

PSALM III.

TITLE.—"A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his Son." *You will remember the sad story of David's flight from his own palace, when, in the dead of the night, he forded the brook Kedron, and went with a few faithful followers to hide himself for awhile from the fury of his rebellious son. Remember that David in this was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, too, fled; he, too, passed over the brook Kedron when his own people were in rebellion against him, and with a feeble band of followers he went to the garden of Gethsemane. He, too, drank of the brook by the way, and therefore doth he lift up the head. By very many expositors this is entitled THE MORNING HYMN. May we ever wake with holy confidence in our hearts, and a song upon our lips!*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm may be divided into four parts of two verses each. Indeed, many of the Psalms cannot be well understood unless we attentively regard the parts into which they are to be divided. They are not continuous descriptions of one scene, but a set of pictures of many kindred subjects. As in our modern sermons, we divide our discourse into different heads, so it is in these Psalms. There is always unity, but it is the unity of a bundle of arrows, and not of a single solitary shaft. Let us now look at the Psalm before us. In the first two verses you have David making a complaint to God concerning his enemies; he then declares his confidence in the Lord (3, 4), sings of his safety in sleep (5, 6), and strengthens himself for future conflict (7, 8).*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many *are* they that rise up against me.

2 Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is no help for him in God.* Selah.

The poor broken-hearted father complains of the multitude of his enemies, and if you turn to 2 Samuel xv. 12, you will find it written that "the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom," while the troops of David constantly diminished! "*Lord how are they increased that trouble me!*" Here is a note of exclamation to express the wonder of woe which amazed and perplexed the fugitive father. Alas! I see no limit to my misery, for my troubles are enlarged! There was enough at first to sink me very low; but lo! my enemies multiply. When Absalom, my darling, is in rebellion against me, it is enough to break my heart; but lo! Ahithophel hath forsaken me, my faithful counsellors have turned their backs on me; lo! my generals and soldiers have deserted my standard. "How are they increased that trouble me!" Troubles always come in flocks. Sorrow hath a numerous family.

"*Many are they that rise up against me.*" Their hosts are far superior to mine! Their numbers are too great for my reckoning!

Let us here recall to our memory the innumerable hosts which beset our Divine Redeemer. The legions of our sins, the armies of fiends, the crowd of bodily pains, the host of spiritual sorrows, and all the allies of death and hell, set themselves in battle against the Son of Man. O how precious to know and believe that he has routed their hosts, and trodden them down in his anger! They who would have troubled us he has removed into captivity, and those who would have risen up against us he has laid low. The dragon lost his sting when he dashed it into the soul of Jesus.

David complains before his loving God of the worst weapon of his enemies' attacks, and the bitterest drop of his distresses. "Oh!" saith David, "*many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.*" Some of his distrustful friends said this sorrowfully, but his enemies exultingly boasted of it, and longed to see their words proved by his total destruction. This was the unkindest cut of all, when they declared that his God had forsaken him. Yet David knew in his own conscience that he had given them some ground for this exclamation, for he had committed sin against God in the very light of day. Then they flung his crime

with Bathsheba into his face, and they said, "Go up, thou bloody man; God hath forsaken thee and left thee." Shimei cursed him and swore at him to his very face, for he was bold because of his backers, since multitudes of the men of Belial thought of David in like fashion. Doubtless, David felt this infernal suggestion to be staggering to his faith. If all the trials which come from heaven, all the temptations which ascend from hell, and all the crosses which arise from earth, could be mixed and pressed together, they would not make a trial so terrible as that which is contained in this verse. It is the most bitter of all afflictions to be led to fear that there is no help for us in God. And yet remember our most blessed Saviour had to endure this in the deepest degree when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He knew full well what it was to walk in darkness and to see no light. This was the curse of the curse. This was the wormwood mingled with the gall. To be deserted of his Father was worse than to be the despised of men. Surely we should love him who suffered this bitterest of temptations and trials for our sake. It will be a delightful and instructive exercise for the loving heart to mark the Lord in his agonies as here portrayed, for there is here, and in very many other Psalms, far more of David's Lord than of David himself.

"*Selah.*" This is a musical pause; the precise meaning of which is not known. Some think it simply a rest, a pause in the music; others say it means, "Lift up the strain—sing more loudly—pitch the tune upon a higher key—there is nobler matter to come, therefore retune your harps." Harp-strings soon get out of order and need to be screwed up again to their proper tightness, and certainly our heart-strings are evermore getting out of tune. Let "*Selah*" teach us to pray

"O may my heart in tune be found
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

At least, we may learn that wherever we see "*Selah,*" we should look upon it as a note of observation. Let us read the passage which precedes and succeeds it with greater earnestness, for surely there is always something excellent where we are required to rest and pause and meditate, or when we are required to lift up our hearts in grateful song. "*SELAH.*"

3 But thou, O LORD, *art a shield for me*; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. *Selah.*

Here David avows his confidence in God. "*Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.*" The word in the original signifies more than a shield; it means a buckler round about, a protection which shall surround a man entirely, a shield above, beneath, around, without and within. Oh! what a shield is God for his people! He wards off the fiery darts of Satan from beneath, and the storms of trials from above, while, at the same instant, he speaks peace to the tempest within the breast. Thou art "*my glory.*" David knew that though he was driven from his capital in contempt and scorn, he should yet return in triumph, and by faith he looks upon God as honouring and glorifying him. O for grace to see our future glory amid present shame! Indeed, there is a present glory in our afflictions, if we could but discern it; for it is no mean thing to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. David was honoured when he made the ascent of Olivet, weeping, with his head covered; for he was in all this made like unto his Lord. May we learn, in this respect, to glory in tribulations also! "*And the lifter up of mine head*"—thou shalt yet exalt me. Though I hang my head in sorrow, I shall very soon lift it up in joy and thanksgiving. What a divine trio of mercies is contained in this verse!—defence for the defenceless, glory for the despised, and joy for the comfortless. Verily we may well say, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun."

"*I cried unto the Lord with my voice.*" Why doth he say, "with my voice?" Surely, silent prayers are heard. Yes, but good men often find that, even in secret, they pray better aloud than they do when they utter no vocal sound. Perhaps, moreover, David would think thus:—"My cruel enemies clamour against me; *they lift up their voices, and, behold, I lift up mine, and my cry outsoars them all.* They clamour, but the cry of my voice in great distress pierces the very skies, and is louder and stronger than all their tumult; for there is one in the sanctuary who

hearkens to me from the seventh heaven, and he hath '*heard me out of his holy hill.*' " Answers to prayers are sweet cordials for the soul. We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God.

Here stands another *Selah*. Rest awhile, O tried believer, and change the strain to a softer air.

5 I laid me down and slept ; I awaked ; for the LORD sustained me.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.

David's faith enabled him to *lie down* ; anxiety would certainly have kept him on tiptoe, watching for an enemy. Yea, he was able to sleep, *to sleep* in the midst of trouble, surrounded by foes. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." There is a sleep of presumption ; God deliver us from it ! There is a sleep of holy confidence ; God help us so to close our eyes ! But David says he *awaked* also. Some sleep the sleep of death ; but he, though exposed to many enemies, reclined his head on the bosom of his God, slept happily beneath the wing of Providence in sweet security, and then awoke in safety. "*For the Lord sustained me.*" The sweet influence of the Pleiades of promise shone upon the sleeper, and he awoke conscious that the Lord had preserved him. An excellent divine has well remarked—"This quietude of a man's heart by faith in God, is a higher sort of work than the natural resolution of manly courage, for it is the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit upholding a man above nature, and therefore the Lord must have all the glory of it."

Buckling on his harness for the day's battle, our hero sings, "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*" Observe that he does not attempt to under-estimate the number or wisdom of his enemies. He reckons them at tens of thousands, and he views them as cunning huntsmen chasing him with cruel skill. Yet he trembles not, but looking his foeman in the face he is ready for the battle. There may be no way of escape ; they may hem me in as the deer are surrounded by a circle of hunters ; they may surround me on every side, but in the name of God I will dash through them ; or, if I remain in the midst of them, yet shall they not hurt me ; I shall be free in my very prison.

But David is too wise to venture to the battle without prayer ; he therefore betakes himself to his knees, and cries aloud to Jehovah.

7 Arise, O LORD ; save me, O my God : for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone ; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

His only hope is in his God, but that is so strong a confidence, that he feels the Lord hath but to *arise* and he is saved. It is enough for the Lord to stand up, and all is well. He compares his enemies to wild beasts, and he declares that God hath broken their jaws, so that they could not injure him ; "*Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.*" Or else he alludes to the peculiar temptations to which he was then exposed. They had spoken against him ; God, therefore, has smitten them upon the cheek bone. They seemed as if they would devour him with their mouths ; God hath broken their teeth, and let them say what they will, their toothless jaws shall not be able to devour him. Rejoice, O believer, thou hast to do with a dragon whose head is broken, and with enemies whose teeth are dashed from their jaws !

8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD : thy blessing *is* upon thy people. *Selah*.

This verse contains the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine. Search Scripture through, and you must, if you read it with a candid mind, be persuaded that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the great doctrine of the word of God : "*Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.*" This is a point concerning which we are daily fighting. Our opponents say, "Salvation belongeth to the free will of man ; if not to man's merit, yet at least to man's will ;" but we hold and teach that salvation from first to last, in every iota of it, belongs to the Most High God. It is God that chooses his people. *He* calls them by his grace ; *he* quickens them by his Spirit, and keeps them by his power. It is not of man, neither by man ; "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." May we all learn this truth experimentally, for our proud flesh and blood will never permit us to learn it in any other way. In the last sentence the peculiarity and

speciality of salvation are plainly stated: "*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" Neither upon Egypt, nor upon Tyre, nor upon Nineveh; thy blessing is upon thy chosen, thy blood-bought, thine everlastingly-beloved people. "*Selah:*" lift up your hearts, and pause, and meditate upon this doctrine. "*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*" Divine, discriminating, distinguishing, eternal, infinite, immutable love, is a subject for constant adoration. Pause my soul, at this *Selah*, and consider thine own interest in the salvation of God; and if by humble faith thou art enabled to see Jesus as thine by his own free gift of himself to thee, if this greatest of all blessings be upon thee, rise up and sing—

" Rise, my soul! adore and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'
Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour's family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks to thee."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—With regard to the authority of the TITLES, it becomes us to speak with diffidence, considering the very opposite opinions which have been offered upon this subject by scholars of equal excellence. In the present day, it is too much the custom to slight or omit them altogether, as though added, nobody knows when or by whom, and as, in many instances, inconsistent with the subject-matter of the Psalm itself: while Augustine, Theodoret, and various other early writers of the Christian church, regard them as a part of the inspired text; and the Jews still continue to make them a part of their chant, and their rabbins to comment upon them.

It is certainly unknown who invented or placed them where they are: but it is unquestionable that they have been so placed from time immemorial; they occur in the Septuagint, which contains also in a few instances titles to Psalms that are without any in the Hebrew; and they have been copied after the Septuagint by Jerome. So far as the present writer has been able to penetrate the obscurity that occasionally hangs over them, they are a direct and most valuable key to the general history or subject of the Psalms to which they are prefixed; and, excepting where they have been evidently misunderstood or misinterpreted, he has never met with a single instance in which the drift of the title and its respective Psalm do not exactly coincide. Many of them were, doubtless, composed by Ezra at the time of editing his own collection, at which period some critics suppose the whole to have been written; but the rest appear rather to be coeval, or nearly so, with the respective Psalms themselves, and to have been written about the period of their production.—*John Mason Good, M.D., F.R.S., 1854.*

See title. Here we have the first use of the word *Psalm*. In Hebrew, *Mizmor*, which hath the signification of pruning, or cutting off superfluous twigs, and is applied to songs made of short sentences, where many superfluous words are put away.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Upon this note an old writer remarks, "Let us learn from this, that in times of sore trouble men will not fetch a compass and use fine words in prayer, but will offer a prayer which is pruned of all luxuriance of wordy speeches."

Whole Psalm.—Thus you may plainly see how God hath wrought in his church in old time, and therefore should not discourage yourselves for any sudden change; but with David, acknowledge your sins to God, declare unto him how many there be that vex you and rise up against you, naming you Huguenots, Lutherans, Heretics, Puritans, and the children of Belial, as they named David. Let the wicked idolators brag that they will prevail against you and overcome you, and that God hath given you over, and will be no more your God. Let them put their trust in Absalom, with his large golden locks; and in the wisdom of Ahithophel, the wise counsellor; yet

say you, with David, "*Thou, O Lord, art my defender, and the lifter up of my head.*" Persuade yourselves, with David, that the Lord is your defender, who hath compassed you round about, and is, as it were, a "*shield*" that doth cover you on every side. It is he only that may and will compass you about with glory and honour. It is he that will thrust down those proud hypocrites from their seat, and exalt the lowly and meek. It is he which will "*smite*" your "*enemies on the cheek bone,*" and burst all their teeth in sunder. He will hang up Absalom by his own long hairs; and Ahithophel through desperation shall hang himself. The bands shall be broken and you delivered; for this belongeth unto the Lord, to save his from their enemies, and to bless his people, that they may safely proceed in their pilgrimage to heaven without fear.—*Thomas Tymme's "Silver Watch Bell,"* 1634.

Verse 1.—Absalom's faction, like a snowball, strangely gathered in its motion. David speaks of it as one amazed; and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally revolt from him, and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy young fellow as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now of a sudden he had lost them! As people must not trust too much to princes (Psalm cxlvi. 3), so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ the Son of David had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, "*Crucify him, crucify him,*" how were they then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them, and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—When the believer questions the power of God, or his interest in it, his joy gusheth out as blood out of a broken vein. This verse is a sore stab indeed.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with anything so much as if you offer to persuade him, "*There is no help for him in God.*" David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord; they say, "*There is no help for me in thee;*" but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, "*There is no salvation*" (for so the word is) "*for him in God;*" but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, "*I am thy salvation*" (Psalm xxxv. 3), and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 2, 4, 8.—"Selah" סֶלָה. Much has been written on this word, and still its meaning does not appear to be wholly determined. It is rendered in the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase, *lealmin, for ever, or to eternity.* In the Latin Vulgate, it is omitted, as if it were no part of the text. In the Septuagint it is rendered *Ἀψαλμα*, supposed to refer to some variation or modulation of the voice in singing. Schleusner, *Lex.* The word occurs seventy-three times in the Psalms, and three times in the book of Habakkuk (iii. 3, 9, 13). It is never translated in our version, but in all these places the original word *Selah* is retained. It occurs only in poetry, and is supposed to have had some reference to the singing or cantillation of poetry, and to be probably a musical term. In general, also, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance. Gesenius (*Lex.*) supposes that the most probable meaning of this musical term or note is *silence* or *pause*, and that its use was, in chanting the words of the Psalm, to direct the singer to be silent, to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude or harmony. Perhaps this is all that can now be known of the meaning of the word, and this is enough to satisfy every reasonable enquiry. It is probable, if this was the use of the term, that it would commonly correspond with the sense of the passage, and be inserted where the sense made a pause suitable; and this will doubtless be found usually to be the fact. But any one acquainted at all with the character of musical notation will perceive at once that we are not to suppose that this would be invariably or necessarily the fact, for the musical pauses by no means always correspond with pauses in the sense. This word, therefore, can furnish very little assistance in determining the meaning of the passages where it is found. Ewald supposes, differing from this view, that it rather indicates that in the places where it occurs the voice is to be raised, and that it is synonymous with *up, higher, loud, or distinct*, from *ל,*

sal, שָׁלַח *salal*, to ascend. Those who are disposed to enquire further respecting its meaning, and the uses of musical pauses in general, may be referred to Ugolin, "Thesau. Antiq. Sac.," tom. xxii.—*Albert Barnes*, 1868.

Verses 2, 4, 8.—*Selah*, שָׁלַח, is found seventy-three times in the Psalms, generally at the end of a sentence or paragraph; but in Psalm lv. 19 and lvii. 3, it stands in the middle of the verse. While most authors have agreed in considering this word as somehow relating to the *music*, their conjectures about its precise meaning have varied greatly. But at present these two opinions chiefly obtain. Some, including Herder, De Wette, Ewald (*Poet Bücher*, i. 179), and Delitzsch, derive it from שָׁלַח, or שָׁלַח, to raise and understand an *elevation* of the voice or music; others, after Gesenius, in *Thesaurus*, derive it from שָׁלַח, to be still or silent, and understand a pause in the singing. So Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, and Tholuck. Probably *selah* was used to direct the singer to be silent, or to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude (so Sept., διάψαλμα) or symphony. In Psalm ix. 16, it occurs in the expression *higgaion selah*, which Gesenius, with much probability, renders *instrumental, pause*; i.e., let the instruments strike up a symphony, and let the singer pause. By Tholuck and Hengstenberg, however, the two words are rendered *meditation, pause*; i.e., let the singer meditate while the music stops.—*Benjamin Davis*, Ph.D., LL.D., article *Psalms*, in *Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*.

Verse 3.—"Lifter up of my head." God will have the body partake with the soul—as in matters of grief, so in matters of joy; the lantern shines in the light of the candle within.—*Richard Sibbs*, 1639.

There is a lifting up of the head by elevation to office, as with Pharaoh's butler; this we trace to the divine appointment. There is a lifting up in honour after shame, in health after sickness, in gladness after sorrow, in restoration after a fall, in victory after a temporary defeat; in all these respects the Lord is the lifter up of our head.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—When prayer leads the van, in due time deliverance brings up the rear.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 4.—"He heard me." I have often heard persons say in prayer, "Thou art a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God," but the expression contains a superfluity, since for God to hear is, according to Scripture, the same thing as to answer.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me." The title of the Psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest; not when he lay on his bed of down in his stately palace at Jerusalem, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such a disloyal army at his back hunting of him; yea, so transcendent is the influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie down as cheerfully to sleep in the grave, as on the softest bed. You will say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed; some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust, and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. "Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his goods on ship-board, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail, and be gone homewards. Indeed, what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get his full lading in for heaven? And when hath he that, if not when he is assured of his peace with God? This peace of the gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties, and temptations, and troubles, that ordinarily, before he calls his saints to any hard service, or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine next their hearts, to cheer them up and embolden them in the conflict.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 5.—Gurnall, who wrote when there were houses on old London Bridge, has quaintly said, "Do you not think that they sleep as soundly who dwell on London Bridge as they who live at Whitehall or Cheapside? for they know that the waves which rush under them cannot hurt them. Even so may the saints rest quietly over the floods or trouble or death, and fear no ill."

Verse 5.—Xerxes, the Persian, when he destroyed all the temples in Greece, caused the temple of Diana to be preserved for its beautiful structure: that soul which hath the beauty or holiness shining in it, shall be preserved for the glory of the structure; God will not suffer his own temple to be destroyed. Would you be secured in evil times? Get grace and fortify this garrison; a good conscience is a Christian's fort-royal. David's enemies lay round about him; yet saith he, "*I laid me down and slept.*" A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon; grace is a Christian's coat of mail, which fears not the arrow or bullet. True grace may be shot at, but can never be shot through; grace puts the soul into Christ, and there it is safe, as the bee in the hive, as the dove in the ark. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"The Lord sustained me." It would not be unprofitable to consider the sustaining power manifested in us while we lie asleep. In the flowing of the blood, heaving of the lung, etc., in the body and the continuance of mental faculties while the image of death is upon us.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." The psalmist will trust, despite appearances. He will not be afraid though ten thousands of people have set themselves against him round about. Let us here limit our thoughts to this one idea, "despite appearances." What could look worse to human sight than this array of ten thousands of people? Ruin seemed to stare him in the face; wherever he looked an enemy was to be seen. What was one against ten thousand? It often happens that God's people come into circumstances like this; they say, "All these things are against me;" they seem scarce able to count their troubles; they cannot see a loophole through which to escape; things look very black indeed; it is great faith and trust which says under these circumstances "I will not be afraid."

These were the circumstances under which Luther was placed, as he journeyed towards Worms. His friend Spalatin heard it said, by the enemies of the Reformation, that the safe conduct of a heretic ought not to be respected, and became alarmed for the reformer. "At the moment when the latter was approaching the city, a messenger appeared before him with this advice from the chaplain, 'Do not enter Worms!' And this from his best friend, the elector's confidant, from Spalatin himself! But Luther, undismayed, turned his eyes upon the messenger, and replied, 'Go and tell your master, that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles upon the housetops, still I would enter it.' The messenger returned to Worms, with this astounding answer: 'I was then undaunted,' said Luther, a few days before his death, 'I feared nothing.'"

At such seasons as these, the reasonable men of the world, those who walk by sight and not by faith, will think it reasonable enough that the Christian should be afraid; they themselves would be very low if they were in such a predicament. Weak believers are now ready to make excuses for us, and we are only too ready to make them for ourselves; instead of rising above the weakness of the flesh, we take refuge under it, and use it as an excuse. But let us think prayerfully for a little while, and we shall see that it should not be thus with us. To trust only when appearances are favourable, is to sail only with the wind and tide, to believe only when we can see. Oh! let us follow the example of the psalmist, and seek that unreservedness of faith which will enable us to trust God, come what will, and to say as he said, "*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.*"—*Philip Bennett Power's 'I wills' of the Psalms, 1862.*

Verse 6.—"I will not be afraid," etc. It makes no matter what our enemies be, though for number, legions; for power, principalities; for subtilty, serpents; for cruelty, dragons; for vantage of place, a prince of the air; for maliciousness, spiritual wickedness; stronger is he that is in us, than they who are against us; nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. In Christ Jesus our Lord, we shall be more than conquerors.—*William Couper, 1612.*

Verse 7.—"Arise, O Lord," Jehovah! This is a common scriptural mode of calling upon God to manifest his presence and his power, either in wrath or favour. By a natural anthropomorphism, it describes the intervals of such manifestation as periods of inaction or of slumber, out of which he is besought to rouse himself. "*Save me,*" even me, of whom they say there is no help for him in God. "*Save me, O my God,*" mine by covenant and mutual engagement, to whom I therefore have a

right to look for deliverance and protection. This confidence is warranted, moreover, by experience. "For thou hast," in former exigencies, "smitten all mine enemies," without exception " (on the) cheek " or jaw, an act at once violent and insulting.—*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"Upon the cheek bone."—The language seems to be taken from a comparison of his enemies with wild beasts. The cheek bone denotes the bone in which the teeth are placed, and to break that is to disarm the animal.—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 7.—When God takes vengeance upon the ungodly, he will smite in such a manner as to make them feel his almightiness in every stroke. All his power shall be exercised in punishing and none in pitying. O that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with Omnipotence!—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:" parallel passage in *Jonah* ii. 9, "Salvation is of the Lord." The mariners might have written upon their ship, instead of *Castor* and *Pollux*, or the like device, *Salvation is the Lord's*; the Ninevites might have written upon their gates, *Salvation is the Lord's*; and whole mankind, whose cause is pitted and pleaded by God against the hardness of *Jonah's* heart, in the last, might have written on the palms of their hands, *Salvation is the Lord's*. It is the argument of both the Testaments, the staff and supportation of heaven and earth. They would both sink, and all their joints be severed, if the salvation of the Lord were not. The birds in the air sing no other notes, the beasts in the field give no other voice, than *Salus Jehovæ*, Salvation is the Lord's. The walls and fortresses to our country's gates, to our cities and towns, bars to our houses, a surer cover to our heads than a helmet of steel, a better receipt to our bodies than the confection of apothecaries, a better receipt to our souls than the pardons of Rome, is *Salus Jehovæ*, the salvation of the Lord. *The Salvation of the Lord* blesseth, preserveth, upholdeth all that we have; our basket and our store, the oil in our cruses, our presses, the sheep in our fold, our stalls, the children in the womb, at our tables, the corn in our field, our stores, our garners; it is not the virtue of the stars, nor nature of all things themselves, that giveth being and continuance to any of these blessings. And, "What shall I more say?" as the apostle asked (*Heb. xi.*), when he had spoken much, and there was much more behind, but time failed him. Rather, what should I not say? for the world is my theatre at this time, and I neither think nor can feign to myself anything that hath not dependence upon this acclamation, *Salvation is the Lord's*. *Plutarch* writeth, that the Amphictions in Greece, a famous council assembled of twelve sundry people, wrote upon the temple of *Apollo Pythius*, instead of the *Iliads* of *Homer*, or songs of *Pindarus* (large and tiring discourses), short sentences and memoratives, as, *Know thyself, Use moderation, Beware of suretyship*, and the like; and doubtless though every creature in the world, whereof we have use, be a treatise and narration unto us of the goodness of God, and we might weary our flesh, and spend our days in writing books of that inexplicable subject, yet this short apothegm of *Jonah* comprehendeth all the rest, and standeth at the end of the song, as the altars and stones that the patriarch set up at the parting of the ways, to give knowledge to the after-world by what means he was delivered. I would it were daily preached in our temples, sung in our streets, written upon our door-posts, painted upon our walls, or rather cut with an adamant claw upon the tables of our hearts, that we might never forget salvation to be the Lord's. We have need of such remembrances to keep us in practice of revolving the mercies of God. For nothing decayeth sooner than love: *nihil facilius quam amor putrescit*. And of all the powers of the soul, memory is most delicate, tender, and brittle, and first waxeth old, *memoria delicata, tenera, fragilis, in quam primum senectus incurrit*; and of all the apprehensions of memory, first benefit *primum senescit beneficium*.—*John King's Commentary on Jonah, 1594.*

Verse 8.—"Thy blessing is upon thy people." The saints are not only blessed when they are comprehensors, but while they are viators. They are blessed before they are crowned. This seems a paradox to flesh and blood: what, reproached and maligned, yet blessed! A man that looks upon the children of God with a carnal eye, and sees how they are afflicted, and like the ship in the gospel, which was covered with waves (*Matt. viii. 24*), would think they were far from blessedness. Paul brings a catalogue of his sufferings (*2 Cor. xi. 24—26*), "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck," etc. And those Christians

of the first magnitude, of whom the world was not worthy, "Had trails of cruel mockings and scourgings, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword." Heb. xi. 36, 37. What! and were all these during the time of their sufferings blessed? A carnal man would think, if this be to be blessed, God deliver him from it. But, however sense would give their vote, our Saviour Christ pronounceth the godly man blessed; though a mourner, though a martyr, yet blessed. Job on the dunghill was blessed Job. The saints are blessed when they are cursed. Shimei did curse David (2 Samuel xvi. 5), "He came forth and cursed him;" yet when he was cursed David he was blessed David. The saints though they are bruised, yet they are blessed. Not only they shall be blessed, but they are so. Psalm cxix. 1. "Blessed are the undefiled." Psalm iii. 8. "*Thy blessing is upon thy people.*"
—*Thomæ Watson.*

As a curious instance of Luther's dogmatical interpretations, we give very considerable extracts from his rendering of this Psalm without in any degree endorsing them.

—C. H. S.

Whole Psalm.—That the meaning of this Psalm is not historical, is manifest from many particulars, which militate against its being so understood. And first of all, there is this which the blessed Augustine has remarked; that the words, "I laid me down to sleep and took my rest," seem to be the words of Christ rising from the dead. And then that there is at the end the blessing of God pronounced upon the people, which manifestly belongs to the whole church. Hence, the blessed Augustine interprets the Psalm in a threefold way: first, concerning Christ the head; secondly concerning the whole of Christ, that is, Christ and his church, the head and the body; and thirdly, figuratively, concerning any private Christian. Let each have his own interpretation. I, in the meantime, will interpret it concerning Christ; being moved so to do by the same argument that moved Augustine—that the fifth verse does not seem appropriately to apply to any other but Christ. First, because, "lying down" and "sleeping," signify in this place altogether a natural death, not a natural sleep. Which may be collected from this—because it then follows, "and rose again." Whereas if David had spoken concerning the sleep of the body, he would have said, "and awoke;" though this does not make so forcibly for the interpretation of which we are speaking, if the Hebrew word be closely examined. But again, what new thing would he advance by declaring that he laid him down and slept? Why did he not say also that he walked, ate, drank, laboured, or was in necessity, or mention particularly some other work of the body? And moreover, it seems an absurdity under so great a tribulation, to boast of nothing else but the sleep of the body; for that tribulation would rather force him to a privation from sleep, and to be in peril and distress; especially since those two expressions, "I laid me down," and "I slept," signify the quiet repose of one lying down in his place, which is not the state of one who falls asleep from exhaustion through sorrow. But this consideration makes the more forcibly for us—that he therefore glories in his rising up again because it was the Lord that sustained him, who raised him up while sleeping, and did not leave him in sleep. How can such a glorying agree, and what new kind of religion can make it agree, with any particular sleep of the body? (for in that case, would it not apply to the daily sleep also?) and especially, when this sustaining of God indicates at the same time an utterly forsaken state in the person sleeping, which is not the case in corporal sleep; for there the person sleeping may be protected even by men being his guards; but this sustaining being altogether of God, implies, not a sleep, but a heavy conflict. And lastly, the word *ἠκίζομαι* itself favours such an interpretation; which, being here put absolutely and transitively, signifies, "I caused to arise or awake." As if he had said, "I caused myself to awake, I roused myself." Which certainly more aptly agrees with the resurrection of Christ than with the sleep of the body; both because those who are asleep are accustomed to be roused and awakened, and because it is no wonderful matter, nor a matter worthy of so important a declaration, for any one to awake of himself, seeing that it is what takes place every day. But this matter being introduced by the Spirit as a something new and singular, is certainly different from all that which attends common sleeping and waking.

Verse 2.—“*There is no help for him in his God.*” In the Hebrew the expression is simply, “in God,” without the pronoun “his,” which seems to me to give clearness and force to the expression. As if he had said, They say of me that I am not only deserted and oppressed by all creatures, but that even God, who is present with all things, and preserves all things, and protects all things, forsakes me as the only thing out of the whole universe that he does not preserve. Which kind of temptation Job seems also to have tasted where he says, “Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?” vii. 20. For there is no temptation, no, not of the whole world together, nor of all hell combined in one, equal unto that wherein God stands contrary to a man, which temptation Jeremiah prays against (xvii. 17), “Be not a terror unto me; thou art my hope in the day of evil;” and concerning which also the sixth Psalm following saith, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger;” and we find the same petitions throughout the psalter. This temptation is wholly unsupported, and is truly hell itself; as it is said in the same sixth Psalm, “for in death there is no remembrance of thee,” etc. In a word, if you have never experienced it, you can never form any idea of it whatever.

Verse 3.—“*For thou, O Lord, art my helper, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*” David here contrasts three things with three; helper, with many troubling; glory, with many rising up; and the lifter up of the head, with the blaspheming and insulting. Therefore, the person here represented is indeed alone in the estimation of man, and even according to his own feelings also; but in the sight of God, and in a spiritual view, he is by no means alone; but protected with the greatest abundance of help; as Christ saith (John xvi. 32), “Behold, the hour cometh when ye shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” The words contained in this verse are not the words of nature, but of grace; not of free-will, but of the spirit of strong faith; which, even though seeing God, as in the darkness of the storm of death and hell, a deserting God, acknowledges him a sustaining God; when seeing him as a persecuting God, acknowledges him a helping God; when seeing him as a condemner, acknowledges him a Saviour. Thus this faith does not judge of things according as they seem to be, or are felt, like a horse or mule which have no understanding; but it understands things which are not seen, for “hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” Romans viii. 24.

Verse 4.—“*I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.*” In the Hebrew, the verb is in the future, and is, as Hieronymus translates it, “I will cry,” and, “he shall hear;” and this pleases me better than the perfect tense; for they are the words of one triumphing in, and praising and glorifying God, and giving thanks unto him who sustained, preserved, and lifted him up, according as he had hoped in the preceding verse. For it is usual with those that triumph and rejoice, to speak of those things which they have done and suffered, and to sing a song of praise unto their helper and deliverer; as in Psalm lxxvi. 16, “Come, then, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.” And also Psalm lxxxix. 1, “Sing aloud unto God our strength.” And so again, Exodus xv. 1, “Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” And so here, being filled with an overflowing sense of gratitude and joy, he sings of his being dead, of his having slept and rose up again, of his enemies being smitten, and of the teeth of the ungodly being broken. This it is which causes the change; for he who hitherto had been addressing God in the second person, changes on a sudden his address to others concerning God, in the third person, saying, “and he heard me,” not “and thou heardest me;” and also, “I cried unto the Lord,” not “I cried unto thee,” for he wants to make all know what benefits God has heaped upon him; which is peculiar to a grateful mind.

Verse 5.—“*I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustatned me.*” Christ, by the words of this verse signifies his death and burial. For it is not to be supposed that he would have spoken so importantly concerning mere natural rest and sleep; especially since that which precedes, and that which follows, compel us to understand him as speaking of a deep conflict and a glorious victory over his enemies. By all which things he stirs us up and animates us to faith in God, and commends unto us the power and grace of God; that he is able to raise us up from the dead; an example of which he sets before us, and proclaims it unto us as wrought in himself. And this is shown also farther in his using gentle words, and such as tend wonderfully to lessen the terror of death. “I laid

me down (saith he), *and slept.*" He does not say, I died and was buried ; for death and the tomb had lost both their name and their power. And now death is not death, but a sleep ; and the tomb not a tomb, but a bed and resting place ; which was the reason why the words of this prophecy were put somewhat obscurely and doubtfully, that it might by that means render death most lovely in our eyes (or rather most contemptible), as being that state from which, as from the sweet rest of sleep, an undoubted arising and awaking are promised. For who is not most sure of an awaking and arising, who lies down to rest in a sweet sleep (where death does not prevent) ? This person, however, does not say that he died, but that he laid him down to sleep, and that therefore he awaked. And moreover, as sleep is useful and necessary for a better renewal of the powers of the body (as Ambrosius says in his hymn), and as sleep relieves the weary limbs, so is death also equally useful, and ordained for the arriving at a better life. And this is what David says in the following Psalm, " I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for thou, Lord, in a singular manner hast formed me in hope." Therefore, in considering death, we are not so much to consider death itself, as that most certain life and resurrection which are sure to those who are in Christ ; that those words (John viii. 51) might be fulfilled, " If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." But how is it that he shall never see it ? Shall he not feel it ? Shall he not die ? No ! he shall only see sleep, for, having the eyes of his faith fixed upon the resurrection, he so glides through death, that he does not even see death ; for death, as I have said, is to him no death at all. And hence, there is that also of John xi. 25, " He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Verse 7.—" For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone ; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." Hieronymus uses this metaphor of "*cheek bones,*" and "*teeth,*" to represent cutting words, detractions, calumnies, and other injuries of the same kind, by which the innocent are oppressed : according to that of Proverbs xxx. 14, " There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." It was by these that Christ was devoured, when, before Pilate he was condemned to the cross by the voices and accusations of his enemies. And hence it is that the apostle saith (Gal. v. 15), " But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Verse 8.—" *Salvation is of the Lord, and thy blessing is upon thy people.*" A most beautiful conclusion this, and, as it were, the sum of all the feelings spoken of. The sense is, it is the Lord alone that saves and blesses : and even though the whole mass of all evils should be gathered together in one against a man, still, it is the Lord who saves : salvation and blessing are in his hands. What then shall I fear ? What shall I not promise myself ? When I know that no one can be destroyed, no one reviled, without the permission of God, even though all should rise up to curse and to destroy ; and that no one of them can be blessed and saved without the permission of God, how much soever they may bless and strive to save themselves. And as Gregory Nazianzen says, " Where God gives, envy can avail nothing ; and where God does not give labour can avail nothing." And in the same way also Paul saith (Rom. viii. 31), " If God be for us, who can be against us ?" And so, on the contrary, if God be against them, who can be for them ? And why ? Because "*salvation is of the Lord,*" and not of them, nor of us, for "*vain is the help of man.*"—*Martin Luther.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—" *The saint telling his griefs to his God.* (1) His right to do so. (2) The proper manner of telling them. (3) The fair results of such holy communications with the Lord.

When may we expect increased troubles ? Why are they sent ? What is our wisdom in reference to them ?

Verse 2.—The lie against the saint and the libel upon his God.

Verse 3.—The threefold blessing which God affords to his suffering ones—Defence, Honour, Joy. Show how all these may be enjoyed by faith, even in our worst estate.

Verse 4.—(1) In dangers we should pray. (2) God will graciously hear. (3) We should record his answers of grace. (4) We may strengthen ourselves for the future by remembering the deliverances of the past.

Verse 5.—(1) Describe sweet sleeping. (2) Describe happy waking. (3) Show how both are to be enjoyed, “*for the Lord sustained me.*”

Verse 6.—Faith surrounded by enemies and yet triumphant.

Verse 7.—(1) Describe the Lord's past dealing with his enemies; “*thou hast.*” (2) Show that the Lord should be our constant resort, “*O Lord,*” “*O my God.*” (3) Enlarge upon the fact that the Lord is to be stirred up: “*Arise.*” (4) Urge believers to use the Lord's past victories as an argument with which to prevail with him.

Verse 7 (last clause).—Our enemies vanquished foes, toothless lions.

Verse 8 (first clause).—Salvation of God from first to last. (See the exposition).

Verse 8 (last clause).—They were blessed *in* Christ, *through* Christ, and shall be blessed *with* Christ. The blessing rests upon their persons, comforts, trials, labours, families, etc. It flows from grace, is enjoyed by faith, and is insured by oath, etc.—*James Smith's Portions, 1802—1862.*