

PSALM IV.

TITLE.—*This Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the third, and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled THE MORNING PSALM, this from its matter is equally deserving of the title of THE EVENING HYMN. May the choice words of the 8th verse be our sweet song of rest as we retire to our repose!*

“ Thus with my thoughts composed to peace,
I'll give mine eyes to sleep ;
Thy hand in safety keeps my days,
And will my slumbers keep.”

The Inspired title runs thus : “ To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David.” The chief musician was the master or director of the sacred music of the sanctuary. Concerning this person carefully read 1 Chron. vi. 31, 32 ; xv. 16—22 ; xxv. 1, 7. In these passages will be found much that is interesting to the lover of sacred song, and very much that will throw a light upon the mode of praising God in the temple. Some of the titles of the Psalms are, we doubt not, derived from the names of certain renowned singers, who composed the music to which they were set.

On Neginoth, that is, on stringed instruments, or hand instruments, which were played on with the hand alone, as harps and cymbals. The joy of the Jewish church was so great that they needed music to set forth the delightful feelings of their souls, our holy mirth is none the less overflowing because we prefer to express it in a more spiritual manner, as becometh a more spiritual dispensation. In allusion to these instruments to be played on with the hand, Nazianzen says. “ Lord I am an instrument for thee to touch.” Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch, so shall we make melody. May we be full of faith and love, and we shall be living instruments of music.

Hawker says “ The Septuagint read the word which we have rendered in our translation chief musician Lamenetz, instead of Lamenetzoth, the meaning of which is unto the end.” From whence the Greek and Latin fathers imagined, that all psalms which bear this inscription refer to the Messiah the great end. If so, this Psalm is addressed to Christ ; and well it may, for it is all of Christ, and spoken by Christ, and hath respect only to his people as being one with Christ. The Lord the Spirit give the reader to see this, and he will find it most blessed.

DIVISION.—*In the first verse David pleads with God for help. In the second he expostulates with his enemies, and continues to address them to the end of verse 5. Then from verse 6 to the close he delightfully contrasts his own satisfaction and safety with the disquietude of the ungodly in their best estate. The Psalm was most probably written upon the same occasion as the preceding, and is another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy is it for us that David was tried, or probably we should never have heard these sweet sonnets of faith.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness : thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress ; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour. Here he reviews his Ebenezers and takes comfort from them. It is not to be imagined that he who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves, and he will never cease to help us until we cease to need. The manna shall fall every morning until we cross the Jordan.

Observe, that David speaks first to God and then to men. Surely we should all speak the more boldly to men if we had more constant converse with God. He who dares to face his Maker will not tremble before the sons of men.

The name by which the Lord is here addressed, “ *God of my righteousness,*” deserves notice, since it is not used in any other part of Scripture. It means, Thou art the author, the witness, the maintainer, the judge, and the rewarder of my righteousness ; to thee I appeal from the calumnies and harsh judgments of men. Herein is wisdom, let us imitate it and always take our suit, not to the petty courts of human opinion. but into the superior court, the King's Bench of heaven.

"*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*" A figure taken from an army enclosed in a defile, and hardly pressed by the surrounding enemy. God hath dashed down the rocks and given me room; he hath broken the barriers and set me in a large place. Or, we may understand it thus:—"God hath enlarged my heart with joy and comfort when I was like a man imprisoned by grief and sorrow." God is a never-failing comforter.

"*Have mercy upon me.*" Though thou mayest justly permit my enemies to destroy me, on account of my many and great sins, yet I flee to thy mercy, and I beseech thee *hear my prayer*, and bring thy servant out of his troubles. The best of men need mercy as truly as the worst of men. All the deliverances of saints, as well as the pardons of sinners, are the free gifts of heavenly grace.

2 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame? *how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* Selah.

In this second division of the Psalm, we are led from the closet of prayer into the field of conflict. Remark the undaunted courage of the man of God. He allows that his enemies are great men (for such is the import of the Hebrew words translated—*sons of men*), but still he believes them to be foolish men, and therefore chides them, as though they were but children. He tells them that they *love vanity, and seek after leasing*, that is, lying, empty fancies, vain conceits, wicked fabrications. He asks them *how long* they mean to make his honour a jest, and his fame a mockery? A little of such mirth is too much, why need they continue to indulge in it? Had they not been long enough upon the watch for his halting? Had not repeated disappointments convinced them that the Lord's anointed was not to be overcome by all their calumnies? Did they mean to jest their souls into hell, and go on with their laughter until swift vengeance should turn their merriment into howling? In the contemplation of their perverse continuance in their vain and lying pursuits, the Psalmist solemnly pauses and inserts a *Selah*. Surely we too may stop awhile, and meditate upon the deep-seated folly of the wicked, their continuance in evil, and their sure destruction; and we may learn to admire that grace which has made us to differ, and taught us to *love truth, and seek after righteousness*.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

"*But know.*" Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz:—the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from among men. Election is a doctrine which unrenewed men cannot endure, but nevertheless, it is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. HE who chose us for himself will surely hear our prayers. The Lord's elect shall not be condemned, nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord's people in the same manner; let us tell our enemies to their faces, that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls. O beloved, when you are on your knees, the fact of your being *set apart* as God's own peculiar treasure, should give you courage and inspire you with fervency and faith. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" Since he chose to love us he cannot but chose to hear us.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

"*Tremble and sin not.*" How many reverse this counsel and sin but tremble not. O that men would take the advice of this verse and *commune with their own hearts*. Surely a want of thought must be one reason why men are so mad as to despise Christ and hate their own mercies. O that for once their passions would be quiet and let them *be still*, that so in solemn silence they might review the past, and meditate upon their inevitable doom. Surely a thinking man might have enough sense to discover the vanity of sin and the worthlessness of the world. Stay, rash sinner, stay ere thou take the last leap. Go to *thy bed* and think upon thy ways.

Ask counsel of thy pillow, and let the quietude of night instruct thee! Throw not away thy soul for nought! Let reason speak! Let the clamorous world be still awhile, and let thy poor soul plead with thee to bethink thyself before thou seal its fate, and ruin it for ever! *Selah.* O sinner! pause while I question thee awhile in the words of a sacred poet,—

“Sinner, is thy heart at rest?
Is thy bosom void of fear?
Art thou not by guilt oppress’d?
Speaks not conscience in thine car?”

Can this world afford thee bliss?
Can it chase away thy gloom?
Flattering, false, and vain it is;
Tremble at the worldling’s doom!

Think, O sinner, on thy end,
See the judgment-day appear,
Thither must thy spirit wend,
There thy righteous sentence hear.

Wretched, ruin’d, helpless soul,
To a Saviour’s blood apply;
He alone can make thee whole,
Fly to Jesus, sinner, fly!”

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Provided that the rebels had obeyed the voice of the last verse, they would now be crying,—“What shall we do to be saved?” And in the present verse, they are pointed to the *sacrifice*, and exhorted to *trust in the Lord*. When the Jew offered sacrifice righteously, that is, in a spiritual manner, he thereby set forth the Redeemer, the great sin-atonng Lamb; there is, therefore, the full gospel in this exhortation of the Psalmist. O sinners, flee ye to the sacrifices of Calvary, and there put your whole confidence and *trust*, for he who died for men is the LORD JEHOVAH.

6 *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

We have now entered upon the third division of the Psalm, in which the faith of the afflicted one finds utterance in sweet expressions of contentment and peace.

There were many, even among David’s own followers, who wanted to *see* rather than to believe. Alas! this is the tendency of us all! Even the regenerate sometimes groan after the sense and sight of prosperity, and are sad when darkness covers all good from view. As for worldlings, this is their unceasing cry. “*Who will shew us any good?*” Never satisfied, their gaping mouths are turned in every direction, their empty hearts are ready to drink in any fine delusion which impostors may invent; and when these fail, they soon yield to despair, and declare that there is no good thing in either heaven or earth. The true believer is a man of a very different mould. His face is not downward like the beasts’, but upward like the angels’. He drinks not from the muddy pools of Mammon, but from the fountain of life above. The light of God’s countenance is enough for him. This is his riches, his honour, his health, his ambition, his ease. Give him this, and he will ask no more. This is joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Oh, for more of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ may be constant and abiding!

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

“It is better,” said one, “to feel God’s favour one hour in our repenting souls, than to sit whole ages under the warmest sunshine that this world affordeth.” Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn, or wine in the vat. Corn and wine are but fruits of the world, but the light of God’s countenance is the ripe fruit of heaven. “Thou art with me,” is a far more blessed cry than “Harvest home.” Let my granary be empty, I am yet full of blessings if Jesus Christ smiles upon me; but if I have all the world, I am poor without Him.

We should not fail to remark that this verse is the *saying* of the righteous man, in opposition to the saying of the many. How quickly doth the tongue betray the character! "*Speak, that I may see thee!*" said Socrates to a fair boy. The metal of a bell is best known by its sound. Birds reveal their nature by their song. Owls cannot sing the carol of the lark, nor can the nightingale hoot like the owl. Let us, then, weigh and watch our words, lest our speech should prove us to be foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Sweet Evening Hymn! I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will *lie down*; and then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down *in peace and sleep*, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was haunted by blood-thirsty foes. Note the word "*only*," which means that God alone was his keeper, and that though alone, without man's help, he was even then in good keeping, for he was "*alone with God*." A quiet conscience is a good bedfellow. How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ.

O Lord, give us this calm repose on thee, that like David we may lie down in peace, and sleep each night while we live; and joyfully may we lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death, to rest in God!

Dr. Hawker's reflection upon this Psalm is worthy to be prayed over and fed upon with sacred delight. We cannot help transcribing it.

"Reader! let us never lose sight of the Lord Jesus while reading this psalm. He is the Lord our righteousness; and therefore, in all our approaches to the mercy seat, let us go there in a language corresponding to this which calls Jesus the Lord our righteousness. While men of the world, from the world are seeking their chief good, let us desire his favour which infinitely transcends corn and wine, and all the good things which perish in the using. Yes, Lord, *thy favour is better than life itself*. Thou causest them that love thee to inherit substance, and fillest all their treasure.

Oh! thou gracious God and Father, hast thou in such a wonderful manner set apart one in our nature for thyself? Hast thou indeed chosen one out of the people? Hast thou beheld him in the purity of his nature,—as one in every point godly? Hast thou given him as the covenant of the people? And hast thou declared thyself well pleased in him? Oh! then, well may my soul be well pleased in him also. Now do I know that my God and Father will hear me when I call upon him in Jesus' name, and when I look up to him for acceptance for Jesus' sake? Yes, my heart is fixed, O Lord, my heart is fixed; Jesus is my hope and righteousness, the Lord will hear me when I call. And henceforth will I both lay me down in peace and sleep securely in Jesus, accepted in the Beloved; for *this is the rest wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing*.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Hear me when I call*," etc. Faith is a good orator and a noble disputer in a strait; it can reason from God's readiness to hear: "*Hear me when I call, O God*." And from the everlasting righteousness given to the man in the justification of his person: "*O God of my righteousness*." And from God's constant justice in defending the righteousness of his servant's cause: "*O God of my righteousness*." And from both present distresses and those that are by-past, wherein he hath been, and from by-gone mercies received: "*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress*." And from God's grace, which is able to answer all objections from the man's unworthiness or ill-deserving: "*Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer*."—David Dickson, 1653.

Verse 1.—"*Hear me*." The great Author of nature and of all things does nothing

in vain. He instituted not this law, and, if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insufficient thing, but endows it with wonderful efficacy for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened. He has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may, with easy and pleasant labour, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth, and all the elements, obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all works, and, which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred Scriptures are the examples of Moses and Joshua, and that which James (v. 17) particularly mentions of Elijah, whom he expressly calls *ἄνθρωπος*, a man subject to like infirmities with ourselves, that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under Antoninus is well known and justly celebrated, which, for the singular ardour and efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of *κεραυνοφόδος*, the thundering legion.—Robert Leighton, D.D., Archbishop of Glasgow, 1611—1684.

Verse 2.—“O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.” Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift wing commits itself to heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong, wide-extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft, and point out, as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, and so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, who just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity entreating that he might be heard, now, as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace.—Robert Leighton, D.D.

Verse 2.—“O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?” etc. We might imagine every syllable of this precious Psalm used by our Master some evening, when about to leave the temple for the day, and retiring to his wonted rest at Bethany (verse 8), after another fruitless expostulation with the men of Israel. And we may read it still as the very utterance of his heart, longing over man, and delighting in God. But further, not only is this the utterance of the Head, it is also the language of one of his members in full sympathy with him in holy feeling. This is a Psalm with which the righteous may make their dwellings resound, morning and evening, as they cast a sad look over a world that rejects God’s grace. They may sing it while they cling more and more every day to Jehovah, as their all-sufficient heritage, now and in the age to come. They may sing it, too, in the happy confidence of faith and hope, when the evening of the world’s day is coming, and may then fall asleep in the certainty of what shall greet their eyes on the resurrection morning—

“Sleeping embosomed in his grace,
Till morning-shadows flee.”

Andrew A. Bonar, 1859.

Verse 2.—“Love Vanity.” They that love sin, love vanity; they chase a bubble, they lean upon a reed, their hope is as a spider’s web.

“Leasing.” This is an old Saxon word signifying falsehood.

Verse 2.—“How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?” “Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.” This our first parents found, and therefore named their second son Abel, or vanity. Solomon, that had tried these things, and could best tell the vanity of them, he preacheth this sermon over again and again, “Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.” It is sad to think how many thousands there be that can say with the preacher, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;” nay, swear it, and yet follow after these things as if there were no other glory, nor felicity, but what is to be found in these things they call vanity. Such men will sell Christ, heaven, and their souls, for a trifle, that call these things vanity, but do not cordially

believe them to be vanity, but set their hearts upon them as if they were their crown, the top of all their royalty and glory. Oh! let your souls dwell upon the vanity of all things here below, till your hearts be so thoroughly convinced and persuaded of the vanity of them, as to trample upon them, and make them a footstool for Christ to get up, and ride in a holy triumph in your hearts.

Gilemex, king of Vandals, led in triumph by Belisarius, cried out, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The fancy of Lucian, who placeth Charon on the top of a high hill, viewing all the affairs of men living, and looking on their greatest cities as little birds' nests, is very pleasant. Oh, the imperfection, the ingratitude, the levity, the inconstancy, the perfidiousness of those creatures we most servilely affect! Ah, did we but weigh man's pain with his payment, his crosses with his mercies, his miseries with his pleasures, we should then see that there is nothing got by the bargain, and conclude, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Chrysostom said once, "That if he were the fittest in the world to preach a sermon to the whole world, gathered together in one congregation, and had some high mountain for his pulpit, from whence he might have a prospect of all the world in his view, and were furnished with a voice of brass, a voice as loud as the trumpets of the archangel, that all the world might hear him, he would choose to preach upon no other text than that in the Psalms, O mortal men, *'How long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing?'*"—*Thomas Brooks*, 1608—1680.

Verse 2.—"Love Vanity." Men's affections are according to their principles; and every one loves that most *without him* which is most suitable to somewhat *within him*: *liking* is founded in *likeness*, and has therefore that word put upon it. It is so in whatsoever we can imagine; whether in temporals or spirituals, as to the things of this life, or of a better. Men's love is according to some working and impression upon their own spirits. And so it is here in the point of vanity; those which are vain persons, they delight in vain things; as children, they love such matters as are most agreeable to their childish dispositions, and as do suit them in that particular. Out of the heart comes all kind of evil.—*Thomas Horton*, 1675.

Verse 3.—"The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." When God chooseth a man, he chooseth him for himself; for himself to converse with, to communicate himself unto him as a friend, a companion, and his delight. Now, it is holiness that makes us fit to live with the holy God for ever, since without it we cannot see him (Heb. xii. 14), which is God's main aim, and more than our being his children; as one must be supposed a man, one of mankind, having a soul reasonable, ere we can suppose him capable of adoption, or to be another man's heir. As therefore it was the main first design in God's eye, before the consideration of our happiness, let it be so in ours.—*Thomas Goodwin*, 1600—1679.

Verse 3.—What rare persons the godly are: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Prov. xii. 26. As the flower of the sun, as the wine of Lebanon, as the sparkling upon Aaron's breastplate, such is the orient splendour of a person embellished with godliness. . . . The godly are precious, therefore they are set apart for God, "Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." We set apart things that are precious; the godly are set apart as God's peculiar treasure (Psalm cxxxv. 4); as his garden of delight (Cant. iv. 12); as his royal diadem (Isaiah xliii. 3); the godly are the excellent of the earth (Psalm xvi. 3); comparable to fine gold (Lam. iv. 2); double refined. Zech. xiii. 9. They are the glory of the creation. Isaiah xli. 13. Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystals: God calls them jewels. Mal. iii. 17.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 3.—"The Lord will hear when I call unto him." Let us remember that the experience of one of the saints concerning the verity of God's promises, and of the certainty of the written privileges of the Lord's people, is a sufficient proof of the right which all his children have to the same mercies, and a ground of hope that they also shall partake of them in their times of need.—*David Dickson*, 1653.

Verse 4.—"Stand in awe, and sin not." Jehovah is a name of great power and efficacy, a name that hath in it five vowels, without which no language can be expressed; a name that hath in it also three syllables, to signify the Trinity of persons, the eternity of God, One in Three and Three in One; a name of such dread and reverence amongst the Jews, that they tremble to name it, and therefore they use the name *Adonai* (*Lord*) in all their devotions. And thus ought every one to "stand in awe, and sin not," by taking the name of God in vain; but to

sing praise, and honour, to remember, to declare, to exalt, to praise and bless it; for holy and reverend, only worthy and excellent is his name.—*Rayment*, 1630.

Verse 4.—“*Commune with your own heart.*” The language is similar to that which we use when we say, “Consult your better judgment,” or, “Take counsel of your own good sense.”—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 4.—If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, accustom thyself to soliloquies, I mean to conference with thyself. He needs never be idle that hath so much business to do with his own soul. It was a famous answer which Antisthenes gave when he was asked what fruit he reaped by all his studies. By them, saith he, I have learned both to live and talk with myself. Soliloquies are the best disputes; every good man is best company for himself of all the creatures. Holy David enjoineth this to others, “*Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still.*” “*Commune with your own hearts;*” when ye have none to speak with, talk to yourselves. Ask yourselves for what end ye were made, what lives ye have led, what times ye have lost, what love ye have abused, what wrath ye have deserved. Call yourselves to a reckoning, how ye have improved your talents, how true or false ye have been to your trust, what provision ye have laid in for an hour of death, what preparation ye have made for a great day of account. “*Upon your beds.*” Secrecy is the best opportunity for this duty. The silent night is a good time for this speech. When we have no outward objects to disturb us, and to call our eyes, as the fool’s eyes are always, to the ends of the earth; then our eyes, as the eyes of the wise, may be in our heads; and then our minds, like the windows in Solomon’s temple, may be broad inwards. The most successful searches have been made in the night season; the soul is then wholly shut up in the earthly house of the body, and hath no visits from strangers to disquiet its thoughts. Physicians have judged dreams a probable sign whereby they might find out the distempers of the body. Surely, then, the bed is no bad place to examine and search into the state of the soul. “*And be still.*” Self-communion will much help to curb your headstrong, ungodly passions. Serious consideration, like the casting up of earth amongst bees, will allay inordinate affections when they are full of fury, and make such a hideous noise. Though sensual appetites and unruly desires are, as the people of Ephesus, in an uproar, pleading for their former privilege, and expecting their wonted provision, as in the days of their predominancy, if conscience use its authority, commanding them in God’s name, whose officer it is, to keep the king’s peace, and argue it with them, as the town-clerk of Ephesus, “We are in danger to be called in question for this day’s uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this day’s concourse;” all is frequently by this means hushed, and the tumult appeased without any further mischief.—*George Swinnoek, 1627—1673.*

Verse 4.—“*Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*” When we are most retired from the world, then we are most fit to have, and usually have, most communion with God. If a man would but abridge himself of sleep, and wake with holy thoughts, when deep sleep falleth upon sorrowful labouring men, he might be entertained with visions from God, though not such visions as Eliphaz and others of the saints have had, yet visions he might have. Every time God communicates himself to the soul, there is a vision of love, or mercy, or power, somewhat of God in his nature, or in his will, is showed unto us. David shows us divine work when we go to rest. The bed is not all for sleep: “*Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*” Be still or quiet, and then commune with your hearts; and if you will commune with your hearts, God will come and commune with your hearts too, his Spirit will give you a loving visit and visions of his love.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—“*Stand in awe.*”

With sacred awe pronounce his name,
Whom words nor thoughts can reach.

John Needham, 1768.

Verse 6.—Where Christ reveals himself there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion, and without Christ there is emptiness in the greatest fulness.—*Alexander Grosse, on enjoying Christ, 1632.*

Verse 6.—“*Many,*” said David, “ask who will shew us any good?” meaning

riches, and honour, and pleasure, which are not good. But when he came to godliness itself, he leaves out "*many*," and prayeth in his own person, "*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*;" as if none would join with him.—*Henry Smith*.

Verse 6.—"Who will shew us any good?" This is not a fair translation. The word *any* is not in the text, nor anything equivalent to it; and not a few have quoted it, and preached upon the text, placing the principal emphasis upon this illegitimate. The place is sufficiently emphatic. There are *multitudes who say, Who will shew us good?* Man wants *good*; he hates *evil* as evil, because he has *pain, suffering, and death* through it; and he wishes to find that *supreme good* which will content his heart, and save him from evil. But men mistake this good. They look for a good that is to gratify their *passions*; they have no notion of any happiness that does not come to them through the *medium of their senses*. Therefore they reject *spiritual good*, and they reject the supreme God, by whom alone all the powers of the soul of man can be gratified.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 6.—"Lift thou up," etc. This was the blessing of the high priest and is the heritage of all the saints. It includes reconciliation, assurance, communion, benediction, in a word, the fulness of God. Oh, to be filled therewith!—*C. H. S.*

Verses 6, 7.—Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous; and lest they should be considered as the *chief good*, he frequently bestows them on the wicked. But they are more generally the portion of his enemies than his friends. Alas! what is it to receive and not to be received? to have none other dews of blessing than such as shall be followed by showers of brimstone? We may compass ourselves with sparks of security, and afterwards be secured in eternal misery. This world is a floating island, and so sure as we cast anchor upon it, we shall be carried away by it. God, and all that he has made, is not more than God without anything that he has made. He can never want treasure who has such a golden mine. He is enough without the creature, but the creature is not anything without him. It is, therefore, better to enjoy him without anything else, than to enjoy everything else without him. It is better to be a wooden vessel filled with wine, than a golden one filled with water. *William Secker's Nonsuch Professor, 1660.*

Verse 7.—What madness and folly is it that the favourites of heaven should envy the men of the world, who at best do but feed upon the scraps that come from God's table! Temporals are the bones; spirituals are the marrow. Is it below a man to envy the dogs, because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals, when himself enjoys spirituals? *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 7.—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart." The comforts which God reserves for his mourners are filling comforts (Rom. xv. 13); "The God of hope fill you with joy" (John xvi. 24); "Ask that your joy may be full." When God pours in the joys of heaven they fill the heart, and make it run over (2 Cor. vii. 4); "I am exceeding joyful;" the Greek is, I overflow with joy, as a cup that is filled with wine till it runs over. Outward comforts can no more fill the heart than a triangle can fill a circle. Spiritual joys are satisfying (Psalm lxxiii. 5); "My heart shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;" "*Thou hast put gladness in my heart.*" Worldly joys do put gladness into the face, but the spirit of God puts gladness into the heart; divine joys are heart joys (Zech. x. 7; John xvi. 22); "Your heart shall rejoice" (Luke i. 47); "My spirit rejoiced in God." And to show how filling these comforts are, which are of a heavenly extraction, the Psalmist says they create greater joy than when "*corn and wine increase.*" Wine and oil may delight but not satisfy; they have their vacuity and indigence. We may say, as Zech. x. 2, "They comfort in vain;" outward comforts do sooner cloy than cheer, and sooner weary than fill. Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart (Psalm xciv. 19), "Thy comforts delight my soul." There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten, and one that is painted on the wall.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 8.—It is said of the husbandman, that having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth day and night, and the seed springs and grows he knoweth

not how. Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him according to his holy will.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—When you have walked with God from morning until night, it remaineth that you *conclude* the day well, when you would give yourself to rest at night. Wherefore, first look back and take a strict view of your whole carriage that *day past*. Reform what you find amiss; and rejoice, or be grieved, as you find you have done well or ill, as you have advanced or declined in grace that day. Secondly, since you cannot sleep in safety if God, who is your *keeper* (Psalm cxi. 4, 5), do not *wake and watch for you* (Psalm cxxvii. 1); and though you have *God* to watch when you sleep, you cannot be safe, if he that watcheth be your *enemy*. Wherefore it is very convenient that at night you renew and confirm your peace with God by faith and prayer, commending and committing yourself to God's tuition by prayer (Psalm lii. 4, 5; Psalm xcii. 2), with thanksgiving before you go to bed. Then shall you lie *down in safety*. Psalm iv. 8. All this being done, yet while you are *putting off* your apparel, when you are *lying down*, and when you are *in bed*, before you sleep, it is good that you *commune with your own heart*. Psalm iv. 4. If possibly you can fall asleep with *some heavenly meditation*, then will your sleep be *more sweet* (Prov. iii. 21, 24, 25); and *more secure* (Prov. vi. 21, 22); your *dreams fewer*, or more *comfortable*; your head will be fuller of good thoughts (Prov. vi. 22), and your heart will be in a *better frame* when you *awake*, whether in the night or in the morning.—*Condensed from Henry Scudder's Daily Walk, 1633.*

Verse 8.—“*I will both,*” etc. We have now to retire for a moment from the strife of tongues and the open hostility of foes, into the stillness and privacy of the chamber of sleep. Here, also, we find the “*I will*” of trust. “*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.*” God is here revealed to us as exercising *personal care in the still chamber*. And there is something here which should be inexpressibly sweet to the believer, for this shows the minuteness of God's care, the individuality of his love; how it condescends and stoops, and acts, not only in great, but also in little spheres; not only where *glory* might be procured from great results, but where nought is to be had save the gratitude and love of a poor feeble creature, whose life has been protected and preserved, in a period of helplessness and sleep. How blessed would it be if we made a larger recognition of God in the still chamber; if we thought of him as being there in all hours of illness, of weariness, and pain; if we believed that his interest and care are as much concentrated upon the feeble believer there as upon his people when in the wider battle field of the strife of tongues. There is something inexpressibly touching in this “*laying down*” of the Psalmist. In thus lying down he voluntarily gave up guardianship of himself; he resigned himself into the hands of another; he did so completely, for in the absence of all care he slept; there was here a perfect trust. Many a believer lies down, but it is not to sleep. Perhaps he feels safe enough so far as his body is concerned, but cares and anxieties invade the privacy of his chamber; they come to try his faith and trust; they threaten, they frighten, and alas! prove too strong for trust. Many a poor believer might say, “*I will lay me down, but not to sleep.*” The author met with a touching instance of this, in the case of an aged minister whom he visited in severe illness. This worthy man's circumstances were narrow, and his family trials were great; he said, “*The doctor wants me to sleep, but how can I sleep with care sitting on my pillow?*” It is the experience of some of the Lord's people, that although equal to an emergency or a continued pressure, a reaction sets in afterwards; and when they come to be alone their spirits sink, and they do not realise that strength from God, or feel that confidence in him which they felt while the pressure was exerting its force. . . . There is a trial in stillness; and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battle field. O that we could trust God more and more with personal things! O that he were the God of our chamber, as well as of our temples and houses! O that we could bring him more and more into the minutæ of daily life! If we did thus, we could experience a measure of rest to which we are, perhaps, strangers now; we should have less dread of the sick chamber; we should have that unharassed mind which conduces most to repose, in body and soul; we should be able to say, “*I will lie down and sleep, and leave to-morrow with God!*” Ridley's brother offered to remain with him during the night preceding his martyrdom, but the bishop declined, saying,

that "he meant to go to bed, and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life."—*Phillip Bennett Power's 'I Wills' of the Psalms.*

Verse 8.—Due observation of Providence will both beget and secure inward tranquility in your minds amidst the vicissitudes and revolutions of things in this unstable vain world. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for the Lord only maketh me dwell in safety." He resolves that sinful fears of events shall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious presages: he will commit all his concerns into that faithful fatherly hand that had hitherto wrought all things for him; and he means not to lose the comfort of one night's rest, nor bring the evil of to-morrow upon the day; but knowing in whose hand he was, wisely enjoys the sweet felicity of a resigned will. Now this tranquility of our minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due consideration of providence as by anything whatsoever.—*John Flavel, 1627—1691.*

Verse 8.—Happy is the Christian, who having nightly with this verse, committed himself to his bed as to his grave, which at last, with the same words, resign himself to his grave as to his bed, from which he expects in due time to arise, and sing a morning hymn with the children of the resurrection.—*George Horne, D.D., 1776.*

Verse 9.—"Sleep."

"How blessed was that sleep
The sinless Saviour knew!
In vain the storm-winds blew,
Till he awoke to others' woes,
And hushed the billows to repose.

How beautiful is sleep—
The sleep that Christians know!
Ye mourners! cease your woe,
While soft upon his Saviour's breast,
The righteous sinks to endless rest."

Mrs. M'Cartree.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Is full of matter for a sermon upon, *past mercies a plea for present help.* The first sentence shows that believers desire, expect, and believe in a God that heareth prayer. The title—*God of my righteousness,* may furnish a text (see exposition), and the last sentence may suggest a sermon upon, "The best of saints must still appeal to God's mercy and sovereign grace."

Verse 2.—*Depravity of man* as evinced (1) by continuance in despising Christ, (2) loving vanity in his heart, and (3) seeking lies in his daily life.

Verse 2.—The length of the sinner's sin. "How long?" May be bounded by repentance, shall be by death, and yet shall continue in eternity.

Verse 3.—*Election.*—Its aspects towards God, our enemies, and ourselves.

Verse 3.—"The Lord will hear when I call unto him." Answers to prayer certain to special persons. Mark out those who can claim the favour.

Verse 3.—*The gracious Separatist.* Who is he? Who separated him? With what end? How to make men know it?

Verse 4.—The sinner directed to review himself, that he may be convinced of sin.—*Andrew Fuller, 1754—1815.*

Verse 4.—"Be still." Advice—good, practical, but hard to follow. Times when seasonable. Graces needed to enable one to be still. Results of quietness. Persons who most need the advice. Instances of its practice. Here is much material for a sermon.

Verse 5.—The nature of those sacrifices of righteousness which the Lord's people are expected to offer.—*William Ford Vance, 1827.*

Verse 6.—The cry of the world and the church contrasted. *Vox populi not always Vox Dei.*

Verse 6.—The cravings of the soul all satisfied in God.

Verses 6, 7.—An assurance of the Saviour's love, the source of unrivalled joy.

Verse 7.—The believer's joys. (1) Their source, "Thou;" (2) their season—

even now—" *Thou hast ;*" (3) their position, "*in my heart ;*" (4) their excellence, "*more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*"

Another excellent theme suggests itself—" The superiority of the joys of grace to the joys of earth ;" or, " Two sort of prosperity—which is to be the more desired ? "

Verse 8.—The peace and safety of the good man.—*Joseph Lathrop, D.D., 1805.*

Verse 8.—A bedchamber for believers, a vesper song to sing in it, and a guard to keep the door.

Verse 8.—The Christian's good-night.

Verses 2 to 8.—The means which a believer should use to win the ungodly to Christ. (1.) Expostulation, verse 2. (2.) Instruction, verse 3. (3.) Exhortation, verses 4, 5. (4.) Testimony to the blessedness of true religion, as in verses 6, 7. (5.) Exemplification of that testimony by the peace of faith, verse 8.