

PSALM V.

TITLE.—"To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth, a Psalm of David." *The Hebrew word Nehiloth is taken from another word, signifying "to perforate," "to bore through," whence it comes to mean a pipe or a flute; so that this song was probably intended to be sung with an accompaniment of wind instruments, such as the horn, the trumpet, flute, or cornet. However, it is proper to remark that we are not sure of the interpretation of these ancient titles, for the Septuagint translates it, "For him who shall obtain inheritance," and Aben Ezra thinks it denotes some old and well-known melody to which this Psalm was to be played. The best scholars confess that great darkness hangs over the precise interpretation of the titles; nor is this much to be regretted, for it furnishes an internal evidence of the great antiquity of the Book. Throughout the first, second, third, and fourth Psalms, you will have noticed that the subject is a contrast between the position, the character, and the prospects of the righteous and of the wicked. In this Psalm you will note the same. The Psalmist carries out a contrast between himself made righteous by God's grace, and the wicked who opposed him. To the devout mind there is here presented a precious view of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears.*

DIVISION.—The Psalm should be divided into two parts, from the first to the seventh verse, and then from the eight to the twelfth. In the first part of the Psalm David most vehemently beseeches the Lord to hearken to his prayer, and in the second part he retraces the same ground.

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

There are two sorts of prayers—those expressed in words, and the unuttered longings which abide as silent meditations. Words are not the essence but the garments of prayer. Moses at the Red Sea cried to God, though he said nothing. Yet the use of language may prevent distraction of mind, may assist the powers of the soul, and may excite devotion. David, we observe, uses both modes of prayer, and craves for the one a hearing, and for the other a *consideration*. What an expressive word! "*Consider my meditation.*" If I have asked that which is right, give it to me; if I have omitted to ask that which I most needed, fill up the vacancy in my prayer. "*Consider my meditation.*" Let thy holy soul *consider* it as presented through my all-glorious Mediator: then regard thou it in thy wisdom, weigh it in the scales, judge thou of my sincerity, and of the true state of my necessities, and answer me in due time for thy mercy's sake! There may be prevailing intercession where there are no words; and alas! there may be words where there is no true supplication. Let us cultivate the *spirit* of prayer which is even better than the *habit* of prayer. There may be seeming prayer where there is little devotion. We should begin to pray before we kneel down, and we should not cease when we rise up.

2 Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

"*The voice of my cry.*" In another Psalm we find the expression, "The voice of my weeping." Weeping has a voice—a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God: and *crying* hath a voice—a soul-moving eloquence; coming from *our* heart it reaches *God's* heart. Ah! my brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a *cry*: but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he hears a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magic influence which his heart cannot resist. "*My King and my God.*" Observe carefully these little pronouns, "*my* King, and *my* God." They are the pith and marrow of the plea. Here is a grand argument why God should answer prayer—because he is *our* King and *our* God. We are not aliens to him: he is the King of our

country. Kings are expected to hear the appeals of their own people. We are not strangers to him; we are his worshippers, and he is our God: ours by covenant, by promise, by oath, by blood.

"For unto thee will I pray." Here David expresses his declaration that he will seek to God, and to God alone. God is to be the only object of worship: the only resource of our soul in times of need. Leave broken cisterns to the goddess, and let the godly drink from the Divine fountain alone. "Unto thee will I pray." He makes a resolution, that as long as he lived he would pray. He would never cease to supplicate, even though the answer should not come.

3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

Observe, this is not so much a prayer as a resolution, "'My voice shalt thou hear,' I will not be dumb, I will not be silent, I will not withhold my speech, I will cry to thee, for the fire that dwells within compels me to pray." We can sooner die than live without prayer. None of God's children are possessed with a dumb devil.

"In the morning." This is the fittest time for intercourse with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. Let us give to God the mornings of our days and the morning of our lives. Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star.

If we merely read our English version, and want an explanation of these two sentences, we find it in the figure of an archer, "I will direct my prayer unto thee," I will put my prayer upon the bow, I will direct it towards heaven, and then when I have shot up my arrow, I will look up to see where it has gone. But the Hebrew has a still fuller meaning than this—"I will direct my prayer." It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: "I will arrange my prayer before thee;" I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. I will arrange my prayer; or, as old Master Trapp has it, "I will marshal up my prayers," I will put them in order, call up all my powers, and bid them stand in their proper places, that I may pray with all my might, and pray acceptably.

"And will look up," or, as the Hebrew might better be translated, "'I will look out,' I will look out for the answer; after I have prayed, I will expect that the blessing shall come." It is a word that is used in another place where we read of those who watched for the morning. So will I watch for thine answer, O my Lord! I will spread out my prayer like the victim on the altar, and I will look up, and expect to receive the answer by fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Two questions are suggested by the last part of this verse. Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility. We are live men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the end of prayer? We should be careful to keep the stream of meditation always running; for this is the water to drive the mill of prayer. It is idle to pull up the flood-gates of a dry brook, and then hope to see the wheel revolve. Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is hawking with a blind falcon. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, but he works by means. God made man, but he used the dust of the earth as a material: the Holy Ghost is the author of prayer, but he employs the thoughts of a fervent soul as the gold with which to fashion the vessel. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well-kindled fire.

But, furthermore, do we not forget to watch the result of our supplications? We are like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. We sow the seed, and are too idle to seek a harvest. How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.

4 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness : neither shall evil dwell with thee.

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight : thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

And now the Psalmist having thus expressed his resolution to pray, you hear him putting up his prayer. He is pleading against his cruel and wicked enemies. He uses a most mighty argument. He begs of God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God himself. "*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness : neither shall evil dwell with thee.*" "When I pray against my tempters," says David, "I pray against the very things which thou thyself abhorrest." *Thou* hatest evil : Lord, I beseech thee, deliver *me* from it !

Let us learn here the solemn truth of the hatred which a righteous God must bear towards sin. *He has no pleasure in wickedness*, however wittily, grandly, and proudly it may array itself. Its glitter has no charm for him. Men may bow before the successful villainy, and forget the wickedness of the battle in the gaudiness of the triumph, but the Lord of Holiness is not such-an-one as we are. "*Neither shall evil dwell with thee.*" He will not afford it the meanest shelter. Neither on earth nor in heaven shall evil share the mansion of God. Oh, how foolish are we if we attempt to entertain two guests so hostile to one another as Christ Jesus and the devil ! Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlour of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts. "*The foolish shall not stand in thy sight.*" Sinners are fools written large. A little sin is a great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin. Such sinful fools as these must be banished from the court of heaven. Earthly kings were wont to have fools in their trains, but the only wise God will have no fools in his palace above. "*Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*" It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing. O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God ! Observe, that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers, for "*thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing.*" All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction. "*The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.*" Bloody men shall be made drunk with their own blood, and they who began by deceiving others shall end with being deceived themselves. Our old proverb saith, "Bloody and deceitful men dig their own graves." The voice of the people is in this instance the voice of God. How forcible is the word *abhor* ! Does it not show us how powerful and deep-seated is the hatred of the Lord against the workers of iniquity ?

7 But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy : *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

With this verse the first part of the Psalm ends. The Psalmist has bent his knee in prayer : he has described before God, as an argument for his deliverance, the character and the fate of the wicked ; and now he contrasts this with the condition of the righteous. "*But as for me, I will come into thy house.*" I will not stand at a distance, I will come into thy sanctuary, just as a child comes into his father's house. But I will not come there by my own merits ; no, I have a multitude of sins, and therefore I will come *in the multitude of thy mercy*. I will approach thee with confidence because of thy immeasurable grace. God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable ; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy. "*And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,*"—towards the temple of thy holiness. The temple was not built on earth at that time ; it was but a tabernacle ; but David was wont to turn his eyes spiritually to that temple of God's holiness where between the wings of the Cherubim Jehovah dwells in light ineffable. Daniel opened his window towards Jerusalem, but we open our hearts towards heaven.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies ; make thy way straight before my face.

Now we come to the second part, in which the Psalmist repeats his arguments, and goes over the same ground again.

"Lead me, O Lord," as a little child is led by its father, as a blind man is guided by his friend. It is safe and pleasant walking when God leads the way. "In thy righteousness," not in my righteousness, for that is imperfect, but in *thine*, for thou art righteousness itself. "Make thy way," not my way, "straight before my face." Brethren, when we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace ; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. Errors about duty may lead us into a sea of sins, before we know where we are.

9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part *is* very wickedness ; their throat *is* an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue.

This description of depraved man has been copied by the Apostle Paul, and, together with some other quotations, he has placed it in the second chapter of Romans, as being an accurate description of the whole human race, not of David's enemies only, but of all men by nature. Note that remarkable figure, "*Their throat is an open sepulchre,*" a *sepulchre* full of loathsomeness, of miasma, of pestilence and death. But, worse than that, it is an *open* sepulchre, with all its evil gases issuing forth, to spread death and destruction all around. So, with the throat of the wicked, it would be a great mercy if it could always be closed. If we could seal in continual silence the mouth of the wicked it would be like a sepulchre shut up, and would not produce much mischief. But "their throat is an *open* sepulchre," consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales, and comes forth. How dangerous is an open sepulchre ; men in their journeys might easily stumble therein, and find themselves among the dead. Ah ! take heed of the wicked man, for there is nothing that he will not say to ruin you ; he will long to destroy your character, and bury you in the hideous sepulchre of his own wicked throat. One sweet thought here, however. At the resurrection there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but characters. This should be a great comfort to a man who has been abused and slandered. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." The world may think you vile, and bury your character ; but if you have been upright, in the day when the graves shall give up their dead, this open sepulchre of the sinner's throat shall be compelled to give up your heavenly character, and you shall come forth and be honoured in the sight of men. "*They flatter with their tongue.*" Or, as we might read it, "They have an oily tongue, a smooth tongue." A smooth tongue is a great evil ; many have been bewitched by it. There be many human ant-eaters that with their long tongues covered with oily words entice and entrap the unwary and make their gain thereby. When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth in its blood.

10 Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee.

"Against thee : " not against *me*. If they were *my* enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive *thine*. We are to forgive *our* enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive. These expressions have often been noticed by men of over refinement as being harsh, and grating on the ear. "Oh ! " say they, "they are vindictive and revengeful." Let us remember that they might be translated as prophecies, not as wishes ; but we do not care to avail ourselves of this method of escape. We have never heard of a reader of the Bible who, after perusing these passages, was made revengeful by reading them, and it is but fair to test the nature of a writing by its effects. When we hear a judge condemning a murderer, however severe his sentence, we do not feel that we should be justified in condemning others for any private injury done to us. The Psalmist here speaks as a judge, *ex officio* ; he speaks as God's mouth, and in condemning the wicked he gives us no excuse whatever for uttering anything in the way of malediction upon those who have caused us personal offence. The most shameful

way of cursing another is by pretending to bless him. We were all somewhat amused by noticing the toothless malice of that wretched old priest of Rome when he foolishly cursed the Emperor of France with his blessing. He was blessing him in form and cursing him in reality. Now, in direct contrast we put this healthy commination of David, which is intended to be a blessing by warning the sinner of the impending curse. O impenitent man, be it known unto thee that all thy godly friends will give their solemn assent to the awful sentence of the Lord, which he shall pronounce upon thee in the day of doom! Our verdict shall applaud the condemning curse which the Judge of all the earth shall thunder against the godless.

In the following verse we once more find the contrast which has marked the preceding Psalms.

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Joy is the privilege of the believer. When sinners are destroyed our rejoicing shall be full. They laugh first and weep ever after; we weep now, but shall rejoice eternally. When they howl we shall *shout*, and as they must groan for ever, so shall we *ever shout* for joy. This holy bliss of ours has a firm foundation, for O Lord, we are *joyful in thee*. The eternal God is the well-spring of our bliss. We love God, and therefore we delight in him. Our heart is at ease in our God. We fare sumptuously every day because we feed on him. We have music in the house, music in the heart, and music in heaven, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation.

12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

Jehovah has ordained his people the heirs of blessedness, and nothing shall rob them of their inheritance. With all the fulness of his power he will bless them, and all his attributes shall unite to satiate them with divine contentment. Nor is this merely for the present, but the blessing reaches into the long and unknown future. "*Thou Lord, wilt bless the righteous.*" This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness.

As for the defence which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David, "*With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*" According to Ainsworth there is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defence. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.*" It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid, and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God, so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, nor indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the mind as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair; his prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer; and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly, and constantly, and eagerly urges his petition, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope. *Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verses 1, 2.—Observe the order and force of the words, "*my cry,*" "*the voice of my prayer;*" and also, "*give ear,*" "*consider,*" "*hearken.*" These expressions all evince the urgency and energy of David's feelings and petitions. First, we

have, "give ear;" that is, hear me. But it is of little service for the words to be heard, unless the "cry," or the roaring, or the meditation, be considered. As if he had said, in a common way of expression, I speak with deep anxiety and concern, but with a failing utterance; and I cannot express myself, nor make myself understood as I wish. Do thou, therefore, understand from my feelings more than I am able to express in words. And, therefore, I add my "cry;" that what I cannot express in words for thee to hear, I may by my "cry" signify to thine understanding. And when thou hast understood me, then, O Lord "Hearken unto the voice of my prayer," and despise not what thou hast thus heard and understood. We are not, however, to understand that hearing, understanding, and hearkening, are all different acts in God, in the same way as they are in us; but that our feelings towards God are to be thus varied and increased; that is, that we are first to desire to be heard, and then, that our prayers which are heard may be understood; and then, that being understood, they may be hearkened unto, that is, not disregarded.—Martin Luther.

Verse 1.—"Meditation" fits the soul for supplication; meditation fills the soul with good liquor, and then prayer broaches it, and sets it a-running. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue, "Lord, make me to know mine end." Psalm xxxix. 3, 4. Nay, to assure us that meditation was the mother which bred and brought forth prayer, he calls the child by its parent's name, "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation." Meditation is like the charging of a piece, and prayer the discharging of it. "Isaac went into the field to meditate." Genesis xxiv. 63. The Septuagint, the Geneva translation, and Tremellius, in his marginal notes on it, read it to "pray;" and the Hebrew word מָדַבַּר used there signifieth both to pray and meditate; whereby we may learn they are very near akin; like twins, they be in the same womb, in the same word. Meditation is the best beginning of prayer, and prayer is the best conclusion of meditation. When the Christian, like Daniel, hath first opened the windows of his soul by contemplation, then he may kneel down to prayer.—George Swinnoek.

Verse 3.—"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord."

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun:
Give him thy first thoughts, then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours
'Twi'xt heaven and us; the manna was not good
After sun-rising, for day sullies flowers.
Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens when the world's is shut.

Walk with thy fellow creatures; note the hush
And whisperings amongst them. Not a spring
Or leaf but hath his morning hymn; each bush
And oak doth know I AM—canst thou not sing?
O leave thy cares and follies! Go this way,
And thou art sure to prosper all the day.

Henry Vaughan, 1621—1695.

Verse 3.—"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning." "In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee," said Heman. That is the fittest time for devotion, you being then fresh in your spirits, and freest from distractions. Which opportunity for holy duties may fitly be called the wings of the morning.—Edward Reyner, 1658.

Verse 3.—"In the morning." "In the days of our fathers," says Bishop Burnet, "when a person came early to the door of his neighbour, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom—'My master is at prayer,' as it now is to say, 'My master is not up.'"

Verse 3.—"In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up," or I will marshal my prayer, I will bring up petition after petition, pleading after pleading, even till I become like Jacob, a prince with God, till I have won the field and got the day. Thus the word is applied by a metaphor both to disputations

with men and supplications to God. Further, we may take the meaning plainly without any strain of rhetoric, *Set thy words in order before me.* Method is good in everything, either an express or covert method. Sometimes it is the best of art to cover it; in speaking there is a special use of method, for though, as one said very well (speaking of those who are more curious about method than serious about matter), "*Method never converted any man;*" yet method and the ordering of words is very useful. Our speeches should not be heaps of words, but words bound up; not a throng of words, but words set in array, or, as it were, in rank and file.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"*I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*" In the words you may observe two things: first, David's posture in prayer; secondly, his practice after prayer. First, his posture in prayer, "*I will direct my prayer unto thee.*" Secondly, his practice after prayer, "*And I will look up.*" The prophet in these words, makes use of two military words. First, he would not only pray, but marshal up his prayers, he would put them in battle array; so much the Hebrew word נָשָׂא imports. Secondly, when he had done this, then he would be as a spy upon his watch-tower, to see whether he prevailed, whether he got the day or no; and so much the Hebrew word נָשָׂא imports. When David had set his prayers, his petitions, in rank and file, in good array, then he was resolved he would look abroad, he would look about him to see at what door God would send in an answer of prayer. He is either a fool or a madman, he is either very weak or very wicked, that prays and prays, but never looks after his prayers; that shoots many an arrow towards heaven, but never minds where his arrows alight.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3.—David would direct his prayer to God and look up; not down to the world, down to corruption, but up to God what he would speak. Psalm lxxxv. 8. "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*" Let the resolution of the prophet be thine, "*I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.*" Micah vii. 7.—*William Greenhill, 1650.*

Verse 3.—"*I will direct my prayer to thee, and will look up,*" that is, I will trade, I will send out my spiritual commodities, and expect a gainful return; I will make my prayers, and not give them for lost, but look up for an answer. God will bring man home by a way contrary to that by which he wandered from him. Man fell from God by distrust, by having God in suspicion; God will bring him back by trust, by having good thoughts of him. Oh, how richly laden might the vessel which thou sendest out come home, wouldst thou but long and look for its return! —*George Swinnock.*

Verse 3.—Faith hath a supporting art after prayer: it supports the soul to expect a gracious answer: "*I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,*" or I will look; for what, but for a return? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying; but faith fills the soul with expectation. As a merchant, when he casts up his estate, he counts what he hath sent beyond sea, as well as what he hath in hand; so doth faith reckon upon what he hath sent to heaven in prayer and not received, as well as those mercies which he hath received, and are in hand at present. Now this expectation which faith raiseth in the soul after prayer, appears in the power that it hath to quiet and compose the soul in the interim between the sending forth, as I may say, the ship of prayer, and its return home with its rich lading it goes for, and it is more or less, according as faith's strength is. Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria.* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. . . . For want of looking up many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? And if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence. What is this, but to take his name in vain? O Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise. . . . Mordecai, no doubt, had put up many prayers for Esther, and therefore he waits at the king's gate, looking what answer God would in his providence give thereunto. Do thou likewise.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—"*Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.*" As a man that cutteth with a dull knife is the cause of cutting, but not of the ill-cutting

and hacking of the knife—the knife is the cause of that ; or if a man strike upon an instrument that is out of tune, he is the cause of the sound, but not of the jarring sound—that is the fault of the untuned strings ; or, as a man riding upon a lame horse, stirs him—the man is the cause of the motion, but the horse himself of the halting motion : thus God is the author of every action, but not of the evil of that action—that is from man. He that makes instruments and tools of iron or other metal, he maketh not the rust and canker which corrupteth them, that is from another cause ; nor doth that heavenly workman, God Almighty, bring in sin and iniquity ; nor can he be justly blamed if his creatures do soil and besmear themselves with the foulness of sin, for he made them good.—*Spencer's Things New and Old.*

Verses 4—6.—Here the Lord's alienation from the wicked is set forth gradually, and seems to rise by six steps. First, *he hath no pleasure in them* ; secondly, *they shall not dwell with them* ; thirdly, he casteth them forth, *they shall not stand in his sight* ; fourthly, his heart turns from them, *thou hatest all the workers of iniquity* ; fifthly, his hand is turned upon them, *thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing* ; sixthly, his spirit riseth against them, and is alienated from them, *the Lord will abhor the bloody man*. This estrangement is indeed a *strange* (yet a certain) punishment to "the workers of iniquity." These words, "the workers of iniquity," may be considered two ways. First, as intending (not all degrees of sinners, or sinners of every degree, but) the highest degree of sinners, great, and gross sinners, resolved and wilful sinners. Such as sin industriously, and, as it were, artificially, with skill and care to get themselves a name, as if they had an ambition to be accounted workmen that need not be ashamed in doing that whereof all ought to be ashamed ; these, in strictness of Scripture sense, are "workers of iniquity." Hence note, *notorious sinners made sin their business, or their trade*. Though every sin be a work of iniquity, yet only some sinners are "workers of iniquity ;" and they who are called so, make it their calling to sin. We read of some *who love and make a lie*. Rev. xxii. 15. A lie may be told by those who neither love nor make it ; but there are lie-makers, and they, sure enough, are lovers of a lie. Such craftsmen in sinning are also described in Psalm lviii. 2.—"Yea, in heart ye work wickedness ; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth." The palmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there ; *the heart is a shop within, an underground shop* ; there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—What an astonishing thing is sin, which maketh the God of love and Father of mercies an enemy to his creatures, and which could only be purged by the blood of the Son of God ! Though all must believe this who believe the Bible, yet the exceeding sinfulness of sin is but weakly apprehended by those who have the deepest sense of it, and will never be fully known in this world.—*Thomas Adam's Private Thoughts, 1701—1784.*

Verse 5 (last clause).—"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." For what God thinks of sin, see Deut. vii. 22 ; Prov. vi. 16 ; Rev. ii. 6, 15 ; where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceed all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it ; nay, not only the work, but worker also of iniquity becomes the object of his hatred. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 5 (last clause).—"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." If God's hatred be against the workers of iniquity, how great is it against iniquity itself ! If a man hate a poisonous creature, he hates poison much more. The strength of God's hatred is against sin, and so should we hate sin, and hate it with strength ; it is an abomination unto God, let it be so unto us. Prov. vi. 16—19, "These six things doth the Lord hate ; yea, seven are an abomination unto him ; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 5 (last clause).—Those whom the Lord hates must perish. But he hates impenitent sinners, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Now, who are so properly workers of iniquity as those who are so eager at it that they will not leave this work, though they be in danger to perish for it ? Christ puts it out of doubt. The workers of iniquity must perish. Luke xiii. 27. Those whom the Lord will tear in his wrath must perish with a witness ; but those whom he hates, he tears, &c.

Job xvi. 8. What more due to such impenitent sinners than hatred! What more proper than wrath, since they treasure up wrath? Rom. ii. Will he entertain those in the bosom of love whom his soul hates? No; destruction is their portion. Prov. xxi. 15. If all the curses of the law, all the threatenings of the gospel, all judgments in earth or in hell, will be the ruin of him, he must perish. If the Lord's arm be strong enough to wound him dead, he must die. Psalm lxxviii. 21. Avoid all that Christ hates. If you love, approve, entertain that which is hateful to Christ, how can he love you? What is that which Christ hates? The psalmist (Psalm xlv. 7) tells us, making it one of Christ's attributes, to hate wickedness. . . . As Christ hates iniquity, so the "*workers of iniquity.*" You must not love them, so as to be intimate with them, delight in the company of evil doers, openly profane, scornors of godliness, obstructors of the power of it. 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. If you love so near relations to wicked men, Christ will have no relation to you. If you would have communion with Christ in sweet acts of love, you must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor those that act them.—*David Clarkson, B.D., 1621—1686.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing,*" whether in jest or earnest. Those that lie in jest will (without repentance) go to hell in earnest.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing,*" etc. In the same field wherein Absalom raised battle against his father, stood the oak that was his gibbet. The mule whereon he rode was his hangman, for the mule carried him to the tree, and the hair wherein he gloried served for a rope to hang. Little know the wicked how everything which now they have, shall be a snare to trap them when God begins to punish them.—*William Cowper, 1612.*

Verse 7.—"*In thy fear will I worship.*" As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so a holy fear of miscarrying, in so solemn a duty, would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand. As the sculpture is on the seal, so will the print on the wax be; if the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 7.—David saith, "*In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*" The temple did shadow forth the body of our Lord Christ, the Mediator, in whom only our prayers and services are accepted with the Father which Solomon respected in looking towards the temple.—*Thomas Manton, D.D., 1620—1677.*

Verse 7.—"*But as for me,*" etc. A blessed verse this! a blessed saying! The words and the sense itself, carry with them a powerful contrast. For there are two things with which this life is exercised, HOPE and FEAR, which are, as it were, those two springs of Judges i. 15, the one from above, the other from beneath. *Fear* comes from beholding the threats and fearful judgments of God; as being a God in whose sight no one is clean, every one is a sinner, every one is damnable. But *hope* comes from beholding the promises, and the all-sweet mercies of God; as it is written (Psalm xxv. 6), "Remember, O Lord, thy lovingkindnesses, and thy tender mercies which have been ever of old." Between these two, as between the upper and nether millstone, we must always be ground and kept, that we never turn either to the right hand or to the left. For this turning is the state peculiar to hypocrites, who are exercised with the two contrary things, security and presumption. *Martin Luther.*

Verse 9.—If the whole soul be infected with such a desperate disease, what a great and difficult work is it to regenerate, to restore men again to spiritual life and vigour, when every part of them is seized by such a mortal distemper! How great a cure doth the Spirit of God effect in restoring a soul by sanctifying it! To heal but the lungs or the liver, if corrupted, is counted a great cure, though performed but upon one part of thee; but all thy inward parts are very rottenness. "*For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.*" How great a cure is it then to heal thee! Such as is only in the skill and power of God to do.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—"*Their throat is an open sepulchre.*" This figure graphically portrays the filthy conversation of the wicked. Nothing can be more abominable to the senses than an open sepulchre, when a dead body beginning to putrefy steams forth

its tainted exhalations. What proceeds out of their mouth is infected and putrid ; and as the exhalation from a sepulchre proves the corruption within, so it is with the corrupt conversation of sinners.—*Robert Haldane's "Expositions of the Epistle to the Romans,"* 1835.

Verse 9.—“*Their throat is an open sepulchre.*” This doth admonish us, (1) that the speeches of natural unregenerate men are unsavoury, rotten, and hurtful to others ; for, as a sepulchre doth send out noisome savours and filthy smells, so evil men do utter rotten and filthy words. (2) As a sepulchre doth consume and devour bodies cast into it, so wicked men do with their cruel words destroy others ; they are like a gulf to destroy others. (3) As a sepulchre, having devoured many corpses, is still ready to consume more, being never satisfied, so wicked men, having overthrown many with their words, do proceed in their outrage, seeking whom they may devour.—*Thomas Wilson,* 1653.

Verse 9.—“*Their inward part,*” etc. Their hearts are storehouses for the devil.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—All those portions where we find apparently prayers that breathe revenge, are never to be thought of as anything else than the *breathed assent of righteous souls* to the justice of their God, who taketh vengeance on sin. When taken as the words of Christ himself, they are no other than an echo of the Intercessor's acquiescence at last in the sentence on the barren fig-tree. It is as if he cried aloud, “*Hew it down now, I will intercede no longer, the doom is righteous, destroy them, O God ; cast them out in (or, for) the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee.*” And in the same moment he may be supposed to invite his saints to sympathise in his decision ; just as in Rev. xviii. 20, “*Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets.*” In like manner, when one of Christ's members, in entire sympathy with his Head, views the barren fig-tree from the same point of observation, and sees the glory of God concerned in inflicting the blow, he too can cry, “*Let the axe smite !*” Had Abraham stood beside the angel who destroyed Sodom, and seen how Jehovah's name required the ruin of these impenitent rebels, he would have cried out, “*Let the shower descend ; let the fire and brimstone come down !*” not in any spirit of revenge ; not from want of tender love to souls, but from intense earnestness of concern for the glory of his God. We consider this explanation to be the real key that opens all the difficult passages in this book, where curses seem to be called for on the head of the ungodly. They are no more than a carrying out of Deut. xxvii. 15—26, “*Let all the people say, Amen,*” and an entering into the Lord's holy abhorrence of sin, and delight in acts of justice expressed in the “*Amen hallelujah,*” of Rev. xix. 3.—*Andrew A. Bonar,* 1859.

Verse 10.—(Or *imprecatory passages generally*). Lord, when in my daily service I read David's Psalms, give me to alter the accent of my soul according to their several subjects. In such Psalms wherein he confesseth his sins, or requesteth thy pardon, or praiseth for former, or prayeth for future favours, in all these give me to raise my soul to as high a pitch as may be. But when I come to such Psalms wherein he curseth his enemies, O there let me bring my soul down to a lower note. For those words were made only to fit David's mouth. I have the like breath, but not the same spirit to pronounce them. Nor let me flatter myself, that it is lawful for me, with David, to curse thine enemies, lest my deceitful heart entitle mine enemies to be thine, and so what was religion in David, prove malice in me, whilst I act revenge under the pretence of piety.—*Thomas Fuller, D.D.,* 1608—1661.

Verse 12.—When the strong man armed comes against us, when he darts his fiery darts, what can hurt us, if God compass us about with *his lovingkindness as with a shield* ? He can disarm the tempter and restrain his malice, and tread him under our feet. If God be not with us, if he do not give us sufficient grace, so subtle, so powerful, so politic an enemy, will be too hard for us. How surely are we foiled, and get the worse, when we pretend to grapple with him in our own strength ! How many falls, and how many bruises by those falls have we got, by relying too much on our own skill ? How often have we had the help of God when we have humbly asked it ! And how sure are we to get the victory, if *Christ pray for us that we do not fail* ! Luke xxii. 31. Where can we go for shelter but unto God our Maker ! When this lion of the forest does begin to roar, how will he terrify and vex us, till he that permits him for awhile to trouble us, be pleased to chain him up again !—*Timothy Rogers,* 1691.

Verse 12.—"As with a shield." Luther, when making his way into the presence of Cardinal Cajetan, who had summoned him to answer for his heretical opinions at Augsburg, was asked by one of the Cardinal's minions, where he should find a shelter, if his patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert him? "Under the shelter of heaven!" was the reply. The silenced minion turned round and went his way.

Verse 12.—"With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." The shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are: helmet, fitted for the head; plate designed for the breast; and so others, they have their several parts, which they are fastened to; but the shield is a piece that is intended for the defence of the whole body. It was used therefore to be made very large; for its broadness, called a gate or door, because so long and large, as in a manner to cover the whole body. And if the shield were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet being a movable piece of armour, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man: every part of the Christian by it is preserved. . . . The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but it is a defence to the soldier's armour also; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith, it is armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces.—*William Gurnall*.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—Prayer in its threefold form. "Words, meditation, cry." Showing how utterance is of no avail without heart, but that fervent longings and silent desires are accepted, even when unexpressed.

Verse 3.—The excellence of morning devotion.

Verse 3 (last two clauses).—1. Prayer directed. 2. Answers expected.

Verse 4.—God's hatred of sin an example to his people.

Verse 5.—"The foolish." Show why sinners are justly called fools.

Verse 7.—"Multitude of thy mercy." Dwell upon the varied grace and goodness of God.

Verse 7.—The devout resolution.

Verse 7.—I. Observe the singularity of the resolution. II. Mark the object of the resolution. It regards the service of God in the sanctuary. "I will come into thine house . . . in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple." III. The manner in which he would accomplish the resolution. (1) Impressed with a sense of the divine goodness: "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy." (2) Filled with holy veneration: "And in thy fear will I worship."—*William Jay*, 1842.

Verse 8.—God's guidance needed always, and especially when enemies are watching us.

Verse 10.—Viewed as a threatening. The sentence, "Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions," is specially fitted to be the groundwork of a very solemn discourse.

Verse 11.—I. The character of the righteous: *faith and love*. II. The privileges of the righteous. (1) *Joy*—great, pure, satisfying, triumphant (*shout*), constant (*ever*). (2) *Defence*—by power, providence, angels, grace, etc.

Verse 11.—Joy in the Lord both a duty and a privilege.

Verse 12 (first clause).—*The divine blessing upon the righteous*. It is ancient, effectual, constant, extensive, irreversible, surpassing, eternal, infinite.

Verse 12 (second clause).—A sense of divine favour a defence to the soul.