

## PSALM VI.

**TITLE.**—*This Psalm is commonly known as the first of THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS,\* and certainly its language will become the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once the sorrow (verses 3, 6, 7), the humiliation (verses 2 and 4), and the hatred of sin (verse 8), which are the unfailing marks of the contrite spirit when it turns to God. O Holy Spirit, beget in us the true repentance which needeth not to be repented of. The title of this Psalm is, "To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith, † A Psalm of David," that is, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, upon the eight, probably the octave. Some think it refers to the bass or tenor key, which would certainly be well adapted to this mournful ode. But we are not able to understand these old musical terms, and even the term "Selah," still remains untranslated. This, however, should be no difficulty in our way. We probably lose but very little by our ignorance, and it may serve to confirm our faith. It is a proof of the high antiquity of these Psalms that they contain words, the meaning of which is lost even to the best scholars of the Hebrew language. Surely these are but incidental (accidental I might almost say, if I did not believe them to be designed by God), proofs of their being, what they profess to be, the ancient writings of King David of olden times.*

**DIVISION.**—*You will observe that the Psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist's plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse. Then you have, from the eighth to the end, quite a different theme. The Psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key, and betakes himself to sublime strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God hath heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.*

### EXPOSITION.

**O** LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

Having read through the first division, in order to see it as a whole, we will now look at it verse by verse. "*O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.*" The Psalmist is very conscious that he deserves to be rebuked, and he feels, moreover, that the rebuke in some form or other must come upon him, if not for condemnation, yet for conviction and sanctification. "Corn is cleaned with wind, and the soul with chastenings." It were folly to pray against the golden hand which enriches us by its blows. He does not ask that the rebuke may be totally withheld, for he might thus lose a blessing in disguise; but, "*Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.*" If thou remindest me of my sin, it is good; but, oh, remind me not of it as one incensed against me, lest thy servant's heart should sink in despair. Thus saith Jeremiah, "*O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*" I know that I must be chastened, and though I shrink from the rod yet do I feel that it will be for my benefit; but, oh, my God, "*chasten me not in thy hot displeasure,*" lest the rod become a sword, and lest in smiting, thou shouldst also kill. So may we pray that the chastisements of our gracious God, if they may not

\* The other six are, xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxliii.

† 1 Chron. xv. 21.

be entirely removed, may at least be sweetened by the consciousness that they are "not in anger, but in his dear covenant love."

2, 3. "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak.*" Though I deserve destruction, yet let thy mercy pity my frailty. This is the right way to plead with God if we would prevail. Urge not your goodness or your greatness, but plead your sin and your littleness. Cry, "*I am weak,*" therefore O Lord, give me strength and crush me not. Send not forth the fury of thy tempest against so weak a vessel. Temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Be tender and pitiful to a poor withering flower, and break it not from its stem. Surely this is the plea that a sick man would urge to move the pity of his fellow if he were striving with him, "Deal gently with me, 'for I am weak.'" A sense of sin had so spoiled the Psalmist's pride, so taken away his vaunted strength, that he found himself weak to obey the law, weak through the sorrow that was in him, too weak, perhaps, to lay hold on the promise. "*I am weak.*" The original may be read, "I am one who droops," or withered like a blighted plant. Ah! beloved, we know what this means, for we, too, have seen our glory stained, and our beauty like a faded flower.

"*O Lord heal me; for my bones are vexed.*" Here he prays for healing, not merely the mitigation of the ills he endured, but their entire removal, and the curing of the wounds which had arisen therefrom. His bones were "*shaken,*" as the Hebrew has it. His terror had become so great that his very bones shook; not only did his flesh quiver, but the bones, the solid pillars of the house of manhood, were made to tremble. "My bones are shaken." Ah, when the soul has a sense of sin, it is enough to make the bones shake; it is enough to make a man's hair stand up on end to see the flames of hell beneath him, an angry God above him, and danger and doubt surrounding him. Well might he say, "My bones are shaken." Lest, however, we should imagine that it was merely bodily sickness—although bodily sickness might be the outward sign—the Psalmist goes on to say, "*My soul is also sore vexed.*" Soul-trouble is the very soul of trouble. It matters not that the bones shake if the soul be firm, but when the soul itself is also sore vexed this is agony indeed. "*But thou, O Lord, how long?*" This sentence ends abruptly, for words failed, and grief drowned the little comfort which dawned upon him. The Psalmist had still, however, some hope; but that hope was only in his God. He therefore cries, "O Lord, how long?" The coming of Christ into the soul in his priestly robes of grace is the grand hope of the penitent soul; and, indeed, in some form or other, Christ's appearance is, and ever has been, the hope of the saints.

Calvin's favourite exclamation was "*Domine usque quo*"—"O Lord, how long?" Nor could his sharpest pains, during a life of anguish, force from him any other word. Surely this is the cry of the saints under the altar, "O Lord, how long?" And this should be the cry of the saints waiting for the millennial glories, "Why are his chariots so long in coming; Lord, how long?" Those of us who have passed through conviction of sin knew what it was to count our minutes hours, and our hours years, while mercy delayed its coming. We watched for the dawn of grace, as they that watch for the morning. Earnestly did our anxious spirits ask, "O Lord, how long?"

4 "*Return, O Lord; deliver my soul.*" As God's absence was the main cause of his misery, so his return would be enough to deliver him from his trouble. "*Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.*" He knows where to look, and what arm to lay hold upon. He does not lay hold on God's left hand of justice, but on his right hand of mercy. He knew his iniquity too well to think of merit, or appeal to anything but the grace of God.

"*For thy mercies' sake.*" What a plea that is! How prevalent it is with God! If we turn to justice, what plea can we urge? but if we turn to mercy we may still cry, notwithstanding the greatness of our guilt, "Save me for thy mercies' sake."

Observe how frequently David here pleads the name of Jehovah, which is always intended where the word LORD is given in capitals. Five times in four verses we here meet with it. Is not this a proof that the glorious name is full of consolation to the tempted saint? Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Self-existence, are all in the name Jehovah, and all are full of comfort.

5. And now David was in great fear of death—death temporal, and perhaps death eternal. Read the passage as you will, the following verse is full of power. "*For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?*" Churchyards are silent places; the vaults of the sepulchre echo not with songs. Damp earth covers dumb mouths. "O Lord?" said he, "if thou wilt spare me I

will praise thee. If I die, then must my mortal praise at least be suspended; and if I perish in hell, then thou wilt never have any thanksgiving from me. Songs of gratitude cannot rise from the flaming pit of hell. True, thou wilt doubtless be glorified, even in my eternal condemnation, but then, O Lord, I cannot glorify thee voluntarily; and among the sons of men, there will be one heart the less to bless thee." Ah! poor trembling sinners, may the Lord help you to use this forcible argument. It is for God's glory that a sinner should be saved. When we seek pardon, we are not asking God to do that which will stain his banner, or put a blot on his escutcheon. He delighteth in mercy. It is his peculiar, darling attribute. Mercy honours God. Do not we ourselves say, "Mercy blesseth him that gives, and him that takes?" And surely, in some diviner sense, this is true of God, who, when he gives mercy, glorifies himself.

6, 7.—The Psalmist gives a fearful description of his long agony: "*I am weary with my groaning.*" He had groaned till his throat was hoarse; he had cried for mercy till prayer became a labour. God's people may groan, but they may not grumble. Yea, they must groan, being burdened, or they will never shout in the day of deliverance. The next sentence, we think, is not accurately translated. It should be, "*I shall make my bed to swim every night,*" (when nature needs rest, and when I am most alone with my God). That is to say, my grief is fearful even now, but if God do not soon save me, it will not stay of itself, but will increase, until my tears will be so many, that my bed itself shall swim. A description rather of what he feared would be, than of what had actually taken place. May not our forebodings of future woe become arguments which faith may urge when seeking present mercy? "*I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*" As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so says David, my eye is grown red and feeble through weeping. Conviction sometimes has such an effect upon the body, that even the outward organs are made to suffer. May not this explain some of the convulsions and hysterical attacks which have been experienced under convictions in the revivals in Ireland? Is it surprising that some should be smitten to the earth, and begin to cry aloud; when we find that David himself made his bed to swim, and grew old while he was under the heavy hand of God? Ah! brethren, it is no light matter to feel one's self a sinner, condemned at the bar of God. The language of this Psalm is not strained and forced, but perfectly natural to one in so sad a plight.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

8. Hitherto, all has been mournful and disconsolate, but now—

"Your harps, ye trembling saints,  
Down from the willows take."

Ye must have your times of weeping, but let them be short. Get ye up, get ye up, from your dunghills! Cast aside your sackcloth and ashes! Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

David has found peace, and rising from his knees he begins to sweep his house of the wicked. "*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*" The best remedy for us against an evil man is a long space between us both. "Get ye gone; I can have no fellowship with you." Repentance is a practical thing. It is not enough to bemoan the desecration of the temple of the heart, we must scourge out the buyers and sellers, and overturn the tables of the money changers. A pardoned sinner will hate the sins which cost the Saviour his blood. Grace and sin are quarrelsome neighbours, and one or the other must go to the wall.

"For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." What a fine Hebraism, and what grand poetry it is in English! "He hath heard the voice of my weeping." Is there a voice in weeping? Does weeping speak? In what language doth it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which is known and understood in all the earth, and even in heaven above. When a man weeps, whether he be a Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, it has the same meaning in it. Weeping is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an unstammering orator, needing



no interpreter, but understood of all. Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail ! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for thou hearest the voice of my weeping.

9. "*The Lord hath heard my supplication.*" The Holy Spirit had wrought into the Psalmist's mind the confidence that his prayer was heard. This is frequently the privilege of the saints. Praying the prayer of faith, they are often infallibly assured that they have prevailed with God. We read of Luther that, having on one occasion wrestled hard with God in prayer, he came leaping out of his closet crying, "*Vicimus, vicimus;*" that is, "We have conquered, we have prevailed with God." Assured confidence is no idle dream, for when the Holy Ghost bestows it upon us, we know its reality, and could not doubt it, even though all men should deride our boldness. "*The Lord will receive my prayer.*" Here is past experience used for future encouragement. *He hath, he will.* Note this, O believer, and imitate its reasoning.

10. "*Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed.*" This is rather a prophecy than an imprecation, it may be read in the future. "All my enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed." *They shall return and be ashamed instantaneously*,—in a moment;—their doom shall come upon them suddenly. Death's day is doom's day, and both are sure and may be sudden. The Romans were wont to say, "The feet of the avenging Deity are shod with wool." With noiseless footsteps vengeance nears its victim, and sudden and overwhelming shall be its destroying stroke. If this were an imprecation, we must remember that the language of the old dispensation is not that of the new. We pray *for* our enemies, not *against* them. God have mercy on them, and bring them into the right way.

Thus the Psalm, like those which precede it, shows the different estates of the godly and the wicked. O Lord, let us be numbered *with* thy people, both now and for ever !

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—David was a man that was often exercised with sickness and troubles from enemies, and in all the instances almost that we meet with in the Psalms of these his afflictions, we may observe the outward occasions of trouble brought him under the suspicion of God's wrath and his own iniquity ; so that he was seldom sick, or persecuted, but this called on the disquiet of conscience, and brought his sin to remembrance ; as in this Psalm, which was made on the occasion of his sickness, as appears from verse eight, wherein he expresseth the vexation of his soul under the apprehension of God's anger ; all his other griefs running into this channel, as little brooks, losing themselves in a great river, change their name and nature. He that was at first only concerned for his sickness, is now wholly concerned with sorrow and smart under the fear and hazard of his soul's condition ; the like we may see in Psalm xxxviii, and many places more.—*Richard Gilpin, 1677.*

*Verse 1.*—"Rebuke me not." God hath two means by which he reduceth his children to obedience ; his word, by which he rebukes them ; and his rod, by which he chastiseth them. The word precedes, admonishing them by his servants whom he hath sent in all ages to call sinners to repentance ; of the which David himself saith, "Let the righteous rebuke me ;" and as a father doth first rebuke his disordered child, so doth the Lord speak to them. But when men neglect the warnings of his word, then God as a good father, takes up the rod and beats them. Our Saviour wakened the three disciples in the garden three times, but seeing that served not, he told them that Judas and his band were coming to awaken them whom his own voice could not waken.—*A. Symson, 1638.*

*Verse 1.*—"Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger," etc. He does not altogether refuse punishment, for that would be unreasonable ; and to be without it, he judged would be more hurtful than beneficial to him ; but what he is afraid of is the wrath

of God, which threatens sinners with ruin and perdition. To anger and indignation David tacitly opposes fatherly and gentle chastisement, and this last he was willing to bear.—*John Calvin*, 1509—1564.

Verse 1.—“*O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.*”

The anger of the Lord? Oh, dreadful thought!  
How can a creature frail as man endure  
The tempest of his wrath? Ah, whither flee  
To 'scape the punishment he well deserves?  
Flee to the cross! the great atonement there  
Will shield the sinner, if he supplicate  
For pardon with repentance true and deep,  
And faith that questions not. Then will the frown  
Of anger pass off the face of God,  
Like a black tempest cloud that hides the sun.

*Anon.*

Verse 1.—“*Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,*” etc.; that is, do not lay upon me that thou hast threatened in thy law; where anger is not put for the decree, nor the execution, but for the denouncing. So (Matt. iii. 11, and so Hos. xi. 9), “I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,” that is, I will not execute my wrath as I have declared it. Again, it is said, he executes punishment on the wicked; he declares it not only, but executeth it, so anger is put for the execution of anger.—*Richard Stock*, 1641.

Verse 1.—“*Neither chasten me in thine hot displeasure.*”

O keep up life and peace within,  
If I must feel thy chastening rod!  
Yet kill not me, but kill my sin,  
And let me know thou art my God.  
O give my soul some sweet foretaste  
Of that which I shall shortly see!  
Let faith and love cry to the last,  
“Come, Lord, I trust myself with thee!”

*Richard Baxter*, 1615—1691.

Verse 2.—“*Have mercy upon me, O Lord.*” To fly and escape the anger of God, David sees no means in heaven or in earth, and therefore retires himself to God, even to him who wounded him that he might heal him. He flies not with Adam to the bush, nor with Saul to the witch, nor with Jonah to Tarshish; but he appeals from an angry and just God to a merciful God, and from himself to himself. The woman who was condemned by King Philip, appealed from Philip being drunken to Philip being sober. But David appeals from one virtue, justice, to another, mercy. There may be appellation from the tribunal of man to the justice-seat of God; but when thou art indicted before God's justice-seat, whither or to whom wilt thou go but to himself and his mercy-seat, which is the highest and last place of appellation? “I have none in heaven but thee, nor in earth besides thee.” . . . David, under the name of *mercy*, includeth all things, according to that of Jacob to his brother Esau, “I have gotten mercy, and therefore I have gotten all things.” Desirest thou any thing at God's hands? Cry for *mercy*, out of which fountain all good things will spring to thee.—*Archibald Symson*.

Verse 2.—“*For I am weak.*” Behold, what rhetoric he useth to move God to cure him, “*I am weak,*” an argument taken from his weakness, which indeed were a weak argument to move any man to show his favour, but is a strong argument to prevail with God. If a diseased person would come to a physician, and only lament the heaviness of his sickness, he would say, God help thee; or an oppressed person come to a lawyer, and show him the estate of his action and ask his advice, that is a golden question; or to a merchant to crave raiment, he will either have present money or a surety; or a courtier favour, you must have your reward ready in your hand. But coming before God the most forcible argument that ye can use is your necessity, poverty, tears, misery, unworthiness, and confessing them to him, it shall be an open door to furnish you with all things that he hath. . . . The tears of our misery are forcible arrows to pierce the heart of our heavenly Father, to deliver us and pity our hard case. The beggars lay open their sores to the view of the world, that the more they may move men to pity them. So let us deplore our miseries to God, that he, with the pitiful Samaritan, at the sight of our wounds, may help us in due time.—*Archibald Symson*.

*Verse 2.*—"Heal me," etc. David comes not to take physic upon wantonness, but because the disease is violent, because the accidents are vehement; so vehement, so violent, as that it hath pierced *ad ossa*, and *ad animam*, "*My bones are vexed, and my soul is sore troubled*," therefore "*heal me*;" which is the reason upon which he grounds this second petition, "*Heal me, because my bones are vexed*," etc.—*John Donne*.

*Verse 2.*—"My bones are vexed." The Lord can make the strongest and most insensible part of man's body sensible of his wrath when he pleaseth to touch him, for here David's bones are vexed.—*David Dickson*.

*Verse 2.*—The term "*bones*" frequently occurs in the psalms, and if we examine we shall find it used in three different senses. (1.) It is sometimes applied literally to our blessed Lord's human body, to the body which hung upon the cross, as, "*They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones*." (2.) It has sometimes also a further reference to his mystical body the church. And then it denotes all the members of Christ's body that stand firm in the faith, that cannot be moved by persecutions, or temptations, however severe, as, "*All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?*" (3.) In some passages the term bones is applied to the soul, and not to the body, to the inner man of the individual Christian. Then it implies the strength and fortitude of the soul, the determined courage which faith in God gives to the righteous. This is the sense in which it is used in the second verse of Psalm vi., "*O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed*."—*Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom*; quoted by *F. H. Dunwell, B.A.*, in "*Parochial Lectures on the Psalms*," 1855.

*Verse 3.*—"My soul." Yokefellows in sin are yokefellows in pain; the soul is punished for informing, the body for performing, and as both the informer and performer, the cause and the instrument, so shall the stirrer up of sin and the executer of it be punished.—*John Donne*.

*Verse 3.*—"O Lord, how long?" Out of this we have three things to observe; first, that there is an appointed time which God hath measured for the crosses of all his children, before which time they shall not be delivered, and for which they must patiently attend, not thinking to prescribe time to God for their delivery, or limit the Holy One of Israel. The Israelites remained in Egypt till the complete number of four hundred and thirty years were accomplished. Joseph was three years and more in the prison till the appointed time of his delivery came. The Jews remained seventy years in Babylon. So that as the physician appointeth certain times to the patient, both wherein he must fast, and be dieted, and wherein he must take recreation, so God knoweth the convenient times both of our humiliation and exaltation. Next, see the impatiency of our nature in our miseries, our flesh still rebelling against the Spirit, which oftentimes forgetteth itself so far, that it will enter into reasoning with God, and quarrelling with him as we may read of Job, Jonas, etc., and here also of David. Thirdly, albeit the Lord delay his coming to relieve his saints, yet hath he great cause if we could ponder it; for when we were in the heat of our sins, many times he cried by the mouth of his prophets and servants, "*O fools, how long will you continue in your folly?*" And we would not hear; and therefore when we are in the heat of our pains, thinking long, yea, every day a year till we be delivered, no wonder it is if God will not hear; let us consider with ourselves the just dealing of God with us; that as he cried and we would not hear, so now we cry, and he will not hear.—*A. Symson*.

*Verse 3.*—"O Lord, how long?" As the saints in heaven have their *usque quo*, how long, Lord, holy and true, before thou begin to execute judgment? So, the saints on earth have their *usque quo*. How long, Lord, before thou take off the execution of this judgment upon us? For, our deprecatory prayers are not mandatory, they are not directory, they appoint not God his ways, or his times; but as our postulatory prayers are, they also are submitted to the will of God, and have all in that *veruntamen*, that herb of grace, which Christ put into his own prayer, that *themtamen, yet not my will, but thy will be fulfilled*; and they have that ingredient which Christ put into our prayer, *fiat voluntas, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*; in heaven there is no resisting of his will; yet in heaven there is a soliciting, a hastening, an accelerating of the judgment, and the glory of the resurrection; so though we resist not his corrections here upon earth, we may humbly present to God the sense which we have of his displeasure, for this sense and apprehension of his corrections is one of the principal reasons why he sends



them ; he corrects us therefore that we might be sensible of his corrections ; that when we, being humbled under his hand, have said with his prophet, "*I will bear the wrath of the Lord because I have sinned against him*" (Mic. vii. 9), he may be pleased to say to his correcting angel, as he did to his destroying angel, *This is enough*, and so burn his rod now, as he put up his sword then.—*John Donne*.

Verse 4.—"*Return, O Lord, deliver my soul,*" etc. In this his besieging of God, he brings up his works from afar off, closer ; he begins in this Psalm, at a deprecatory prayer ; he asks nothing, but that God would do nothing, that he would forbear him—*rebuke me not, correct me not*. Now, it costs the king less to give a pardon than to give a pension, and less to give a reprieve than to give a pardon, and less to connive, not to call in question, than either reprieve, pardon, or pension ; to forbear is not much. But then as the mathematician said, that he could make an engine, a screw, that should move the whole frame of the world, if he could have a place assigned him to fix that engine, that screw upon, so that it might work upon the world ; so prayer, when one petition hath taken hold upon God, works upon God, moves God, prevails with God, entirely for all. David then having got this ground, this footing in God, he brings his works closer ; he comes from the deprecatory to a postulatory prayer ; not only that God would do nothing against him, but that he would do something for him. God hath suffered man to see *Arcana imperii*, the secrets of his state, how he governs—he governs by precedent ; by precedents of his predecessors, he cannot, he hath none ; by precedents of other gods he cannot, there are none ; and yet he proceeds by precedents, by his own precedents, he does as he did before, *habenti dat*, to him that hath received he gives more, and is willing to be wrought and prevailed upon, and pressed with his own example. And, as though his doing good were but to learn how to do good better, still he writes after his own copy, and *nulla dies sine linea*. He writes something to us, that is, he doth something for us every day. And then, that which is not often seen in other masters, his copies are better than the originals ; his latter mercies larger than his former ; and in this postulatory prayer, larger than the deprecatory, enters our text, "*Return, O Lord ; deliver my soul : O save me,*" etc.—*John Donne*.

Verse 5.—"*For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who will give thee thanks ?*" Lord, be thou pacified and reconciled to me . . . for shouldst thou now proceed to take away my life, as it were a most direful condition for me to die before I have propitiated thee, so I may well demand what increase of glory or honour will it bring unto thee ? Will it not be infinitely more glorious for thee to spare me, till by true contrition I may regain thy favour ?—and then I may live to praise and magnify thy mercy and thy grace : thy mercy in pardoning so great a sinner, and then confess thee by vital actions of all holy obedience for the future, and so demonstrate the power of thy grace which hath wrought this change in me ; neither of which will be done by destroying me, but only thy just judgments manifested in thy vengeance on sinners.—*Henry Hammond, D.D., 1659*.

Verse 6.—"*I fainted in my mourning.*" It may seem a marvellous change in David, being a man of such magnitude of mind, to be thus dejected and cast down. Prevailed he not against Goliath, against the lion and the bear, through fortitude and magnanimity ? But now he is sobbing, sighing, and weeping as a child ! The answer is easy ; the diverse persons with whom he hath to do occasioneth the same. When men and beasts are his opposites, then he is more than a conqueror ; but when he hath to do with God against whom he sinned, then he is less than nothing.

Verse 6.—"*I caused my bed to swim.*" . . . Showers be better than dews, yet it is sufficient if God at least hath bedewed our hearts, and hath given us some sign of a penitent heart. If we have not rivers of waters to pour forth with David, neither fountains flowing with Mary Magdalen, nor as Jeremy, desire to have a fountain in our head to weep day and night, nor with Peter weep bitterly ; yet if we lament that we cannot lament, and mourn that we cannot mourn : yea, if we have the smallest sobs of sorrow and tears of compunction, if they be true and not counterfeit, they will make us acceptable to God ; for as the woman with the bloody issue that touched the hem of Christ's garment, was no less welcome to Christ than Thomas, who put his fingers in the print of the nails ; so, God looketh not at the quantity, but the sincerity of our repentance.

Verse 6.—"*My bed.*" The place of his sin is the place of his repentance, and so

it should be ; yea, when we behold the place where we have offended, we should be pricked in the heart, and there again crave him pardon. As Adam sinned in the garden, and Christ sweat bloody tears in the garden. "Examine your hearts upon your beds, and convert unto the Lord ;" and whereas ye have stretched forth yourselves upon your bed to devise evil things, repent there and make them sanctuaries to God. Sanctify by your tears every place which ye have polluted by sin. And let us seek Christ Jesus on our own bed, with the spouse in the Canticles, who saith, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth."—*Archibald Symson*.

*Verse 6.*—"I water my couch with tears." Not only I wash, but also I water. The faithful sheep of the great Shepherd go up from the washing place, every one bringeth forth twins, and none barren among them. Cant. iv. 2. For so Jacob's sheep, having conceived at the watering troughs, brought forth strong and party-coloured lambs. David likewise, who before had erred and strayed like a lost sheep, making here his bed a washing place, by so much the less is barren in obedience, by how much the more he is fruitful in repentance. In Solomon's temple stood the caldrons of brass, to wash the flesh of those beasts which were to be sacrificed on the altar. Solomon's father maketh a water of his tears, a caldron of his bed, an altar of his heart, a sacrifice, not of the flesh of unreasonable beasts, but of his own body, a living sacrifice, which is his reasonable serving of God. Now the Hebrew word here used signifies properly, to cause to swim, which is more than simply to wash. And thus the Geneva translation readeth it, I cause my bed every night to swim. So that as the priests used to swim in the molten sea, that they might be pure and clean, against they performed the holy rites and services of the temple, in like manner the princely prophet washeth his bed, yea, he swimmeth in his bed, or rather he causeth his bed to swim in tears, as in a sea of grief and penitent sorrow for his sin.—*Thomas Playfere*, 1604.

*Verse 6.*—"I water my couch with my tears." Let us water our bed every night with our tears. Do not only blow upon it with intermissive blasts, for then like fire, it will resurge and flame the more. Sin is like a stinking candle newly put out, it is soon lighted again. It may receive a wound, but like a dog it will easily lick itself whole ; a little forbearance multiplies it like Hydra's heads. Therefore, whatsoever aspersion the sin of the day has brought upon us, let the tears of the night wash away.—*Thomas Adams*.

*Verses 6, 7.*—Soul-trouble is attended usually with great pain of body too, and so a man is wounded and distressed in every part. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, says David. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." Job vi. 4. Sorrow of heart contracts the natural spirits, making all their motions slow and feeble ; and the poor afflicted body does usually decline and waste away ; and, therefore, saith Heman, "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave." In this inward distress we find our strength decay and melt, even as wax before the fire, for sorrow darkeneth the spirits, obscures the judgment, blinds the memory as to all pleasant things, and beclouds the lucid part of the mind, causing the lamp of life to burn weakly. In this troubled condition the person cannot be without a countenance that is pale, and wan, and dejected, like one that is seized with strong fear and consternation ; all his motions are sluggish, and no sprightliness nor activity remains. A merry heart doth good, like a medicine ; but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Hence come those frequent complaints in Scripture : My moisture is turned into the drought of the summer : I am like a bottle in the smoke ; my soul cleaveth unto the dust : my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelid is the shadow of death. Job xvi. 16, xxx. 17, 18—19. My bones are pierced in me, in the night season, and my sinews take no rest ; by the great force of my disease is my garment changed. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. Many times indeed the trouble of the soul does begin from the weakness and indisposition of the body. Long affliction, without any prospect of remedy, does, in process of time, begin to distress the soul itself. David was a man often exercised with sickness and the rage of enemies ; and in all the instances almost that we meet with in the Psalms, we may observe that the outward occasions of trouble brought him under an apprehension of the wrath of God for his sin. (Psalm vi. 1, 2 ; and the reasons given, verses 5 and 6.) All his griefs running into this most terrible thought, that God was his enemy. As little brooks lose themselves in a great river, and change their name and nature, it most frequently



happens, that when our pain is long and sharp, and helpless and unavoidable, we begin to question the sincerity of our estate towards God, though at its first assault we had few doubts or fears about it. Long weakness of body makes the soul more susceptible of trouble, and uneasy thoughts.—*Timothy Rogers on Trouble of Mind.*

*Verse 7.*—“*Mine eye is consumed.*” Many make those eyes which God hath given them, as it were two lighted candles to let them see to go to hell; and for this God in justice requiteth them, that seeing their minds are blinded by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, God I say, sendeth sickness to debilitate their eyes which were so sharp-sighted in the devil’s service, and their lust now causeth them to want the necessary sight of their body.

*Verse 7.*—“*Mine enemies.*” The pirates seeing an empty bark, pass by it; but if she be loaded with precious wares, then they will assault her. So, if a man have no grace within him, Satan passeth by him, as not a convenient prey for him, but being loaded with graces, as the love of God, his fear, and such other spiritual virtues, let him be persuaded that according as he knows what stuff is in him, so will he not fail to rob him of them, if in any case he may.—*Archibald Symson.*

*Verse 7.*—That eye of his that had looked and lusted after his neighbour’s wife is now dimmed and darkened with grief and indignation. He had wept himself almost blind.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Depart from me,*” etc., i.e., you may now go your way; for that which you look for, namely, my death, you shall not have at this present; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping, i.e., has graciously granted me that which with tears I asked of him.—*Thomas Wilcocks.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*” May not too much familiarity with profane wretches be justly charged upon church members? I know man is a sociable creature, but that will not excuse saints as to their carelessness of the choice of their company. The very fowls of the air, and beasts of the field, love not heterogeneous company. “Birds of a feather flock together.” I have been afraid that many who would be thought eminent, of a high stature in grace and godliness, yet see not the vast difference there is between nature and regeneration, sin and grace, the old and the new man, seeing all company is alike unto them.—*Lewis Stuckley’s “Gospel Glass,”* 1667.

*Verse 8.*—“*The voice of my weeping.*” Weeping hath a voice, and as music upon the water sounds farther and more harmoniously than upon the land, so prayers, joined with tears, cry louder in God’s ears, and make sweeter music than when tears are absent. When Antipater had written a large letter against Alexander’s mother unto Alexander, the king answered him, “One tear from my mother will wash away all her faults.” So it is with God. A penitent tear is an undeniable ambassador, and never returns from the throne of grace unsatisfied. *Spencer’s Things New and Old.*

*Verse 8.*—The wicked are called “workers of iniquity,” because they are free and ready to sin, they have a strong tide and bent of spirit to do evil, and they do it not to halves but thoroughly; they do not only begin or nibble at the bait a little (as a good man often doth), but greedily swallow it down, hook and all; they are fully in it, and do it fully; they make a work of it, and so are “workers of iniquity.”—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 8.*—Some may say, “My constitution is such that I cannot weep; I may as well go to squeeze a rock, as think to get a tear.” But if thou canst not weep for sin, canst thou grieve? Intellectual mourning is best; there may be sorrow where there are no tears, the vessel may be full though it wants vent; it is not so much the weeping eye God respects as the broken heart; yet I would be loath to stop their tears who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah’s tears (*Isaiah xxxviii. 5*), “I have seen thy tears.” David’s tears made music in God’s ears, “The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.” It is a sight fit for angels to behold, tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye.—*T. Watson.*

*Verse 8.*—“*The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.*” God hears the voice of our looks, God hears the voice of our tears sometimes better than the voice of our words; for it is the Spirit itself that makes intercession for us. *Rom. viii. 26. Gemitibus inenarrabilibus*, in those groans, and so in those tears, which we cannot utter; *ineloquacibus*, as Tertullian reads that place, devout, and simple tears, which cannot speak, speak aloud in the ears of God; nay, tears which we

cannot utter; not only not utter the force of the tears, but not utter the very tears themselves. As God sees the water in the spring in the veins of the earth before it bubble upon the face of the earth, so God sees tears in the heart of a man before they blubber his face; God hears the tears of that sorrowful soul, which for sorrow cannot shed tears. From this casting up of the eyes, and pouring out the sorrow of the heart at the eyes, at least opening God a window through which he may see a wet heart through a dry eye; from these overtures of repentance, which are as those imperfect sounds of words, which parents delight in, in their children, before they speak plain, a penitent sinner comes to a verbal and a more express prayer. To these prayers, these vocal and verbal prayers from David, God had given ear, and from this hearing of those prayers was David come to this thankful confidence, "*The Lord hath heard, the Lord will hear.*"—*John Donne.*

Verse 8.—What a strange change is here all on a sudden! Well might Luther say, "Prayer is the leech of the soul, that sucks out the venom and swelling thereof." "Prayer," said another, "is an exorcist with God, and an exorcist against sin and misery." Bernard saith, "How oft hath prayer found me despairing almost, but left me triumphing, and well assured of pardon!" The same in effect saith David here, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." What a word is that to his insulting enemies! *Avant! come out! vanish!* These be words used to devils and dogs, but good enough for a Doeg or a Shimei. And the Son of David shall say the same to his enemies when he comes to judgment.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*The Lord hath heard my supplication,*" etc. The Psalmist three times expresses his confidence of his prayers being heard and received, which may be either in reference to his having prayed so many times for help, as the apostle Paul did (2 Cor. xii. 8); and as Christ his antitype did (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44); or to express the certainty of it, the strength of his faith in it, and the exuberance of his joy on account of it.—*John Gill, D.D., 1697—1771.*

Verse 10.—"*Let all mine enemies be ashamed,*" etc. If this were an imprecation, a malediction, yet it was medicinal, and had *rationem boni*, a charitable tincture and nature in it; he wished the men no harm as men. But it is rather *prædictorium*, a prophetic vehemence, that if they will take no knowledge of God's declaring himself in the protection of his servants, if they would not consider that God had heard, and would hear, had rescued, and would rescue his children, but would continue their opposition against him, heavy judgments would certainly fall upon them; their punishment should be certain, but the effect should be uncertain; for God only knows whether his correction shall work upon his enemies to their mollifying, or to their obduration. . . . In the second word, "*Let them be sore vexed,*" he wishes his enemies no worse than himself had been, for he had used the same word of himself before, *Ossa turbata, My bones are vexed*; and, *Anima turbata, My soul is vexed*; and considering that David had found this vexation to be his way to God, it was no malicious imprecation to wish that enemy the same physic that he had taken, who was more sick of the same disease than he was. For this is like a troubled sea after a tempest; the danger is past, but yet the billow is great still; the danger was in the calm, in the security, or in the tempest, by misinterpreting God's corrections to our obduration, and to a remorseless stupefaction; but when a man is come to his noiy vexation, to be troubled, to be shaken with the sense of the indignation of God, the storm is past, and the indignation of God is blown over. The soul is in a fair and near way of being restored to a calmness, and to reposed security of conscience that is come to this holy vexation.—*John Donne.*

Verse 10.—"*Let all mine enemies [or all mine enemies shall] be ashamed, and sore vexed,*" etc. Many of the mournful Psalms end in this manner, to instruct the believer that he is continually to look forward, and solace himself with beholding that day, when his warfare shall be accomplished; when sin and sorrow shall be no more; when sudden and everlasting confusion shall cover the enemies of righteousness; when the sackcloth of the penitent shall be exchanged for a robe of glory, and every tear become a sparkling gem in his crown; when to sighs and groans shall succeed the songs of heaven, set to angelic harps, and faith shall be resolved into the vision of the Almighty.—*George Horne.*

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—*A Sermon for afflicted souls.* I. God's twofold dealings. (1) *Rebuke* by a telling sermon, a judgment on another, a slight trial in our own person, or a solemn monition in our conscience by the Spirit. (2) *Chastening.* This follows the other when the first is disregarded. Pain, losses, bereavements, melancholy, and other trials. II. The evils in them to be most dreaded, anger and hot displeasure. III. The means to avert these ills. Humiliation, confession, amendment, faith in the Lord, etc.

*Verse 1.*—The believer's greatest dread, the anger of God. What this fact reveals in the heart? Why it is so? What removes the fear?

*Verse 2.*—The *argumentum ad misericordiam.*

*Verse 2.*—*First sentence—Divine healing.* 1. What precedes it, *my bones are vexed.* 2. How it is wrought. 3. What succeeds it.

*Verse 3.*—The impatience of sorrow; its sins, mischief, and cure.

*Verse 3.*—A fruitful topic may be found in considering the question, How long will God continue afflictions to the righteous?

*Verse 4.*—“*Return, O Lord.*” A prayer suggested by a sense of the Lord's absence, excited by grace, attended with heart searching and repentance, backed by pressing danger, guaranteed as to its answer, and containing a request for all mercies.

*Verse 4.*—The prayer of the deserted saint. 1. *His state:* his soul is evidently in bondage and danger: 2. *His hope:* it is in the Lord's return. 3. *His plea:* mercy only.

*Verse 5.*—The final suspension of earthly service considered in various practical aspects.

*Verse 5.*—The duty of praising God while we live.

*Verse 6.*—Saints' tears in quality, abundance, influence, assuagement, and final end.

*Verse 7.*—The voice of weeping. What it is.

*Verse 8.*—The pardoned sinner forsaking his bad companions.

*Verse 9.*—Past answers the ground of present confidence. He *hath, he will.*

*Verse 10.*—The shame reserved for the wicked.