

PSALM VII.

TITLE.—"Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite."—"Shiggaion of David." As far as we can gather from the observations of learned men, and from a comparison of this Psalm with the only other Shiggaion in the Word of God (Hab. iii.), this title seems to mean "variable songs," with which also the idea of solace and pleasure is associated. Truly our life-psalm is composed of variable verses; one stanza rolls along with the sublime metre of triumph, but another limps with the broken rhythm of complaint. There is much bass in the saint's music here below. Our experience is as variable as the weather in England.

From the title we learn the occasion of the composition of this song. It appears probable that Cush the Benjamite had accused David to Saul of treasonable conspiracy against his royal authority. This the king would be ready enough to credit, both from his jealousy of David, and from the relation which most probably existed between himself, the son of Kish, and this Cush, or Kish, the Benjamite. He who is near the throne can do more injury to a subject than an ordinary slanderer.

This may be called the SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT. Even this sorest of evils may furnish occasion for a Psalm. What a blessing would it be if we could turn even the most disastrous event into a theme for song, and so turn the tables upon our great enemy. Let us learn a lesson from Luther, who once said, "David made Psalms; we also will make Psalms, and sing them as well as we can to the honour of our Lord, and to spite and mock the devil."

DIVISION.—In the first and second verses the danger is stated, and prayer offered. Then the Psalmist most solemnly avows his innocence (3, 4, 5). The Lord is pleaded with to arise to judgment (6, 7). The Lord, sitting upon his throne, hears the renewed appeal of the Slandered Suppliant (8, 9). The Lord clears his servant, and threatens the wicked (10, 11, 12, 13). The slanderer is seen in vision bringing a curse upon his own head (14, 15, 16) while David retires from trial singing a hymn of praise to his righteous God. We have here a noble sermon upon that text: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

EXPOSITION.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

David appears before God to plead with him against the Accuser, who had charged him with treason and treachery. The case is here opened with an avowal of confidence in God. Whatever may be the emergency of our condition we shall never find it amiss to retain our reliance upon our God. "O Lord my God," mine by a special covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood, and ratified in my own soul by a sense of union to thee; "in thee," and in thee only, "do I put my trust," even now in my sore distress. I shake, but my rock moves not. It is never right to distrust God, and never vain to trust him. And now, with both divine relationship and holy trust to strengthen him, David utters the burden of his desire—"save me from all them that persecute me." His pursuers were very many, and any one of them cruel enough to devour him; he cries, therefore, for salvation from them all. We should never think our prayers complete until we ask for preservation from all sin, and all enemies. "And deliver me," extricate me from their snares, acquit me of their accusations, give a true and just deliverance in this trial of my injured character. See how clearly his case is stated; let us see to it, that we know what we would have when we are come to the throne of mercy. Pause a little while before you pray, that you may not offer the sacrifice of fools. Get a distinct idea of your need, and then you can pray with the more fluency of fervency.

"Lest he tear my soul." Here is the plea of fear co-working with the plea of faith. There was one among David's foes mightier than the rest, who had both

dignity, strength, and ferocity, and was, therefore, "like a lion." From this foe he urgently seeks deliverance. Perhaps this was Saul, his royal enemy; but in our own case there is one who goes about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, concerning whom we should ever cry, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Notice the vigour of the description—"rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver." It is a picture from the shepherd-life of David. When the fierce lion had pounced upon the defenceless lamb, and had made it his prey, he would rend the victim in pieces, break all the bones, and devour all, because no shepherd was near to protect the lamb or rescue it from the ravenous beast. This is a soul-moving portrait of a saint delivered over to the will of Satan. This will make the bowels of Jehovah yearn. A father cannot be silent when a child is in such peril. No, he will not endure the thought of his darling in the jaws of a lion, he will arise and deliver his persecuted one. Our God is very pitiful, and he will surely rescue his people from so desperate a destruction. It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured. Slander leaves a slur, even if it be wholly disproved. Common fame, although notoriously a common liar, has very many believers. Once let an ill word get into men's mouths, and it is not easy to get it fully out again. The Italians say that good repute is like the cypress, once cut, it never puts forth leaf again; this is not true if our character be cut by a stranger's hand, but even then it will not soon regain its former verdure. Oh, 'tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)

5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

The second part of this wandering hymn contains a protestation of innocence, and an invocation of wrath upon his own head, if he were not clear from the evil imputed to him. So far from hiding treasonable intentions in his hands, or ungratefully requiting the peaceful deeds of a friend, he had even suffered his enemy to escape when he had him completely in his power. Twice had he spared Saul's life; once in the cave of Adullam, and again when he found him sleeping in the midst of his slumbering camp; he could, therefore, with a clear conscience, make his appeal to heaven. He needs not fear the curse whose soul is clear of guilt. Yet is the imprecation a most solemn one, and only justifiable through the extremity of the occasion, and the nature of the dispensation under which the Psalmist lived. We are commanded by our Lord Jesus to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay; "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." If we cannot be believed on our word, we are surely not to be trusted on our oath; for to a true Christian his simple word is as binding as another man's oath. Especially beware, O unconverted men! of trifling with solemn imprecations. Remember the woman at Devizes, who wished she might die if she had not paid her share in a joint purchase, and who fell dead there and then with the money in her hand.

Selah. David enhances the solemnity of this appeal to the dread tribunal of God by the use of the usual pause.

From these verses we may learn that no innocence can shield a man from the calumnies of the wicked. David had been scrupulously careful to avoid any appearance of rebellion against Saul, whom he constantly styled "the Lord's anointed;" but all this could not protect him from lying tongues. As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumours which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men's characters will be

safe. Ill-will never spoke well. Sinners have an ill-will to saints, and therefore, be sure they will not speak well of them.

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies : and awake for me to the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about : for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

We now listen to a fresh prayer, based upon the avowal which he has just made. We cannot pray too often, and when our heart is true, we shall turn to God in prayer as naturally as the needle to its pole.

"*Arise, O Lord, in thine anger.*" His sorrow makes him view the Lord as a judge who had left the judgment-seat and retired into his rest. Faith would move the Lord to avenge the quarrel of his saints. "*Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies*"—a still stronger figure to express his anxiety that the Lord would assume his authority and mount the throne. Stand up, O God, rise thou above them all, and let thy justice tower above their villainies. "*Awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.*" This is a bolder utterance still, for it implies sleep as well as inactivity, and can only be applied to God in a very limited sense. He never slumbers, yet doth he often seem to do so ; for the wicked prevail, and the saints are trodden in the dust. God's silence is the patience of longsuffering, and if wearisome to the saints, they should bear it cheerfully in the hope that sinners may thereby be led to repentance.

"*So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about.*" Thy saints shall crowd to thy tribunal with their complaints, or shall surround it with their solemn homage : "*for their sakes therefore return thou on high.*" As when a judge travels at the assizes, all men take their cases to his court that they may be heard, so will the righteous gather to their Lord. Here he fortifies himself in prayer by pleading that if the Lord will mount the throne of judgment, multitudes of the saints would be blessed as well as himself. If I be too base to be remembered, yet "*for their sakes,*" for the love thou bearest to thy chosen people, come forth from thy secret pavilion, and sit in the gate dispensing justice among the people. When my suit includes the desires of all the righteous it shall surely speed, for "*shall not God avenge his own elect ?*"

8 The LORD shall judge the people : judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that* is in me.

9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; but establish the just : for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

If I am not mistaken, David has now seen in the eye of his mind the Lord ascending to his judgment-seat, and beholding him seated there in royal state, he draws near to him to urge his suit anew. In the last two verses he besought Jehovah to arise, and now that he is arisen, he prepares to mingle with "the congregation of the people" who compass the Lord about. The royal heralds proclaim the opening of the court with the solemn words, "*The Lord shall judge the people.*" Our petitioner rises at once, and cries with earnestness and humility, "*Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.*" His hand is on an honest heart, and his cry is to a righteous Judge. He sees a smile of complacency upon the face of the King, and in the name of all the assembled congregation he cries aloud, "*Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; but establish the just.*" Is not this the universal longing of the whole company of the elect ? When shall we be delivered from the filthy conversation of these men of Sodom ? When shall we escape from the filthiness of Mesech and the blackness of the tents of Kedar ?

What a solemn and weighty truth is contained in the last sentence of the ninth verse ! How deep is the divine knowledge !—" *he trieth.*" How strict, how accurate, how intimate his search !—" *he trieth the hearts,*" the secret thoughts, "*and reins,*" the inward affections. "*All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*"

10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword ; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

The judge has heard the cause, has cleared the guiltless, and uttered his voice against the persecutors. Let us draw near, and learn the results of the great assize. Yonder is the slandered one with his harp in hand, hymning the justice of his Lord, and rejoicing aloud in his own deliverance. "*My defence is of God, which saveth the upright heart.*" Oh, how good to have a true and upright heart. Crooked sinners, with all their craftiness, are foiled by the upright in heart. God defends the right. Filth will not long abide on the pure white garments of the saints, but shall be brushed off by divine providence, to the vexation of the men by whose base hands it was thrown upon the godly. When God shall try our cause, our sun has risen, and the sun of the wicked is set for ever. Truth, like oil, is ever above, no power of our enemies can drown it ; we shall refute their slanders in the day when the trumpet wakes the dead, and we shall shine in honour when lying lips are put to silence. O believer, fear not all that thy foes can do or say against thee, for the tree which God plants no winds can hurt. "*God judgeth the righteous,*" he hath not given thee up to be condemned by the lips of persecutors. Thine enemies cannot sit on God's throne, nor blot thy name out of his book. Let them alone, then, for God will find time for his revenges.

"*God is angry with the wicked every day.*" He not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with ; he can be angry, nay, he is angry to-day and every day with you, ye ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days. From the beginning of the year even to its ending, there is not an hour in which God's oven is not hot, and burning in readiness for the wicked, who shall be as stubble.

"*If he turn not, he will whet his sword.*" What blows are those which will be dealt by that long uplifted arm ! God's sword has been sharpening upon the revolving stone of our daily wickedness, and if we will not repent, it will speedily cut us in pieces. Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative. "*He hath bent his bow and made it ready.*" Even now the thirsty arrow longs to wet itself with the blood of the persecutor. The bow is bent, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, and what, O sinner, if the arrow should be let fly at thee even now ! Remember, God's arrows never miss the mark, and are, every one of them, "instruments of death." Judgment may tarry, but it will not come too late. The Greek proverb saith, "The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder."

14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

In three graphic pictures we see the slanderer's history. A woman in travail furnishes the first metaphor. "*He travaileth with iniquity.*" He is full of it, pained until he can carry it out, he longs to work his will, he is full of pangs until his evil intent is executed. "*He hath conceived mischief.*" This is the original of his base design. The devil has had doings with him, and the virus of evil is in him. And now behold the progeny of this unhallowed conception. The child is worthy of its father, his name of old was "the father of lies," and the birth doth not belie the parent, for he brought forth falsehood. Thus, one figure is carried out to perfection ; the Psalmist now illustrates his meaning by another taken from the stratagems of the hunter. "*He made a pit and digged it.*" He was cunning in his plans, and industrious in his labours. He stooped to the dirty work of digging. He did not fear to soil his own hands, he was willing to work in a ditch if others might fall therein. What mean things men will do to wreak revenge on the godly. They hunt for good men, as if they were brute beasts ; nay, they will not give them the fair chase afforded to the hare or the fox, but must secretly entrap them, because they can neither run them down nor shoot them down. Our enemies will not meet us to the face, for they fear us as much as they pretend to despise us. But

let us look on to the end of the scene. The verse says, he "*is fallen into the ditch which he made.*" Ah! there he is, let us laugh at his disappointment. Lo! he is himself the beast, he has hunted his own soul, and the chase has brought him a goodly victim. Aha, aha, so should it ever be. Come hither and make merry with this entrapped hunter, this biter who has bitten himself. Give him no pity, for it will be wasted on such a wretch. He is but rightly and richly rewarded by being paid in his own coin. He cast forth evil from his mouth, and it has fallen into his bosom. He has set his own house on fire with the torch which he lit to burn a neighbour. He sent forth a foul bird, and it has come back to its nest. The rod which he lifted on high, has smitten his own back. He shot an arrow upward, and it has "*returned upon his own head.*" He hurled a stone at another, and it has "*come down upon his own pate.*" Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost. Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him" (Ps. cix. 17.) How often has this been the case in the histories of both ancient and modern times. Men have burned their own fingers when they were hoping to brand their neighbour. And if this does not happen now, it will hereafter. The Lord has caused dogs to lick the blood of Ahab in the midst of the vineyard of Naboth. Sooner or later the evil deeds of persecutors have always leaped back into their arms. So will it be in the last great day, when Satan's fiery darts shall all be quivered in his own heart, and all his followers shall reap the harvest which they themselves have sown.

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

We conclude with the joyful contrast. In this all these Psalms are agreed; they all exhibit the blessedness of the righteous, and make its colours the more glowing by contrast with the miseries of the wicked. The bright jewel sparkles in a black foil. *Praise* is the occupation of the godly, their eternal work, and their present pleasure. *Singing* is the fitting embodiment for praise, and therefore do the saints make melody before the Lord Most High. The slandered one is now a singer: his harp was unstrung for a very little season, and now we leave him sweeping its harmonious chords, and flying on their music to the third heaven of adoring praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"Shiggaion," though some have attempted to fix on it a reference to the moral aspect of the world as depicted in this Psalm, is in all probability to be taken as expressing the *nature of the composition*. It conveys the idea of something *erratic* (שׁוֹגְגִים, to wander) in the style; something not so calm as other Psalms; and hence *Ewald* suggests that it might be rendered, "a confused ode," a Dithyramb. This characteristic of excitement in the style, and a kind of disorder in the sense, suits Habakkuk iii. 1, the only other place where the word occurs.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—Whatever might be the occasion of the Psalm, the real subject seems to be the Messiah's appeal to God against the false accusations of his enemies; and the predictions which it contains of the final conversion of the whole world, and of the future judgment, are clear and explicit.—*Samuel Horsley, LL.D., 1733—1806.*

Verse 1.—"O Lord, my God, in thee do I put my trust." This is the first instance in the Psalms where David addresses the Almighty by the united names Jehovah and my God. No more suitable words can be placed at the beginning of any act of prayer or praise. These names show the ground of the confidence afterwards expressed. They "denote at once supreme reverence and the most endearing confidence. They convey a recognition of God's infinite perfections, and of his covenanted and gracious relations."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 2.—"Lest he tear my soul like a lion," etc. It is reported of tigers, that they enter into a rage upon the scent of fragrant spices; so do ungodly men at the blessed savour of godliness. I have read of some barbarous nations, who, when the sun shines hot upon them, they shoot up their arrows against it; so do wicked men at the light and heat of godliness. There is a natural antipathy between the spirits of godly men and the wicked. Genesis iii. 15. "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed."—*Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1660.

Verse 3.—"O Lord, my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands." In the primitive times the people of God were then a people under great reproach. What strange things does Tertullian tell us they reproached them withal; as that in their meetings they made Thyestes suppers, who invited his brother to a supper, and presented him with a dish of his own flesh. They charged them with uncleanness because they met in the night (for they durst not meet in the day), and said, they blew out the candles when they were together, and committed filthiness. They reproached them for ignorance, saying, they were all unlearned; and therefore the heathens in Tertullian's time used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head, and a book in his hand, to signify that though they pretended learning, yet they were an unlearned, silly people, rude and ignorant. Bishop Jewel in his sermon upon Luke xi. 5, cites this out of Tertullian, and applies it to his time:—"Do not our adversaries do the like," saith he, "at this day, against all those that profess the gospel of Christ? Oh, say they, who are they that favour this way? they are none but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as were never at the university;" they are the bishop's own words. He cites likewise Tertullian a little after, saying, that the Christians were accounted the public enemies of the State. And Josephus tells us of Apollinaris, speaking concerning the Jews and Christians, that they are more foolish than any barbarian. And Paulus Fagius reports a story of an Egyptian, concerning the Christians, who said, "They were a gathering together of a most filthy, lecherous people;" and for the keeping of the Sabbath, he says, "they had a disease that was upon them, and they were fain to rest the seventh day because of that disease." And so in Augustine's time, he hath this expression, "Any one that begins to be godly, presently he must prepare to suffer reproach from the tongues of adversaries;" and this was their usual manner of reproach, "What shall we have of you, an Elias? a Jeremy?" And Nazianzen in one of his orations says, "It is ordinary to reproach, that I cannot think to go free myself." And so Athanasius, they called him Sathanasius, because he was a special instrument against the Arians. And Cyprian, they called him Coprian, one that gathers up dung, as if all the excellent things that he had gathered in his works were but dung.—*Jeremiah Burroughs*.

Verse 3.—"If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands." I deny not but you may, and ought to be sensible of the wrong done to your name, for as "a good name is a precious ointment" (Cant. i. 3), so to have an evil name is a great judgment; and therefore you ought not to be insensible of the wrong done to your name by slanders and reproaches, saying, "Let men speak of me what they please, I care not, so long as I know mine own innocency," for though the testimony of your own innocency be a ground of comfort unto you, yet your care must be not only to approve yourselves unto God, but also unto men, to be as careful of your good names as possibly ye can; but yet you are not to manifest any distemper or passion upon the reproachful speeches of others against you.—*Thomas Gouge*, 1660.

Verse 3.—It is a sign that there is some good in thee if a wicked world abuse thee. "Quid mali feci?" said Socrates, what evil have I done that this bad man commends me? The applause of the wicked usually denotes some evil, and their censure imports some good.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 3.—"If there be iniquity in my hands." Injustice is ascribed to the *hand*, not because injustice is always, though usually it be, done by the hand. With the hand men take away, and with that men detain the right of others. David speaks thus (1 Chron. xii. 17), "Seeing there is no wrong in mine hands;" that is, I have done no wrong.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 3, 4.—A good conscience is a flowing spring of assurance. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2 Cor. i. 12. "Beloved,

if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." 1 John iii. 21. A good conscience has sure confidence. He who has it sits in the midst of all combustions and distractions, Noah-like, all sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. What the probationer disciple said to our Saviour, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," that a good conscience says to the believing soul; I will stand by thee; I will strengthen thee; I will uphold thee; I will be a comfort to thee in life, and a friend to thee in death. "Though all should leave thee, yet will I never forsake thee."—*Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 4.—"Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy." Meaning Saul, whose life he twice preserved, once in Engedi, and again when he slept on the plain.—*John Gill*.

Verse 4.—"If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me." To do evil for good, is human corruption; to do good for good, is civil retribution; but to do good for evil, is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace.—*William Secker*.

Verse 4.—Then is grace victorious, and then hath a man a noble and brave spirit, not when he is overcome by evil (for that argueth weakness), but when he can overcome evil. And it is God's way to shame the party that did the wrong, and to overcome him too; it is the best way to get the victory over him. When David had Saul at an advantage in the cave, and cut off the lap of his garment, and did forbear any act of revenge against him, Saul was melted, and said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I." 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. Though he had such a hostile mind against him, and chased and pursued him up and down, yet when David forbore revenge when it was in his power it overcame him, and he falls a-weeping.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 5.—"Let him tread down my life upon the earth." The allusion here is to the manner in which the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men in the dust. The idea of David is, that if he was guilty he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn.—*Albert Barnes, in loc.*

Verse 5.—"Mine honour in the dust." When Achilles dragged the body of Hector in the dust around the walls of Troy, he did but carry out the usual manners of those barbarous ages. David dares in his conscious innocence to imprecate such an ignominious fate upon himself if indeed the accusation of the black Benjamite be true. He had need have a golden character who dares to challenge such an ordeal.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"The judgment which thou hast ordained." In the end of the verse he shows that he asks nothing but what is according to the appointment of God. And this is the rule which ought to be observed by us in our prayers; we should in everything conform our requests to the divine will, as John also instructs us. 1 John iv. 14. And, indeed, we can never pray in faith unless we attend, in the first place, to what God commands, that our minds may not rashly and at random start aside in desiring more than we are permitted to desire and pray for. David, therefore, in order to pray aright, reposes himself on the word and promise of God; and the import of his exercise is this: Lord, I am not led by ambition, or foolish headstrong passion, or depraved desire, inconsiderately to ask from thee whatever is pleasing to my flesh; but it is the clear light of thy word which directs me, and upon it I securely depend.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 7.—"The congregation of the people:" either, 1. A great number of all sorts of people, who shall observe thy justice, and holiness, and goodness in pleading my righteous cause against my cruel and implacable oppressor. Or rather, 2. The whole body of thy people Israel, by whom both these Hebrew words are commonly ascribed in Holy Scripture. "Compass thee about;" they will, and I, as their king and ruler in thy stead, will take care that they shall come from all parts and meet together to worship thee, which in Saul's time they have grossly neglected, and been permitted to neglect, and to offer to thee praises and sacrifices for thy favour to me, and for the manifold benefits which they shall enjoy by my means, and under my government. "For their sakes;" or, for its sake, i.e., for the sake of thy con-

gregation, which now is woefully dissipated and oppressed, and has in a great measure lost all administration of justice, and exercise of religion. "*Return thou on high,*" or, *return to thy high place, i.e. to thy tribunal, to sit there and judge my cause.* An allusion to earthly tribunals, which generally are set up on high above the people. 1 Kings x. 19.—*Matthew Pool, 1624—1679.*

Verse 8.—Believers! let not the terror of that day dispirit you when you meditate upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him and the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads when they think of his coming; but lift ye up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer and your Advocate. Ye must appear before the judgment-seat; but ye shall not come into condemnation. His coming will not be against you, but for you. It is otherwise with unbelievers, a neglected Saviour will be a severe Judge.—*Thomas Boston, 1676—1732.*

Verse 9.—"The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." As common experience shows that the workings of the mind, particularly the passions of joy, grief, and fear, have a very remarkable effect on the reins or kidneys (see Prov. xxiii. 16; Psalm lxxiii. 21), so from their retired situation in the body, and their being hid in fat, they are often used to denote the most secret workings and affections of the soul. And to "see or examine the reins," is to see or examine those most secret thoughts or desires of the soul.—*John Parkhurst, 1762.*

Verse 9 (last clause).—"The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins."

"I that alone am infinite, can try
How deep within itself thine heart doth lie.
Thy seamen's plummet can but reach the ground,
I find that which thine heart itself ne'er found."

Francis Quarles, 1592—1644.

Verse 9.—"The heart" may signify the cogitations, and the "reins" the affections.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 10.—"My defence is of God." Literally, "*My shield is upon God,*" like Psalm lxii. 8, "*My salvation is upon God.*" The idea may be taken from the armour-bearer, ever ready at hand to give the needed weapon to the warrior.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 11.—"God judgeth the righteous," etc. Many learned disputes have arisen as to the meaning of this verse; and it must be confessed that its real import is by no means easily determined: without the words written in italics, which are not in the original, it will read thus, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry every day." The question still will be, is this a good rendering? To this question it may be replied, that there is strong evidence for a contrary one. AINSWORTH translates it, "God is a just judge; and God angrily threateneth every day." With this corresponds the reading of COVERDALE'S Bible, "God is a righteous judge, and God is ever threatening." In King Edward's Bible, of 1549, the reading is the same. But there is another class of critics who adopt quite a different view of the text, and apparently with much colour of argument. BISHOP HORSLEY reads the verse, "God is a righteous judge, although he is not angry every day." In this rendering he seems to have followed most of the ancient versions. The VULGATE reads it, "God is a judge, righteous, strong, and patient; will he be angry every day?" The SEPTUAGINT reads it, "God is a righteous judge, strong, and longsuffering; not bringing forth his anger every day." The SYRIAC has it, "God is the judge of righteousness; he is not angry every day." In this view of the text Dr. A. Clarke agrees, and expresses it as his opinion that the text was first corrupted by the CHALDEE. This learned divine proposes to restore the text thus, "ג, el, with the vowel point *seri*, signifies God; ג, al, the same letters, with the point *pathach*, signifies *not*." There is by this view of the original no repetition of the divine name in the verse, so that it will simply read, as thus restored, "God is a righteous judge, and is NOT angry every day." The text at large, as is intimated in the VULGATE, SEPTUAGINT, and some other ancient versions, conveys a strong intimation of the longsuffering of God, whose hatred of sin is unchangeable, but whose anger against transgressors is marked by infinite patience, and does not burst forth in vengeance every day.—*John Morison, in "An Exposition of the Book of Psalms," 1829.*

Verse 11.—"God is angry." The original expression here is very forcible. The true idea of it appears to be, to froth or foam at the mouth with indignation.—*Richard Mant, D.D., 1824.*

Verses 11, 12.—God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can show what nature they have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul, and member of body, are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is written all with woes and curses, so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 11—13.—The idea of God's righteousness must have possessed great vigour to render such a representation possible. There are some excellent remarks upon the ground of it in Luther, who, however, too much overlooks the fact, that the Psalmist presents before his eyes this form of an angry and avenging God, primarily with the view of strengthening by its consideration his own hope, and pays too little regard to the distinction between the Psalmist, who only indirectly teaches what he described as part of his own inward experience, and the prophet: "The prophet takes a lesson from a coarse human similitude, in order that he might inspire terror unto the ungodly. For he speaks against stupid and hardened people, who would not apprehend the reality of a divine judgment of which he had just spoken; but they might possibly be brought to consider this by greater earnestness on the part of man. Now, the prophet is not satisfied with thinking of the sword, but he adds thereto the bow; even this does not satisfy him, but he describes how it is already stretched, and aim is taken, and the arrows are applied to it as here follows. So hard, stiff-necked, and unabashed are the ungodly, that however many threatenings may be urged against them, they will still remain unmoved. But in these words he forcibly describes how God's anger presses hard upon the ungodly, though they will never understand this until they actually experience it. It is also to be remarked here, that we have had so frightful a threatening and indignation against the ungodly in no Psalm before this; neither has the Spirit of God attacked them with so many words. Then in the following verses, he also recounts their plans and purposes, shows how these shall not be in vain, but shall return again upon their own head. So that it clearly and manifestly appears to all those who suffer wrong and reproach, as a matter of consolation, that God hates such revilers and slanderers above all other characters."—*E. W. Hengstenberg, in loc., 1845.*

Verse 12.—"If he turn not," etc. How few do believe what a quarrel God hath with wicked men? And that not only with the loose, but the formal and hypocritical also? If we did we would tremble as much as to be among them as to be in a house that is falling; we would endeavour to "save" ourselves "from this untoward generation." The apostle would not so have abjured them, so charged, so entreated them, had he not known the danger of wicked company. "God is angry with the wicked every day;" his bow is bent, the arrows are on the string; the instruments for their ruin are all prepared. And is it safe to be there where the arrows of God are ready to fly about our ears? How was the apostle afraid to be in the bath with Cerinthus! "Depart," saith God by Moses, "from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." How have the baskets of good figs suffered with the bad! Is it not prejudicial to the gold to be with the dross? Lot had been ruined by his neighbourhood to the Sodomites if God had not wrought wonderfully for his deliverance. Will you put God to work miracles to save you from your ungodly company? It is dangerous being in the road with thieves whilst God's hue and cry of vengeance is at their backs. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." The very beasts may instruct you to consult better for your security: the very deer are afraid of a wounded chased deer, and therefore for their preservation thrust him out of their company.—*Lewis Stuckley.*

Verse 12.—"If he turn not, he will whet his sword," etc. The whetting of the

sword is but to give a keener edge that it may cut the deeper. God is silent as long as the sinner will let him ; but when the sword is whet, it is to cut ; and when the bow is bent, it is to kill ; and woe be to that man who is the butt.—*William Secker.*

Verse 13.—“ *He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.*” It is said that God hath ordained his arrows against the persecutors ; and the word signifies such as burn in anger and malice against the godly ; and the word translated *ordained*, signifies God hath wrought his arrows ; he doth not shoot them at random, but he works them against the wicked. Illiricus hath a story which may well be a commentary upon this text in both the parts of it. One Felix, Earl of Wartenberg, one of the captains of the Emperor Charles V., swore in the presence of divers at supper, that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans. Here was one that burned in malice, but behold how God works his arrows against him : that very night the hand of God so struck him, that he was strangled and choked in his own blood ; so he rode not, but bathed himself, not up to the spurs, but up to the throat, not in the blood of the Lutherans, but in his own blood before he died.—*Jeremiah Burroughs.*

Verse 13.—“ *He ordaineth his arrows.*” This might more exactly be rendered, “ He maketh his arrows burning.” This image would seem to be deduced from the use of fiery arrows.—*John Kitto, 1804—1854.*

Verse 14.—“ *Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,*” etc. The words express the conception, birth, carriage, and miscarriage, of a plot against David. In which you may consider :—(1.) What his enemies did. (2.) What God did. (3.) What we all should do : his enemies’ intention, God’s prevention, and our duty ; his enemies’ intention, he travaileth with iniquity, and conceiveth mischief ; God’s prevention, he brought forth a lie ; our duty, Behold Observe the aggravation of the sin, he conceiveth. He was not put upon it, or forced into it ; it was voluntary. The more liberty we have not to sin, makes our sin the greater. He did not this in passion, but in cold blood. The less will, less sin.—*Richard Sibbs.*

Verse 14.—“ *He travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief.*” All note that conceiving is before travelling, but here travelling, as a woman in labour, goeth first ; and the reason whereof is, that the wicked are so hotly set upon the evil which they maliciously intend, that they would be immediately acting of it if they could tell how, even before they have conceived by what means ; but in fine they bring forth but a lie, that is, they find that their own hearts lied to them, when they promised good success, but they had evil. For their haste to perpetrate mischief is intimated in the word rendered “ *persecutors* ” (verse 13), which properly signifieth *ardentes, burning* ; that is, with a desire to do mischief—and this admits of no delay. A notable common-place, both setting forth the evil case of the wicked, especially attempting anything against the righteous, to move them to repentance—for thou hast God for thine enemy warring against thee, whose force thou canst not resist—and the greedy desire of the wicked to be evil, but their conception shall all prove abortive.—*J. Mayer, in loc.*

Verse 14.—“ *And hath brought forth falsehood.*” Every sin is a lie.—*Augustine.*

Verse 14.—

“ Earth’s entertainments are like those of Jael,
Her left hand brings me milk, her right, a nail.”

Thomas Fuller.

Verses 14, 15.—“ *They have digged a pit for us* ”—and that low, unto hell—“ *and are fallen into it themselves.*”

“ No juster law can be devised or made,
Than that sin’s agents fall by their own trade.”

The order of hell proceeds with the same degrees ; though it give a greater portion, yet still a just proportion, of torment. These wretched guests were too busy with the waters of sin ; behold, now they are in the depth of a pit, “ where no water is.” Dives, that wasted so many tuns of wine, cannot now procure water, not a pot of water, not a handful of water, not a drop of water, to cool his tongue. *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam.** A just recompense ! He would not give a crumb ; he shall not have a drop. Bread hath no smaller fragment than a crumb, water

* Aug. Hom. 7.

no less fraction than a drop. As he denied the least comfort to Lazarus living, so Lazarus shall not bring him the least comfort dead. Thus the pain for sin answers the pleasure of sin Thus damnable sins shall have semblable punishments; and as Augustine of the tongue, so we may say of any member If it will not serve God in action, it shall serve him in passion.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 15.—"He made a pit and digged it." The practice of making pitfalls was anciently not only employed for ensnaring wild beasts, but was also a stratagem used against men by the enemy, in time of war. The idea, therefore, refers to a man who, having made such a pit, whether for man or beast, and covered it over so as completely to disguise the danger, did himself inadvertently tread on his own trap, and fall into the pit he had prepared for another.—*Pictorial Bible*.

Verse 16.—That most witty of commentators, Old Master Trapp, tells the following notable anecdote, in illustration of this verse :—That was a very remarkable instance of Dr. Story, who, escaping out of prison in Queen Elizabeth's days, got to Antwerp, and there thinking himself out of the reach of God's rod, he got commission under the Duke of Alva to search all ships coming thither for English books. But one Parker, an English merchant, trading to Antwerp, laid his snare fair (saith our chronicler), to catch this foul bird, causing secret notice to be given to Story, that in his ship were stores of heretical books, with other intelligence that might stand him in stead. The Canonist conceiving that all was quite sure, hasted to the ship, where, with looks very big upon the poor mariners, each cabin, chest, and corner above-board were searched, and some things found to draw him futher on : so that the hatches must be opened, which seemed to be unwillingly done, and great signs of fear were showed by their faces. This drew on the Doctor to descend into the hold, where now in the trap the mouse might well gnaw, but could not get out, for the hatches were down, and the sails hoisted up, which, with a merry gale were blown into England, where ere long he was arraigned, and condemned of high treason, and accordingly executed at Tyburn, as he had well deserved.

Verse 16.—The story of Phalaris's bull, invented for the torment of others, and serving afterwards for himself, is notorious in heathen story It was a voluntary judgment which Archbishop Cranmer inflicted on himself when he thrust that very hand into the fire, and burnt it, with which he had signed to the popish articles, crying out, "*Oh, my unworthy right hand!*" but who will deny that the hand of the Almighty was also concerned in it ?—*William Turner* in "*Divine Judgments by way of Retaliation*," 1697.

Verse 17.—To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless him for miseries is the way to remove them : no good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured.—*Williar Dycr*.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The necessity of faith when we address ourselves to God. Show the worthlessness of prayer without trust in the Lord.

Verses 1, 2.—Viewed as a prayer for deliverance from all enemies, especially Satan the lion.

Verse 3.—Self-vindication before men. When possible, judicious, or serviceable. With remarks upon the spirit in which it should be attempted.

Verse 4.—"The best revenge." Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like.

Verse 6.—How and in what sense divine anger may become the hope of the righteous.

Fire fought by fire, or man's anger overcome by God's anger.

Verse 7.—"The congregation of the people." 1. Who they are. 2. Why they congregate together with one another. 3. Where they congregate. 4. Why they choose such a person to be the centre of their congregation.

Verse 7.—The gathering of the saints around the Lord Jesus.

Verse 7 (last clause).—The coming of Christ to judgment for the good of his saints.

Verse 8.—The character of the Judge before whom we all must stand.

Verse 9 (first clause).—(1) By changing their hearts; or (2) by restraining their wills, (3) or depriving them of power, (4) or removing them. Show the times when, the reasons why, such a prayer should be offered, and how, in the first sense, we may labour for its accomplishment.

Verse 9.—This verse contains two grand prayers, and a noble proof that the Lord can grant them.

Verse 9.—The period of sin, and the perpetuity of the righteous:—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—“*Establish the just.*” By what means and in what sense the just are established, or, the true established church.

Verse 9 (last clause).—God’s trial of men’s hearts.

Verse 10.—“*Upright in heart.*” Explain the character.

Verse 10.—The believer’s trust in God, and God’s care over him. Show the action of faith in procuring defence and protection, and of that defence upon our faith by strengthening it, etc.

Verse 11.—The Judge, and the two persons upon their trial.

Verse 11 (second clause).—God’s present, daily, constant, and vehement anger, against the wicked.

Verse 12.—See “*Spurgeon’s Sermons,*” No. 106. “*Turn or Burn.*”

Verses 14, 15, 16.—Illustrate by three figures the devices and defeat of persecutors.

Verse 17.—The excellent duty of praise.

Verse 17.—View the verse in connection with the subject of the Psalm, and show how the deliverance of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked are themes for song.
