

PSALM XIII.

OCCASION.—*The Psalm cannot be referred to any especial event or period in David's history. All attempts to find it a birthplace are but guesses. It was, doubtless, more than once the language of that much tried man of God, and is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials which beset them. If the reader has never yet found occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so ere long, if he be a man after the Lord's own heart. We have been wont to call this the "How Long Psalm." We had almost said the Howling Psalm, from the incessant repetition of the cry "how long?"*

DIVISION.—*This Psalm is very readily to be divided into three parts:—the question of anxiety, 1, 2; the cry of prayer, 3, 4; the song of faith, 5, 6.*

EXPOSITION.

How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

"*How long?*"—This question is repeated no less than four times. It betokens very intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart. And what if there be some impatience mingled therewith; is not this the more true a portrait of our own experience? It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. O for grace that, while we wait on God, we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit! "*How long?*" Does not the oft-repeated cry become a very *HOWLING?* And what if grief should find no other means of utterance? Even then, God is not far from the voice of our roaring; for he does not regard the music of our prayers, but his own Spirit's work in them in exciting desire and inflaming the affections.

"*How long?*" Ah! how long do our days appear when our soul is cast down within us!

"How wearily the moments seem to glide
O'er sadness! How the time
Delights to linger in its flight!"

Time flies with full-fledged wing in our summer days, but in our winters he flutters painfully. A week within prison-walls is longer than a month at liberty. Long sorrow seems to argue abounding corruption; for the gold which is long in the fire must have had much dross to be consumed, hence the question "*how long?*" may suggest deep searching of heart. "*How long wilt thou forget me?*" Ah, David! how like a fool thou talkest! Can God *forget?* Can Omniscience fail in memory? Above all, can Jehovah's heart forget his own beloved child? Ah! brethren, let us drive away the thought, and hear the voice of our covenant God by the mouth of the prophet, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have given thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." "*For ever?*" Oh, dark thought! It was surely bad enough to suspect a temporary forgetfulness, but shall we ask the ungracious question, and imagine that the Lord will for ever cast away his people? No, his anger may endure for a night, but his love shall abide eternally. "*How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*" This is a far more rational question, for God may hide his face, and yet he may remember still. A hidden face is no sign of a forgetful heart. It is in love that his face is turned away; yet to a real child of God, this hiding of his Father's face is terrible, and he will never be at ease until once more he hath his Father's smile. "*How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?*" There is in the original the idea of "*laying up*" counsels in his heart, as if his devices had become innumerable but unavailing. Herein we have often been like David, for we have considered and reconsidered day after day, but have not discovered the happy device by which to escape from our trouble.

Such store is a sad sore. Ruminating upon trouble is bitter work. Children fill their mouths with bitterness when they rebelliously chew the pill which they ought obediently to have taken at once. "*How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*" This is like wormwood in the gall, to see the wicked enemy exulting while our soul is bowed down within us. The laughter of a foe grates horribly upon the ears of grief. For the devil to make mirth of our misery is the last ounce of our complaint, and quite breaks down our patience; therefore let us make it one chief argument in our plea with mercy.

Thus the careful reader will remark that the question "how long?" is put in four shapes. The writer's grief is viewed, as it seems to be, as it is, as it affects himself within, and his foes without. We are all prone to play most on the worst string. We set up monumental stones over the graves of our joys, but who thinks of erecting monuments of praise for mercies received? We write four books of Lamentations and only one of Canticles, and are far more at home in wailing out a *Miserere* than in chanting a *Te Deum*.

3 Consider *and* hear me, O Lord my God lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep* of death;

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

But now prayer lifteth up her voice, like the watchman who proclaims the day-break. Now will the tide turn, and the weeper shall dry his eyes. The mercy-seat is the life of hope and the death of despair. The gloomy thought of God's having forsaken him is still upon the Psalmist's soul, and he therefore cries, "*Consider and hear me.*" He remembers at once the root of his woe, and cries aloud that it may be removed. The final absence of God is Tophet's fire, and his temporary absence brings his people into the very suburbs of hell. God is here entreated to *see and hear*, that so he may be doubly moved to pity. What should we do if we had no God to turn to in the hour of wretchedness?

Note the cry of faith, "*O Lord my God!*" Is it not a very glorious fact that our interest in our God is not destroyed by all our trials and sorrows? We may lose our gourds, but not our God. The title-deed of heaven is not written in the sand, but in eternal brass.

"*Lighten mine eyes:*" that is, let the eye of my faith be clear, that I may see my God in the dark; let my eye of watchfulness be wide open, lest I be entrapped, and let the eye of my understanding be illuminated to see the right way. Perhaps, too, here is an allusion to that cheering of the spirits so frequently called the enlightening of the eyes because it causes the face to brighten, and the eyes to sparkle. Well may we use the prayer, "*Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord!*" for in many respects we need the Holy Spirit's illuminating rays. "*Lest I sleep the sleep of death.*" Darkness engenders sleep, and despondency is not slow in making the eyes heavy. From this faintness and dimness of vision, caused by despair, there is but a step to the iron sleep of death. David feared that his trials would end his life, and he rightly uses his fear as an argument with God in prayer; for deep distress has in it a kind of claim upon compassion, not a claim of right, but a plea which has power with grace. Under the pressure of heart sorrow, the Psalmist does not look forward to the sleep of death with hope and joy, as assured believers do, but he shrinks from it with dread, from which we gather that bondage from fear of death is no new thing.

Another plea is urged in the fourth verse, and it is one which the tried believer may handle well when on his knees. We make use of our arch-enemy for once, and compel him, like Samson, to grind in our mill while we use his cruel arrogance as an argument in prayer. It is not the Lord's will that the great enemy of our souls should overcome his children. This would dishonour God, and cause the evil one to boast. It is well for us that our salvation and God's honour are so intimately connected, that they stand or fall together.

Our covenant God will complete the confusion of all our enemies, and if for awhile we become their scoff and jest, the day is coming when the shame will change sides, and the contempt shall be poured on those to whom it is due.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6 I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

What a change is here! Lo, the rain is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come. The mercy-seat has so refreshed the poor weeper, that he clears his throat for a song. If we have mourned with him, let us now dance with him. David's heart was more often out of tune than his harp. He begins many of his Psalms sighing, and ends them singing; and others he begins in joy and ends in sorrow; "so that one would think," says Peter Moulin, "that those Psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary humour." It is worthy to be observed that the joy is all the greater because of the previous sorrow, as calm is all the more delightful in recollection of the preceding tempest.

"Sorrows remembered sweeten present joy."

Here is his avowal of his confidence: "*But I have trusted in thy mercy.*" For many a year it had been his wont to make the Lord his castle and tower of defence, and he smiles from behind the same bulwark still. He is sure of his faith, and his faith makes him sure; had he doubted the reality of his trust in God, he would have blocked up one of the windows through which the sun of heaven delights to shine. Faith is now in exercise, and consequently is readily discovered; there is never a doubt in our heart about the existence of faith while it is in action; when the hare or partridge is quiet we see it not, but let the same be in motion and we soon perceive it. All the powers of his enemies had not driven the Psalmist from his stronghold. As the shipwrecked mariner clings to the mast, so did David cling to his faith; he neither could nor would give up his confidence in the Lord his God. O that we may profit by his example, and hold by our faith as by our very life!

Now hearken to the music which faith makes in the soul. The bells of the mind are all ringing, "*My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*" There is joy and feasting within doors, for a glorious guest has come, and the fatted calf is killed. Sweet is the music which sounds from the strings of the heart. But this is not all; *the voice* joins itself in the blessed work, and the tongue keeps tune with the soul. while the writer declares, "*I will sing unto the Lord.*"

"I will praise thee every day,
Now thine anger's turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice."

The Psalm closes with a sentence which is a refutation of the charge of forgetfulness which David had uttered in the first verse, "*He hath dealt bountifully with me.*" So shall it be with us if we wait awhile. The complaint which in our haste we utter shall be joyfully retracted, and we shall witness that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"How long will thou forget me, O Lord?" etc. The departures of God from true believers are never final; they may be tedious, but they are temporary. As the evil spirit is said to depart from Christ for a season (Luke iv. 13; though he quitted that temptation, he did not quit his design, so as to tempt no more), so the good Spirit withdraws from those that are Christ's for a season only, 'tis with a purpose of coming again. When he hath most evidently forsaken, 'tis as unquestionable that sooner or later he will return; and the happiness of his return will richly recompense for the sadness of his desertion; Isa. liv. 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee;" here is not only a gathering after a forsaking, but "*great mercies*" to make amends for "*a small moment.*" He who hath engaged to be our God for ever, cannot depart for ever.—*Timothy Cruso*, 1696.

Verse 1.—"How long will thou forget me, O Lord?" Whatever be the pressing need of Christ's followers in troubles, and their constant cleaving to duty for all that; and whatever be Christ's purpose of love towards them, yet he seeth it fit oftentimes not to come to them at first, but will let the trial go on till it come to a height, and be a trial indeed, and put them seriously to it; for before he came

he lets them row "about five and twenty or thirty furlongs" (the last of which make near four miles, eight furlongs going to a mile); and (Mark vi. 48) he came not till the fourth watch of the night, which is the morning watch. We are indeed very sparing of ourselves in trouble, and do soon begin to think that we are low and tried enough, and therefore would be delivered; but our wise Lord seeth that we need more.—*George Hutcheson*, 1657.

Verse 1.—"How long;" etc. Enquire into the cause of God's anger. He is never angry but when there is very great reason, when we force him to be so. What is that accursed thing in our hearts, or in our lives, for which God hides his face, and frowns upon us? What particular disobedience to his commands is it for which he has taken up the rod? Job x. 2; "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" as if he should say, Lord, my troubles and my sorrows are very well known. . . . We must not cease to be solicitous to know what are the particular sins that have made him to tear us up by the roots, to throw us down as with a whirlwind; what is it that has made him so long angry with us, and so long to delay his help, that if any evil be undiscovered in our souls, we may lament it with a seasonable grief, and get a pardon for it. It is not the common course of God's providence to cover his servants with so thick a darkness as this is, which our troubled souls labour under in the day, or rather in the night of his displeasure; and, therefore, we may with humility desire to know why he proceeds with us in a way that is so singular; for it is some way delightful to the understanding to pierce into the reasons and causes of things.—*Timothy Rogers*.

Verse 1.—"How long wilt thou forget me," etc. For God to forget David, not to mind him, or look after him, is much! If his eye be never so little once off us, the spiritual adversary is ready presently to seize on us, as the kite on the chick if the hen look not carefully after it. . . . As a father will sometimes cross his son to try the child's disposition, to see how he will take it, whether he will mutter and grumble at it, and grow humorous and wayward, neglect his duty to his father because his father seemeth to neglect him, or make offer to run away and withdraw himself from his father's obedience because he seemeth to carry himself harshly and roughly towards him, and to provoke him thereunto; so doth God likewise oftentimes cross his children and seemeth to neglect them, so to try their disposition, what metal they are made of, how they stand affected towards him: whether they will neglect God because God seemeth to neglect them, forbear to serve him because he seemeth to forget them, cease to depend upon him because he seemeth not to look after them, to provide for them, or to protect them. Like Joram's prophane pursuivant, "This evil," saith he, "is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Or whether they will still constantly cleave to him, though he seem not to regard them, nor to have any care of them; and say with Isaiah, "Yet will I wait upon God, though he have hid his face from us, and I will look for him though he look not on us;" for, "They are blessed that wait on him; and he will not fail in due time to show mercy unto all them that do so constantly wait on him." Isa. viii. 17; xxx. 18. As Samuel dealt with Saul; he kept away till the last hour, to see what Saul would do when Samuel seemed not to keep touch with him. So doth God with his saints, and with those that be in league with him; he withdraweth himself oft, and keeps aloof oft for a long time together to try what they will do, and what courses they will take when God seemeth to break with them and to leave them in the suds, as we say; amidst many difficulties much perplexed, as it was with David at this time.—*Thomas Gataker*, 1637.

Verse 1.—1. For desertions. I think them like lying fallow of lean and weak land for some years, while it gathers sap for a better crop. It is possible to gather gold, where it may be had, with moonlight. Oh, if I could but creep one foot, or half a foot, nearer in to Jesus, in such a dismal night as that when he is away, I should think it a happy absence! 2. If I knew that the Beloved were only gone away for trial, and further humiliation, and not smoked out of the house with new provocations, I would forgive desertions and hold my peace at his absence. But Christ's bought absence (that I bought with my sin), is two running boils at once, one upon each side; and what side then can I lie on? 3. I know that, as night and shadows are good for flowers, and moonlight and dews are better than a continual sun, so is Christ's absence of special use, and that it hath some nourishing virtue in it, and giveth sap to humility, and putteth an edge on hunger, and furnisheth a fair field to faith to put forth itself, and to exercise its fingers in gripping it seeth not what.—*Samuel Rutherford*, 1600—1661.

Verses 1, 2.—That which the French proverb hath of sickness is true of all evils, that they come on horseback and go away on foot ; we have often seen that a sudden fall, or one meal's surfeit, has stuck by many to their graves ; whereas pleasures come like oxen, slow and heavily, and go away like post-horses, upon the spur. Sorrows, because they are lingering guests, I will entertain but moderately, knowing that the more they are made of the longer they will continue : and for pleasures, because they stay not, and do but call to drink at my door, I will use them as passengers with slight respect. He is his own best friend that makes the least of both of them.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verses 1, 2.—“ *How LONG wilt thou forget me ? How LONG wilt thou hide thy face from me ? How LONG shall I take counsel in my soul ?* ” The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude ; but it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the first case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above ; but, in the last, the mind relaxes, and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude ; but when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verses 1—4.—Everything is strangely changed ; all its comeliness, and beauty, and glory, vanishes when the *life* is gone : life is the pleasant thing ; 'tis sweet and comfortable ; but death with its pale attendants, raises a horror and aversion to it everywhere. The saints of God dread the removal of his favour, and the hiding of his face ; and when it is hid, a faintness and a cold amazement and fear seizes upon every part, and they feel strange bitterness, and anguish, and tribulation, which makes their joints to tremble, and is to them as the very pangs of death.—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verses 1, 5, 6.—Prayer helps towards the increase and growth of grace, by drawing the habits of grace into exercise. Now, as exercise brings benefit to the body, so does prayer to the soul. Exercise doth help to digest or breathe forth those humours that clog the spirits. One that stirs little we see grow pury, and is soon choked up with phlegm, which exercise clears the body of. Prayer is the saint's exercise-field, where his graces are breathed ; it is as the wind to the air, it brightens the soul ; as bellows to the fire, which clears the coal of those ashes that smother them. The Christian, while in this world, lives in an unwholesome climate ; one while, the delights of it deaden and dull his love of Christ ; another while, the trouble he meets in it damps his faith on the promise. How now should the Christian get out of these distempers, had he not a throne of grace to resort to, where if once his soul be in a melting frame, he (like one laid in a kindly sweat), soon breathes out the malignity of his disease, and comes ino his right temper again ? How often do we find the holy prophet, when he first kneels down to pray, full of fears and doubts, who, before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God, and repose in his own spirit ! (Psalm xiii. 1) He begins his prayer as if he thought God would never give him a kind look more : “ *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord ? for ever ?* ” But by that time he had exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength, verses 5, 6 : “ *I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord.* ” Thus his faith lays the cloth, expecting a feast ere long to be set on ; he that now questioned whether he should ever hear good news from heaven, is so strong in faith as to make himself merry with the hopes of that mercy which he is assured will come at last. Abraham began with fifty, but his faith got ground on God every step till he brought down the price of their lives to ten.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 1, 6.—Whatever discouragements thou meetest with in thine attendance on God in ordinances, be like the English jet, fired by water, and not like our ordinary fires, quenched by it ; let them add to, not diminish, thy resolution and courage ; let not one repulse beat thee off ; be violent, give a second storm to the kingdom of heaven. Parents sometimes hide themselves to make their children continue seeking. He that would not at first open his mouth, nor vouchsafe the woman of Canaan a word, doth, upon her continued and fervent petitions, at last open his hand and give her whatsoever she asks : “ *O woman, be it unto thee as thou wilt.* ” Continued importunity is undeniable oratory. And truly, if after all thy pains thou findest Jesus Christ, will it not make amends for thy long patience ? Men that venture often at a lottery, though they take blanks twenty times, if afterwards

they get a golden bason and ewer, it will make them abundant satisfaction. Suppose thou shouldst continue knocking twenty, nay, forty years, yet if at last, though but one hour before thou diest thy heart be opened to Christ, and he be received into thy soul, and when thou diest heaven be opened to thee, and thy soul received into it, will it not infinitely requite thee for all thy labour? Oh, think of it, and resolve never to be dumb while God is deaf, never to leave off prayer till God return a gracious answer. And for thy comfort, know that he who began his Psalm with, "*How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*" comes to conclude it with, "*I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*"—George Swinnoek.

Verse 2.—"How long?" There are many situations of the believer in this life in which the words of this Psalm may be a consolation, and help to revive sinking faith. A certain man lay at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. John v. 5. A woman had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, before she was "loosed." Luke xiii. 11. Lazarus all his life long laboured under disease and poverty, till he was released by death and transferred to Abraham's bosom. Luke xvi. 20—22. Let every one, then, who may be tempted to use the complaints of this Psalm, assure his heart that God does not forget his people, help will come at last, and, in the meantime, all things shall work together for good to them that love him.—W. Wilson, D.D.

Verse 2.—"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Though it be proper to know our own hearts, for the purposes of conviction, yet, if we expect consolation from this quarter, we shall find ourselves sadly disappointed. Such, for a time, appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had *sorrow in his heart daily*: but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded, *trusting in his mercy, his heart rejoiced in his salvation*. There are many persons, who, when in trouble, imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter.—Andrew Fuller.

Verses 2, 4.—"How shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" 'Tis a great relief to the miserable and afflicted, to be pitied by others. It is some relief when others, though they cannot help us, yet seem to be truly concerned for the sadness of our case; when by the kindness of their words and of their actions they do a little smooth the wounds they cannot heal; but 'tis an unspeakable addition to the cross, when a man is brought low under the sense of God's displeasure, to have men to mock at his calamity, or to revile him, or to speak roughly; this does inflame and exasperate the wound that was big enough before; and it is a hard thing when one has a dreadful sound in his ears to have every friend to become a son of thunder. It is a small matter for people that are at ease, to deal severely with such as are afflicted, but they little know how their severe speeches and their angry words pierce them to the very soul. 'Tis easy to blame others for complaining, but if such had felt but for a little while what it is to be under the fear of God's anger, they would find that they could not but complain. It cannot but make any person restless and uneasy when he apprehends that God is his enemy. It is no wonder if he makes every one that he sees, and every place that he is in, a witness of his grief; but now it is a comfort in our temptations and in our fears, that we have so compassionate a friend as Christ is to whom we may repair, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15.—Timothy Rogers.

Verse 3.—"Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." In time of sickness and grief, the "eyes" are dull and heavy; and they grow more and more so as death approaches, which closes them in darkness. On the other hand, health and joy render the organs of vision bright and sparkling, seeming, as it were, to impart "light" to them from within. The words, therefore, may be fitly applied to a recovery of the body natural, and thence, of the body politic, from their respective maladies. Nor do they less significantly describe the restoration of the soul to a state of spiritual health and holy joy, which will manifest themselves in like manner,

by "the eyes of the understanding being enlightened;" and in this case, the soul is saved from the sleep of sin, as the body is in the other, from the sleep of death.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—Why dost thou hide thy face? happily thou wilt say, None can see thy face and live. Ah, Lord, let me die, that I may see thee; let me see thee, that I may die: I would not live, but die; that I may see Christ, I desire death; that I may live with Christ, I despise life.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Oh, excellent hiding, which is become my perfection! My God, thou hidest thy treasure to kindle my desire! Thou hidest thy pearl, to inflame the seeker; thou delayest to give, that thou mayest teach me to importune; seemest not to hear, to make me persevere.—*John Anselm, 1034—1109.*

Verse 4.—

Ah! can you bear contempt; the venom'd tongue
Of those whom ruin pleases, the keen sneer,
The lewd reproaches of the rascal herd;
Who for the selfsame actions, if successful,
Would be as grossly lavish in your praise?
To sum up all in one—can you support
The scornful glances, the malignant joy,
Or more detested pity of a rival—
Of a triumphant rival?

James Thomson, 1700—1748.

Verse 4.—"And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved"—compose comedies out of my tragedies.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." Faith rejoiceth in tribulations, and triumpheth before the victory. The patient is glad when he feels his physic to work, though it make him sick for the time because he hopes it will procure health. We rejoice in afflictions, not that they are joyous for the present, but because they shall work for our good. As faith rejoiceth, so it triumpheth in assurance of good success; for it seeth not according to outward appearance, but when all means fail, it keepeth God in sight, and beholdeth him present for our succour.—*John Ball.*

Verse 5.—"I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." Though passion possess our bodies, let "patience possess our souls." The law of our profession binds us to a warfare; *paciendo vincimus*, our troubles shall end, our victory is eternal. Here David's triumph (Psalm xviii. 38—40), "I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise; they are fallen under my feet. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the neck of mine enemies," etc. They have wounds for their wounds; and the treaders down of the poor are trodden down by the poor. The Lord will subdue those to us that would have subdued us to themselves; and though for a short time they rode over our heads, yet now at last we shall everlastingly tread upon their necks. Lo, then, the reward of humble patience and confident hope. *Speramus et superamus.* Deut. xxxii. 31. "Our God is not as their God, even our enemies being judges." Psalm xx. 7. "Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses." But no chariot hath strength to oppose, nor horse swiftness to escape, when God pursues. *Verse 8.* "They are brought down and fallen; we are risen and stand upright." Their trust hath deceived them; down they fall, and never to rise. Our God hath helped us; we are risen, not for a breathing space, but to stand upright for ever.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those that live by faith.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—Wherefore I say again, "Live by faith;" again I say, always live by it, rejoice through faith in the Lord. I dare boldly say it is thy fault and neglect of its exercise if thou suffer either thy own melancholy humour or Satan to interrupt thy mirth and spiritual alacrity, and to detain thee in dumps and pensiveness at any time. What if thou beest of a sad constitution? of a dark complexion? Is not faith able to rectify nature? Is it not stronger than any hellebore? Doth not an experienced divine and physician worthily prefer one dram of it before all the drugs in the apothecary's shop for this effect? Hath it not sovereign virtue in it, to excerebrate all cares, expectorate all fears and griefs, evacuate the mind

of all ill thoughts and passions, to exhilarate the whole man? But what good doth it to any to have a cordial by him if he use it not? To wear a sword, soldier-like, by his side, and not to draw it forth in an assault? When a dump overtakes thee, if thou wouldst say to thy soul in a word or two, "Soul, why art thou disquieted? know and consider in whom thou believest," would it not presently return to its rest again? Would not the Master rebuke the winds and storms, and calm thy troubled mind presently? Hath not every man something or other he useth to put away dumps, to drive away the evil spirit, as David with his harp? Some with merry company, some with a cup of sack, most with a pipe of tobacco, without which they cannot ride or go. If they miss it a day together they are troubled with rheums, dulness of spirits. They that live in fens and ill airs dare not stir out without a morning draught of some strong liquor. Poor, silly, smoky helps, in comparison with the least taste (but for dishonouring faith I would say whiff) or draught of faith.—*Samuel Ward, 1577—1653.*

Verse 6.—"I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." Faith keeps the soul from sinking under heavy trials, by bringing in former experiences of the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God to the afflicted soul. Hereby was the Psalmist supported in distress. Oh, saith faith, remember what God hath done both for thy outward and inward man: he hath not only delivered thy body when in trouble, but he hath done great things for thy soul; he hath brought thee out of a state of black nature, entered into a covenant relation with thee, made his goodness pass before thee; he hath helped thee to pray, and many times hath heard thy prayers and thy tears. Hath he not formerly brought thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and put a new song in thy mouth, and made thee to resolve never to give way to such unbelieving thoughts and fears again? and how unbecoming is it for thee now to sink in trouble?—*John Willison, 1680—1750.*

Verse 6.—"I will sing unto the Lord." Mr. John Philpot having lain for some time in the bishop of London's coal-house, the bishop sent for him, and amongst other questions, asked him why they were so merry in prison? singing (as the prophet speaks) *Exultantes in rebus pessimis*, rejoicing in your naughtiness, whereas you should rather lament and be sorry. Mr. Philpot answered, "My lord, the mirth which we make is but in singing certain Psalms, as we are commanded by Paul to rejoice in the Lord, singing together hymns and Psalms, for we are in a dark, comfortless place, and therefore, we thus solace ourselves. I trust, therefore, your lordship will not be angry, seeing the apostle saith, 'If any be of an upright heart, let him sing Psalms;' and we, to declare that we are of an upright mind to God, though we are in misery, yet refresh ourselves with such singing." After some other discourse, saith he, "I was carried back to my lord's coal-house, where I, with my six fellow prisoners, do rouse together in the straw, as cheerfully (I thank God) as others do in their beds of down." And in a letter to a friend, he thus writes: "Commend me to Mr. Elsing and his wife, and thank them for providing me some ease in my prison; and tell them that though my lord's coal-house be very black, yet it is more to be desired of the faithful than the Queen's palace. The world wonders how we can be so merry under such extreme miseries; but our God is omnipotent, who turns misery into felicity. Believe me, there is no such joy in the world, as the people of God have under the cross of Christ: I speak by experience, and therefore believe me, and fear nothing that the world can do unto you, for when they imprison our bodies, they set our souls at liberty to converse with God; when they cast us down, they lift us up; when they kill us, then do they send us to everlasting life. What greater glory can there be than to be made conformable to our Head, Christ? And this is done by affliction. O good God, what am I, upon whom thou shouldst bestow so great a mercy? This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the way, though it be narrow, which is full of the peace of God, and leadeth to eternal bliss. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy that I am so near the apprehension thereof! God forgive me my unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy, that though I be in a place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament; but both night and day am so full of joy, as I never was so merry before; and the Lord's name be praised for ever. Our enemies do fret, fume, and gnash their teeth at it. O pray instantly that this joy may never be taken from us; for it passeth all the delights in this world. This is the peace of God that passeth all understanding. This peace, the

more his chosen be afflicted, the more they feel it, and therefore cannot faint neither for fire nor water."—*Samuel Clarke's "Mirrour,"* 1671.

Verse 6.—"I will sing unto the Lord." How far different is the end of this Psalm from the beginning!—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"I will sing unto the Lord," etc. I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns, and at every offer of Satan to afflict me, etc., as I have found him since I came in hither; for look how fears have presented themselves, so have supports and encouragements; yet, when I have started, even as it were at nothing else but my shadow, yet God, as being very tender of me, hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one Scripture or another, strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, *Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comfort's sake.* Eccles. vii. 14; 2 Cor. i. 5.—*John Bunyan, 1628—1688.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The apparent length of sorrow, only apparent. Contrast with days of joy, with eternal misery and eternal joy. Impatience, and other evil passions, cause the seeming length. Means of shortening, by refusing to forestall, or to repine afterwards.

Verse 1 (*second clause*).—Hiding of the divine face. Why at all? Why from me? Why so long?

Verse 2.—Advice to the dejected, or the soul directed to look out of itself for consolation.—*A. Fuller.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—*Self-torture*, its cause, curse, crime, and cure.

Verse 2.—"Having sorrow in my heart daily." I. The cause of daily sorrow. Great enemy, unbelief, sin, trial, loss of Jesus' presence, sympathy with others, mourning for human ruin. II. The necessity of daily sorrow. Purge corruptions, excite graces, raise desires heavenward. III. The cure of daily sorrow. Good food from God's table, old wine of promises, walks with Jesus, exercise in good works, avoidance of everything unhealthy.—*B. Davis.*

Verse 2.—(*second clause*).—Time anticipated when defeat shall be turned into victory.

Verse 3.—By accommodating the text to the believer. I. True character of Satan, "enemy." II. Remarkable fact that his enemy is exalted over us. III. Pressing enquiry, "How long?"—*B. Davis.*

Verse 3.—"Lighten mine eyes." A prayer fit for (1) Every benighted sinner. (2) Every seeker of salvation. (3) Every learner in Christ's school. (4) Every tried believer. (5) Every dying saint.—*B. Davis.*

Verse 4.—Noteth the nature of the wicked two ways; namely, the more they prevail the more insolent they are; they wonderfully exult over those that are afflicted.—*T. Wilcocks.*

Verse 5.—Experience and perseverance. "I have," "my heart shall."

Verse 6.—The bountiful giver and the hearty singer.

The whole Psalm would make a good subject, showing the stages from mourning to rejoicing, dwelling especially upon the turning point, prayer. There are two verses for each, mourning, praying, rejoicing.—*A. G. Brown.*
