

## PSALM XVIII.

**TITLE.**—"To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." We have another form of this Psalm with significant variations (2 Sam. xxii), and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all. Like Addison's hymn beginning, "When all thy mercies, O my God," this Psalm is the song of a grateful heart overwhelmed with a retrospect of the manifold and marvellous mercies of God. We will call it **THE GRATEFUL RETROSPECT**. The title deserves attention. David, although at this time a king, calls himself "the servant of Jehovah," but makes no mention of his royalty; hence we gather that he counted it a higher honour to be the Lord's servant than to be Judah's king. Right wisely did he judge. Being possessed of poetic genius, he served the Lord by composing this Psalm for the use of the Lord's house; and it is no mean work to conduct or to improve that delightful part of divine worship, the singing of the Lord's praises. Would that more musical and poetical ability were consecrated, and that our chief musicians were fit to be trusted with devout and spiritual psalmody. It should be observed that the words of this song were not composed with the view of gratifying the taste of men, but were spoken unto Jehovah. It were well if we had a more single eye to the honour of the Lord in our singing, and in all other hallowed exercises. That praise is little worth which is not directed solely and heartily to the Lord. David might well be thus direct in his gratitude, for he owed all to his God, and in the day of his deliverance he had none to thank but the Lord whose right hand had preserved him. We too should feel that to God and God alone we owe the greatest debt of honour and thanksgiving.

If it be remembered that the second and the forty-ninth verses are both quoted in the New Testament (Heb. ii. 13; Rom. xv. 9) as the words of the Lord Jesus, it will be clear that a greater than David is here. Reader, you will not need our aid in this respect: if you know Jesus you will readily find him in his sorrows, deliverance, and triumphs all through this wonderful Psalm.

**DIVISION.**—The first three verses are the poem or preface in which the resolve to bless God is declared. Delivering mercy is most poetically extolled from verse 4 to verse 19; and then the happy songster, from verse 20 to 28, protests that God had acted righteously in thus favouring him. Filled with grateful joy he again pictures his deliverance, and anticipates future victories from verse 29—45; and in closing speaks with evident prophetic foresight of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah, David's seed and the Lord's anointed.

### EXPOSITION.

**I** WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

1. "I will love thee, O Lord." With strong, hearty affection will I cling to thee; as a child to its parent, or a spouse to her husband. The word is intensely forcible; the love is of the deepest kind. "I will love heartily, with my inmost bowels." Here is a fixed resolution to abide in the nearest and most intimate union with the Most High. Our triune God deserves the warmest love of all our hearts. Father, Son and Spirit have each a claim upon our love. The solemn purpose never to cease loving naturally springs from present fervour of affection. It is wrong to make rash resolutions, but this when made in the strength of God is most wise and fitting. "My strength." Our God is the strength of our life, our graces, our works, our hopes, our conflicts, our victories. This verse is not found in 1 Sam. xxii., and is a most precious addition, placed above all and after all to form the pinnacle of the temple, the apex of the pyramid. Love is still the crowning grace.

2. "*The Lord is my rock and my fortress.*" Dwelling among the crags and mountain fastnesses of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here he compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of trouble. The clefts of the Rock of Ages are safe abodes. "*My deliverer,*" interposing in my hour of peril. When almost captured the Lord's people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by him who is mightier still. This title of "*deliverer*" has many sermons in it, and is well worthy of the study of all experienced saints. "*My God*;" this is all good things in one. There is a boundless wealth in this expression; it means, my perpetual, unchanging, infinite, eternal good. He who can say truly "*my God,*" may well add, "*my heaven, my all.*" "*My strength*;" this word is really "*my rock,*" in the sense of strength and immobility. My sure, unchanging, eternal confidence and support. Thus the word rock occurs twice, but it is no tautology, for the first time it is a rock for concealment, but here a rock for firmness and immutability. "*In whom I will trust.*" Faith must be exercised, or the preciousness of God is not truly known; and God must be the object of faith, or faith is mere presumption. "*My buckler,*" warding off the blows of my enemy, shielding me from arrow or sword. The Lord furnishes his warriors with weapons both offensive and defensive. Our armoury is completely stored so that none need go to battle unarmed. "*The horn of my salvation,*" enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation. "*My high tower,*" a citadel high planted on a rocky eminence beyond the reach of my enemies, from the heights of which I look down upon their fury without alarm, and survey a wide landscape of mercy reaching even unto the goodly land beyond Jordan. Here are many words, but none too many; we might profitably examine each one of them had we leisure, but summing up the whole, we may conclude with Calvin, that David here equips the faithful from head to foot.

3. In this verse the happy poet resolves to invoke the Lord in joyful song, believing that in all future conflicts his God would deal as well with him as in the past. It is well to pray to God as to one who deserves to be praised, for then we plead in a happy and confident manner. If I feel that I can and do bless the Lord for all his past goodness, I am bold to ask great things of him. That word *So* has much in it. To be saved singing is to be saved indeed. Many are saved mourning and doubting; but David had such faith that he could fight singing, and win the battle with a song still upon his lips. How happy a thing to receive fresh mercy with a heart already sensible of mercy enjoyed, and to anticipate new trials with a confidence based upon past experiences of divine love!

"No fearing or doubting with Christ on our side,  
We hope to die shouting. 'The Lord will provide.'"

4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about : the snares of death prevented me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God : he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled ; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured : coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down : and darkness *was* under his feet.

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly : yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his secret place ; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.

12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice ; hail stones and coals of fire.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me : for they were too strong for me.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity : but the LORD was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

In most poetical language the Psalmist now describes his experience of Jehovah's delivering power. Poesy has in all her treasures no gem more lustrous than the sonnet of the following verses ; the sorrow, the cry, the descent of the Divine One, and the rescue of the afflicted, are here set to a music worthy of the golden harps. The Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the main and chief subject of this song ; and while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line here has its deepest and profoundest fulfilment in Him ; but as we are desirous not to extend our comment beyond moderate bounds, we must leave it with the devout reader to make the very easy application of the passage to our once distressed but now triumphant Lord.

4. "*The sorrows of death compassed me.*" Death like a cruel conqueror seemed to twist round about him the cords of pain. He was environed and hemmed in with threatening deaths of the most appalling sort. He was like a mariner broken by the storm and driven upon the rocks by dreadful breakers, white as the teeth of death. Sad plight for the man after God's own heart, but thus it is that Jehovah dealeth with his sons. "*The floods of ungodly men made me afraid.*" Torrents of ungodliness threatened to swamp all religion, and to hurry away the godly man's hope as a thing to be scorned and despised ; so far was this threat fulfilled, that even the hero who slew Goliath began to be afraid. The most seaworthy bark is sometimes hard put to it when the storm fiend is abroad. The most courageous man, who as a rule hopes for the best, may sometimes fear the worst. Beloved reader, he who pens these lines has known better than most men what this verse means, and feels inclined to weep, and yet to sing, while he writes upon a text so descriptive of his own experience. On the night of the lamentable accident at the Surrey Music Hall, the floods of Belial were let loose, and the subsequent remarks of a large portion of the press were exceedingly malicious and wicked ; our soul was afraid as we stood encompassed with the sorrows of death and the blasphemies of the cruel. But oh, what mercy was there in it all, and what honey of goodness was extracted by our Lord out of this lion of affliction ! Surely God hath heard me ! Art thou in an ill plight ? Dear friend, learn thou from our experience to trust in the Lord Jehovah, who forsaketh not his chosen.

5. "*The sorrows of hell compassed me about.*" From all sides the hell-hounds barked furiously. A cordon of devils hemmed in the hunted man of God ; every way of escape was closed up. Satan knows how to blockade our coasts with the iron war-ships of sorrow, but, blessed be God, the port of all prayer is still open, and grace can run the blockade bearing messages from earth to heaven, and blessings in return from heaven to earth. "*The snares of death prevented me.*" The old enemy hunts for his prey, not only with the dogs of the infernal kennel, but also with the snares of deadly craft. The nets were drawn closer and closer until the contracted circle completely prevented the escape of the captive :—

' About me cords of hell were wound,  
And snares of death my footsteps bound."

Thus hopeless was the case of this good man, as hopeless as a case could be, so utterly desperate that none but an almighty arm could be of any service. According

to the four metaphors which he employs, he was bound like a malefactor for execution; overwhelmed like a shipwrecked mariner; surrounded and standing at bay like a hunted stag; and captured in a net like a trembling bird. What more of terror and distress could meet upon one poor defenceless head?

6. "*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.*" Prayer is that postern gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy; it is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner flies at once when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he *calls*, and then *cries*; prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of Jehovah, and then advances to a more familiar name, "*my God*;" thus faith increases by exercise, and he whom we at first viewed as Lord is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray; no distress should prevent us from using the divine remedy of supplication. Above the noise of the raging billows of death, or the barking dogs of hell, the feeblest cry of a true believer will be heard in heaven. "*He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*" Far up within the bejewelled walls, and through the gates of pearl, the cry of the suffering suppliant was heard. Music of angels and harmony of seraphs availed not to drown or even to impair the voice of that humble call. The king heard it in his palace of light unufferable, and lent a willing ear to the cry of his own beloved child. O honoured prayer, to be able thus through Jesus' blood to penetrate the very ears and heart of Deity. The voice and the cry are themselves heard directly by the Lord, and not made to pass through the medium of saints and intercessors; "*My cry came before Him*;" the operation of prayer with God is immediate and personal. We may cry with confident and familiar importunity, while our Father himself listens.

7. There was no great space between the cry and its answer. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is swift to rescue his afflicted. David has in his mind's eye the glorious manifestations of God in Egypt, at Sinai, and on different occasions to Joshua and the Judges; and he considers that his own case exhibits the same glory of power and goodness, and that, therefore, he may accommodate the descriptions of former displays of the divine majesty into his hymn of praise. "*Then the earth shook and trembled.*" Observe how the most solid and immovable things feel the force of supplication. Prayer has shaken houses, opened prison doors, and made stout hearts to quail. Prayer rings the alarm bell, and the Master of the house arises to the rescue, shaking all things beneath his tread. "*The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because of his wrath.*" He who fixed the world's pillars can make them rock in their sockets, and can upheave the corner-stones of creation. The huge roots of the towering mountains are torn up when the Lord bestirs himself in anger to smite the enemies of his people. How shall puny man be able to face it out with God when the very mountains quake with fear? Let not the boaster dream that his present false confidence will support him in the dread day of wrath.

8. "*There went up a smoke out of his nostrils.*" A violent oriental method of expressing fierce wrath. Since the breath from the nostrils is heated by strong emotion, the figure portrays the Almighty Deliverer as pouring forth smoke in the heat of his wrath and the impetuosity of his zeal. Nothing makes God so angry as an injury done to his children. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye. God is not subject to the passions which govern his creatures, but acting as he does with all the energy and speed of one who is angry, he is here aptly set forth in poetic imagery suitable to human understandings. The opening of his lips is sufficient to destroy his enemies; "*and fire out of his mouth devoured.*" This fire was no temporary one but steady and lasting; "*Coals were kindled by it.*" The whole passage is intended to depict God's descent to the help of his child, attended by earthquake and tempest: at the majesty of his appearing the earth rocks, the clouds gather like smoke, and the lightning as flaming fire devours, setting the world on a blaze. What grandeur of description is here! Bishop Maré very admirably rhymes the verse thus:—

"Smoke from his heated nostrils came,  
And from his mouth devouring flame;  
Hot burning coals announced his ire,  
And flashes of careering fire."

9. Amid the terror of the storm Jehovah the Avenger descended, bending beneath his foot the arch of heaven. "*He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*" He came in haste, and spurned everything which impeded his rapidity. The thickest gloom concealed his splendour, "*and darkness was under his feet*;" he fought within the dense vapours, as a warrior in clouds of smoke and dust, and found out the hearts of his enemies with the sharp falchion of his vengeance. Darkness is no impediment to God; its densest gloom he makes his tent and secret pavilion. See how prayer moves earth and heaven, and raises storms to overthrow in a moment the foes of God's Israel. Things were bad for David before he prayed, but they were much worse for his foes so soon as the petition had gone up to heaven. A trustful heart, by enlisting the divine aid, turns the tables on its enemies. If I must have an enemy let him not be a man of prayer, or he will soon get the better of me by calling in his God into the quarrel.

10. There is inimitable grandeur in this verse. Under the Mosaic system the cherubim are frequently represented as the chariot of God; hence Milton, in "*Paradise Lost*," writes of the Great Father,—

"He on the wings of cherubim  
Uplifted, in paternal glory rode  
Far into chaos."

Without speculating upon the mysterious and much-disputed subject of the cherubim, it may be enough to remark that angels are doubtless our guards and ministering friends, and all their powers are enlisted to expedite the rescue of the afflicted. "*He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.*" Nature also yields all her agents to be our helpers, and even the powers of the air are subservient: "*yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.*" The Lord comes flying when mercy is his errand, but he lingers long when sinners are being wooed to repent. The flight here pictured is as majestic as it is swift; "*flying all abroad*" is Sternhold's word, and he is not far from correct. As the eagle soars in easy grandeur with wings outspread, without violent flapping and exertion, so comes the Lord with majesty of omnipotence to aid his own.

11. The storm thickened, and the clouds pouring forth torrents of rain combined to form the secret chamber of the invisible but wonder-working God. "*Pavilioned in impervious shade*" faith saw him, but no other eye could gaze through the "*thick clouds of the skies.*" Blessed is the darkness which encurtains my God; if I may not see him, it is sweet to know that he is working in secret for my eternal good. Even fools can believe that God is abroad in the sunshine and the calm, but faith is wise, and discerns him in the terrible darkness and threatening storm.

12. Suddenly the terrible artillery of heaven was discharged; the *brightness* of lightning lit up the clouds as with a glory proceeding from him who was concealed within the cloudy pavilion; and volleys of hailstones and coals of fire were hurled forth upon the enemy. The lightnings seemed to cleave the clouds and kindle them into a blaze, and then hailstones and flakes of fire with flashes of terrific grandeur terrified the sons of men.

13. Over all this splendour of tempest pealed the dread thunder. "*The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice.*" Fit accompaniment for the flames of vengeance. How will men bear to hear it at the last when addressed to them in proclamation of their doom, for even now their hearts are in their mouths if they do but hear it muttering from afar? In all this terror David found a theme for song, and thus every believer finds even in the terrors of God a subject for holy praise. "*Hailstones and coals of fire*" are twice mentioned to show how certainly they are in the divine hand, and are the weapons of Heaven's vengeance. Horne remarks that "*every thunderstorm should remind us of that exhibition of power and vengeance, which is hereafter to accompany the general resurrection*;" may it not also assure us of the real power of him who is our Father and our friend, and tend to assure us of our safety while he fights our battles for us. The prince of the power of the air is soon dislodged when the cherubic chariot is driven through his dominions; therefore let not the legions of hell cause us dismay. He who is with us is greater than all they that be against us.

14. The lightnings were darted forth as forked arrows upon the hosts of the foe, and speedily "*scattered them.*" Boastful sinners prove to be great cowards when Jehovah enters the lists with them. They despise his words, and are very

tongue-vallant, but when it comes to blows they fly apace. The glittering flames, and the fierce bolts of fire "*discomfited them.*" God is never at a loss for weapons. Woe be unto him that contendeth with his Maker! God's arrows never miss their aim; they are feathered with lightning, and barbed with everlasting death. Fly, O sinner, to the rock of refuge before these arrows stick fast in thy soul.

15. So tremendous was the shock of God's assault in arms that the order of nature was changed, and the bottoms of rivers and seas were laid bare. "*The channels of waters were seen;*" and the deep cavernous bowels of the earth were upheaved till "*the foundations of the world were discovered.*" What will not Jehovah's "*rebuke*" do? If "*the blast of the breath of thy nostrils,*" O Lord, be so terrible, what must thine arm be? Vain are the attempts of men to conceal anything from him whose word unbars the deep, and lifts the doors of earth from their hinges! Vain are all hopes of resistance, for a whisper of his voice makes the whole earth quail in abject terror.

16. Now comes the rescue. The Author is divine, "*He sent;*" the work is heavenly, "*from above;*" the deliverance is marvellous, "*He drew me out of many waters.*" Here David was like another Moses, drawn from the water; and thus are all believers like their Lord, whose baptism in many waters of agony and in his own blood has redeemed us from the wrath to come. Torrents of evil shall not drown the man whose God sitteth upon the floods to restrain their fury.

17. When we have been rescued, we must take care to ascribe all the glory to God by confessing our own weakness, and remembering the powers of the conquered enemy. God's power derives honour from all the incidents of the conflict. Our great spiritual adversary is a "*strong enemy*" indeed, much too strong for poor, weak creatures like ourselves, but we have been delivered hitherto and shall be even to the end. Our weakness is a reason for divine help; mark the force of the "*for*" in the text.

18. It was an ill day, a day of *calamity*, of which evil foes took cruel advantage while they used crafty means utterly to ruin him, yet David could say, "*but the Lord is my stay.*" What a blessed but which cuts the Gordian knot, and slays the hundred-headed hydra! There is no fear of deliverance when our stay is in Jehovah.

19. "*He brought me forth also into a large place.*" After pining awhile in the prison-house Joseph reached the palace, and from the cave of Adullam David mounted to the throne. Sweet is pleasure after pain. Enlargement is the more delightful after a season of pinching poverty and sorrowful confinement. Besieged souls delight in the broad fields of the promise when God drives off the enemy and sets open the gates of the environed city. The Lord does not leave his work half done, for having routed the foe he leads out the captive into liberty. Large indeed is the possession and place of the believer in Jesus, there need be no limit to his peace, for there is no bound to his privilege. "*He delivered me, because he delighted in me.*" Free grace lies at the foundation. Rest assured, if we go deep enough, sovereign grace is the truth which lies at the bottom of every well of mercy. Deep sea fisheries in the ocean of divine bounty always bring the pearls of electing, discriminating love to light. Why Jehovah should delight in us is an answerless question, and a mystery which angels cannot solve; but that he does delight in his beloved is certain, and is the fruitful root of favours as numerous as they are precious. Believer, sit down, and inwardly digest the instructive sentence now before us, and learn to view the uncasured love of God as the cause of all the loving-kindness of which we are the partakers.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure ; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people ; but wilt bring down high looks.

28 For thou wilt light my candle : the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

20. "*The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness.*" Viewing this Psalm as prophetic of the Messiah, these strongly-expressed claims to righteousness are readily understood, for his garments were white as snow ; but considered as the language of David they have perplexed many. Yet the case is clear, and if the words be not strained beyond their original intention, no difficulty need occur. Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged, and the righteous ultimately delivered. David's early troubles arose from the wicked malice of envious Saul, who no doubt prosecuted his persecutions under cover of charges brought against the character of "the man after God's own heart." These charges David declares to have been utterly false, and asserts that he possessed a grace-given righteousness which the Lord had graciously rewarded in defiance of all his calumniators. Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the "*cleanness of his hands*" and the righteousness of his life. He knows little of the sanctifying power of divine grace who is not at the bar of human equity able to plead innocence. There is no self-righteousness in an honest man knowing that he is honest, nor even in his believing that God rewards him in providence because of his honesty, for such is often a most evident matter of fact ; but it would be self-righteousness indeed if we transferred such thoughts from the region of providential government into the spiritual kingdom, for there grace reigns not only supreme but sole in the distribution of divine favours. It is not at all an opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and no sort of evidence of a Pharisaic spirit, when a gracious man, having been slandered, stoutly maintains his integrity, and vigorously defends his character. A godly man has a clear conscience, and knows himself to be upright ; is he to deny his own consciousness, and to despise the work of the Holy Ghost, by hypocritically making himself out to be worse than he is ? A godly man prizes his integrity very highly, or else he would not be a godly man at all ; is he to be called proud because he will not readily lose the jewel of a reputable character ? A godly man can see that in divine providence uprightness and truth are in the long run sure to bring their own reward ; may he not, when he sees that reward bestowed in his own case, praise the Lord for it ? Yea rather, must he not show forth the faithfulness and goodness of his God ? Read the cluster of expressions in this and the following verses as the song of a good conscience, after having safely outriden a storm of obloquy, persecution, and abuse, and there will be no fear of our upbraiding the writer as one who set too high a price upon his own moral character.

21. Here the assertion of purity is repeated, both in a positive and a negative form. There is "*I have*" and "*I have not,*" both of which must be blended in a truly sanctified life ; constraining and restraining grace must each take its share. The words of this verse refer to the saint as a traveller carefully keeping to "*the ways of the Lord,*" and "*not wickedly,*" that is, designedly, wilfully, persistently, defiantly forsaking the ordained pathway in which God favours the pilgrim with his presence. Observe how it is implied in the expression "*and have not wickedly departed from my God,*" that David lived habitually in communion with God, and knew him to be his own God, whom he might speak of as "*my God.*" God never departs from his people, let them take heed of departing from him.

22. "*For all his judgments were before me.*" The word, the character, and the actions of God should be evermore before our eyes ; we should learn, consider, and reverence them. Men forget what they do not wish to remember, but the excellent attributes of the Most High are objects of the believer's affectionate and delighted admiration. We should keep the image of God so constantly before us that we become in our measure conformed unto it. This inner love to the right must be the main spring of Christian integrity in our public walk. The fountain must be filled with love to holiness, and then the streams which issue from it will

be pure and gracious. "*I did not put away his statutes from me.*" To put away the Scriptures from the mind's study is the certain way to prevent their influencing the outward conversation. Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles, and go on to filthy garments.

23. "*I was also upright before him.*" Sincerity is here claimed; sincerity, such as would be accounted genuine before the bar of God. Whatever evil men might think of Him, David felt that he had the good opinion of his God. Moreover, freedom from his one great besetting sin he ventures also to plead, "*I kept myself from mine iniquity.*" It is a very gracious sign when the most violent parts of our nature have been well guarded. If the weakest link in the chain is not broken, the stronger links will be safe enough. David's impetuous temper might have led him to slay Saul when he had him in his power, but grace enabled him to keep his hands clean of the blood of his enemy; but what a wonder it was, and how well worthy of such a grateful record as these verses afford! It will be a sweet cordial to us one of these days to remember our self-denials, and to bless God that we were able to exhibit them.

24. God first gives us holiness, and then rewards us for it. We are his workmanship; vessels made unto honour; and when made, the honour is not withheld from the vessel; though, in fact, it all belongs to the Potter upon whose wheel the vessel was fashioned. The prize is awarded to the flower at the show, but the gardener reared it; the child wins the prize from the schoolmaster, but the real honour of his schooling lies with his master, although instead of receiving he gives the reward.

25. The dealings of the Lord in his own case, cause the grateful singer to remember the usual rule of God's moral government; he is just in his dealings with the sons of men, and metes out to each man according to his measure. "*With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.*" Every man shall have his meat weighed in his own scales, his corn meted in his own bushel, and his land measured with his own rod. No rule can be more fair, to ungodly men more terrible, or to the generous more honourable. How would men throw away their light weights, and break their short yards, if they could but believe that they themselves are sure to be in the end the losers by their knavish tricks? Note that even the merciful need mercy; no amount of generosity to the poor, or forgiveness to enemies, can set us beyond the need of mercy. Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

26. "*With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*" The sinner's frowardness is sinful and rebellious, and the only sense in which the term can be applied to the Most Holy God is that of judicial opposition and sternness, in which the Judge of all the earth will act at cross-purposes with the offender, and let him see that all things are not to be made subservient to wicked whims and wilful fancies. Calvin very forcibly says, "This brutish and monstrous stupidity in men compels God to invent new modes of expression, and as it were to clothe himself with a different character. There is a similar sentence in Leviticus xxvi. 21—24, where God says, "and if ye walk contrary unto (or perversely with) me, then will I also walk contrary unto (or perversely, or roughly, or at random with) you." As if he had said that their obstinacy and stubbornness would make him on his part forget his accustomed forbearance and gentleness, and cast himself recklessly or at random against them. We see then what the stubborn at length gain by their obduracy; it is this, that God hardens himself still more to break them in pieces, and if they are of stone, he causes them to feel that he has the hardness of iron. The Jewish tradition was that the manna tasted according to each man's mouth; certainly God shows himself to each individual according to his character.

27. "*For thou wilt save the afflicted people.*" This is a comforting assurance for the poor in spirit whose spiritual griefs admit of no sufficient solace from any other than a divine hand. They cannot save themselves nor can others do it, but God will save them. "*But wilt bring down high looks.*" Those who look down on others with scorn shall be looked down upon with contempt ere long. The Lord abhors a proud look. What a reason for repentance and humiliation! How much better to be humble than to provoke God to humble us in his wrath! A considerable number of clauses occur in this passage in the future tense; how forcibly are we thus brought to remember that our present joy or sorrow is not to have so much weight with us as the great and eternal future!



28. "*For thou wilt light my candle.*" Even the children of the day sometimes need candle-light. In the darkest hour light will arise; a candle shall be lit, it will be comfort such as we may fittingly use without dishonesty—it will be our own candle; yet God himself will find the holy fire with which the candle shall burn; our evidences are our own, but their comfortable light is from above. Candles which are lit by God the devil cannot blow out. All candles are not shining, and so there are some graces which yield no present comfort; but it is well to have candles which may by and by be lit, and it is well to possess graces which may yet afford us cheering evidences. The metaphor of the whole verse is founded upon the dolorous nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light; "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" and even so the presence of the Lord removes all the gloom of sorrow, and enables the believer to rejoice with exceeding great joy. The lighting of the lamp is a cheerful moment in the winter's evening, but the lifting up of the light of God's countenance is happier far. It is said that the poor in Egypt will stint themselves of bread to buy oil for the lamp, so that they may not sit in darkness; we could well afford to part with all earthly comforts if the light of God's love could but constantly gladden our souls.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

30 *As for God, his way is perfect*: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.

31 For who *is* God save the LORD? or who *is* a rock save our God?

32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them*: *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; *and* thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

Some repetitions are not vain repetitions. Second thoughts upon God's mercy should be and often are the best. Like wines on the lees our gratitude grows stronger and sweeter as we meditate upon divine goodness. The verses which we have now to consider are the ripe fruit of a thankful spirit; they are apples of gold as to matter, and they are placed in baskets of silver as to their language. They describe the believer's victorious career and his enemies' confusion.

29. "*For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over*

a wall." Whether we meet the foe in the open field or leap upon them while they lurk behind the battlements of a city, we shall by God's grace defeat them in either case; if they hem us in with living legions, or environ us with stone walls, we shall with equal certainty obtain our liberty. Such feats we have already performed, hewing our way at a run through hosts of difficulties, and scaling impossibilities at a leap. God's warriors may expect to have a taste of every form of fighting, and must by the power of faith determine to quit themselves like men; but it behoves them to be very careful to lay all their laurels at Jehovah's feet, each one of them saying, "by my God" have I wrought this valiant deed. Our *spolia optima*, the trophies of our conflicts, we hereby dedicate to the God of Battles, and ascribe to him all glory and strength.

30. "As for God, his way is perfect." Far past all fault and error are God's dealings with his people; all his actions are resplendent with justice, truth, tenderness, mercy, and holiness. Every way of God is complete in itself, and all his ways put together are matchless in harmony and goodness. Is it not very consolatory to believe that he who has begun to bless us will perfect his work, for all his ways are "perfect?" Nor must the divine "word" be without its song of praise. "The word of the Lord is tried," like silver refined in the furnace. The doctrines are glorious, the precepts are pure, the promises are faithful, and the whole revelation is superlatively full of grace and truth. David had tried it, thousands have tried it, we have tried it, and it has never failed. It was meet that when way and word had been extolled, the Lord himself should be magnified; hence it is added, "He is a buckler to all those that trust in him." No armour of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the covenant God of Israel protects his warring people. He himself is the buckler of trustful ones; what a thought is this! What peace may every trusting soul enjoy!

31. Having mentioned his God, the Psalmist's heart burns, and his words sparkle; he challenges heaven and earth to find another being worthy of adoration or trust in comparison with Jehovah. His God, as Matthew Henry says, is a None-such. The idols of the heathen he scorns to mention, snuffing them all out as mere nothings when Deity is spoken of. "Who is God save the Lord?" Who else creates, sustains, foresees, and overrules? Who but he is perfect in every attribute, and glorious in every act? To whom but Jehovah should creatures bow? Who else can claim their service and their love? "Who is a rock save our God?" Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge.

32. Surveying all the armour in which he fought and conquered, the joyful victor praises the Lord for every part of the panoply. The girdle of his loins earns the first stanza: "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect." Girt about the loins with power from heaven, the warrior was filled with vigour, far above all created might; and, whereas, without this wonderous belt he would have been feeble and effeminate, with relaxed energies and scattered forces, he felt himself, when braced with the girdle of truth, to be compact in purpose, courageous in daring, and concentrated in power; so that his course was a complete success, so undisturbed by disastrous defeat as to be called "perfect." Have we been made more than conquerors over sin, and has our life hitherto been such as becometh the gospel? Then let us ascribe all the glory to him who girt us with his own inexhaustible strength, that we might be unconquered in battle and unwearied in pilgrimage.

33. The conqueror's feet had been shod by a divine hand, and the next note must, therefore, refer to them. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places." Pursuing his foes the warrior had been swift of foot as a young roe, but, instead of taking pleasure in the legs of a man, he ascribes the boon of swiftness to the Lord alone. When our thoughts are nimble, and our spirits rapid, like the chariots of Amminadib, let us not forget that our best Beloved's hand has given us the choice favour. Climbing into impregnable fortresses, David had been preserved from slipping, and made to stand where scarce the wild goat can find a footing; herein was preserving mercy manifested. We, too, have had our *high places* of honour, service, temptation, and danger, but hitherto we have been kept from falling. Bring hither the harp, and let us emulate the Psalmist's joyful thanksgiving; had we fallen, our wailings must have been terrible; since we have stood, let our gratitude be fervent.

31. "*He teacheth my hands to war.*" Martial prowess and skill in the use of weapons are gratefully acknowledged to be the result of divine teaching; no sacrifice is offered at the shrine of self in praise of natural dexterity, or acquired skilfulness; but, regarding all warlike prowess as a gift of heavenly favour, thankfulness is presented to the Giver. The Holy Spirit is the great Drill-master of heavenly soldiers. "*So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.*" A bow of brass is probably meant, and these bows could scarcely be bent by the arms alone, the archer had to gain the assistance of his foot; it was, therefore, a great feat of strength to bend the bow, so far as even to snap it in halves. This was meant of the enemies' bow, which he not only snatched from his grasp, but rendered useless by breaking it in pieces. Jesus not only destroyed the fiery suggestions of Satan, but he broke his arguments with which he shot them, by using Holy Scripture against him; by the same means we may win a like triumph, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder by the sharp edge of revealed truth. Probably David had by nature a vigorous bodily frame; but it is even more likely that, like Samson, he was at times clothed with more than common strength; at any rate, he ascribes the honour of his feats entirely to his God. Let us never wickedly rob the Lord of his due, but faithfully give unto him the glory which is due unto his name.

35. "*Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation.*" Above all we must take the shield of faith, for nothing else can quench Satan's fiery darts; this shield is of celestial workmanship, and is in all cases a direct gift from God himself; it is the channel, the sign, the guarantee, and the earnest of perfect salvation. "*Thy right hand hath holden me up.*" Secret support is administered to us by the preserving grace of God, and at the same time Providence kindly yields us manifest aid. We are such babes that we cannot stand alone; but when the Lord's right hand upholds us, we are like brazen pillars which cannot be moved. "*Thy gentleness hath made me great.*" There are several readings of this sentence. The word is capable of being translated, "*thy goodness hath made me great.*" David saw much of benevolence in God's action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God. "*Thy providence*" is another reading, which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, "*thy help,*" which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Certain learned annotators tell us that the text means, "*thy humility hath made me great.*" "*Thy condescension*" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which he have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God's making himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that if God should manifest his greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under his feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings altogether; as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "*thy discipline*"—thy fatherly correction—"*hath made me great;*" while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "*thy word hath increased me.*" Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the descending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. Let us all feel this sentiment in our own hearts, and confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at his feet, and cry, "*thy gentleness hath made me great.*"

36. "*Thou hast enlarged my steps.*" A smooth pathway leading to spacious possessions and camping-grounds had been opened up for him. Instead of threading the narrow mountain paths, and hiding in the cracks and corners of caverns, he was able to traverse the plains and dwell under his own vine and fig tree. It is no small mercy to be brought into full Christian liberty and enlargement, but it is a greater favour still to be enabled to walk worthily in such liberty, not being permitted to slip with our feet. To stand upon the rocks of affliction is the result of gracious upholding, but that aid is quite as much needed in the luxurious plains of prosperity.

37. The preservation of the saints bodes ill for their adversaries. The Amalekites thought themselves clear away with their booty, but when David's God guided him in the pursuit, they were soon overtaken and cut in pieces. When God is with us sins and sorrows flee, and all forms of evil are "*consumed*" before the power

of grace. What a noble picture this and the following verses present to us of the victories of our glorious Lord Jesus!

38. The destruction of our spiritual enemies is complete. We may exult over sin, death and hell, as disarmed and disabled for us by our conquering Lord; may he graciously give them a like defeat *within* us.

39 and 40. It is impossible to be too frequent in the duty of ascribing all our victories to the God of our salvation. It is true that we have to wrestle with our spiritual antagonists, but the triumph is far more the Lord's than ours. We must not boast like the ambitious votaries of vainglory, but we may exult as the willing and believing instruments in the Lord's hands of accomplishing his great designs.

41. "*They cried, but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.*" Prayer is so notable a weapon that even the wicked will take to it in their fits of desperation. Bad men have appealed to God against God's own servants, but all in vain; the kingdom of heaven is not divided, and God never succours his foes at the expense of his friends. There are prayers to God which are no better than blasphemy, which bring no comfortable reply, but rather provoke the Lord to greater wrath. Shall I ask a man to wound or slay his own child to gratify my malice? Would he not resent the insult against his humanity? How much less will Jehovah regard the cruel desires of the enemies of the church, who dare to offer their prayers for its destruction calling its existence schism, and its doctrine heresy!

42. The defeat of the nations who fought with King David was so utter and complete that they were like powders pounded in a mortar; their power was broken into fragments and they became as weak as dust before the wind, and as mean as the mire of the roads. Thus powerless and base are the enemies of God now become through the victory of the Son of David upon the cross. Arise, O my soul, and meet thine enemies, for they have sustained a deadly blow, and will fall before thy bold advance.

" Hell and my sins resist my course,  
But hell and sin are vanquish'd foes;  
My Jesus nail'd them to his cross,  
And sung the triumph when he rose."

43. "*Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people.*" Internal strife is very hard to deal with. A civil war is war in its most miserable form; it is a subject for warmest gratitude when concord rules within. Our poet praises Jehovah for the union and peace which smiled in his dominions, and if we have peace in the three kingdoms of our spirit, soul, and body, we are in duty bound to give Jehovah a song. Unity in a church should assuredly excite like gratitude. "*Thou hast made me the head of the heathen; a people whom I have not known shall serve me.*" The neighbouring nations yielded to the sway of Judah's prince. Oh when shall all lands adore King Jesus, and serve him with holy joy? Surely there is far more of Jesus than of David here. Missionaries may derive rich encouragement from the positive declaration that heathen lands shall own the Headship of the Crucified.

44. "*As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.*" Thus readily did the once struggling captain become a far-renowned victor, and thus easy shall be our triumphs. We prefer, however, to speak of Jesus. In many cases the gospel is speedily received by hearts apparently unprepared for it. Those who have never heard the gospel before, have been charmed by its first message, and yielded obedience to it; while others, alas! who are accustomed to its joyful sound, are rather hardened than softened by its teachings. The grace of God sometimes runs like fire among the stubble, and a nation is born in a day. "Love at first sight" is no uncommon thing when Jesus is the wooer. He can write Cæsar's message without boasting, *Veni, vidi, vici*; his gospel is in some cases no sooner heard than believed. What inducements to spread abroad the doctrine of the cross!

45. "*The strangers shall fade away.*" Like sear leaves or blasted trees our foes and Christ's foes shall find no sap and stamina remaining in them. Those who are strangers to Jesus are strangers to all lasting happiness; those must soon fade who refuse to be watered from the river of life. "*And be afraid out of their close places.*" Out of their mountain fastnesses the heathen crept in fear to own allegiance to Israel's king, and even so, from the castles of self-confidence and the dens of carnal security, poor sinners come bending before the Saviour, Christ the Lord. Our sins which have entrenched themselves in our flesh and blood as in impregnable forts, shall yet be

driven forth by the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit, and we shall serve the Lord in singleness of heart.

Thus with remembrances of conquests in the past, and with glad anticipations of victories yet to come the sweet singer closes the description, and returns to exercise of more direct adoration of his gracious God.

46 The LORD liveth ; and blessed be my rock ; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 *It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.*

48 He delivereth me from mine enemies : yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me : thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king ; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

46. "*The Lord liveth.*" Possessing underived, essential, independent and eternal life. We serve no inanimate, imaginary, or dying God. He only hath immortality. Like loyal subjects let us cry, Live on, O God. Long live the King of kings. By thine immortality do we dedicate ourselves afresh to thee. As the Lord our God liveth so would we live to him. "*And blessed be my rock.*" He is the ground of our hope, and let him be the subject of our praise. Our hearts bless the Lord, with holy love extolling him.

Jehovah lives, my rock be blest!  
Praised be the God who gives me rest!

"*Let the God of my salvation be exalted.*" As our Saviour, the Lord should more than ever be glorified. We should publish abroad the story of the covenant and the cross, the Father's election, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's regeneration. He who rescues us from deserved ruin should be very dear to us. In heaven they sing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us in his blood;" the like music should be common in the assemblies of the saints below.

47. "*It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.*" To rejoice in personal revenge is unhallowed and evil, but David viewed himself as the instrument of vengeance upon the enemies of God and his people, and had he not rejoiced in the success accorded to him he would have been worthy of censure. That sinners perish is in itself a painful consideration, but that the Lord's law is avenged upon those who break it is to the devout mind a theme for thankfulness. We must, however, always remember that vengeance is never ours, vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he is so just and withal so long-suffering in the exercise of it, that we may safely leave its administration in his hands.

48. From all enemies, and especially from one who was pre-eminent in violence, the Lord's anointed was preserved, and at the last over the head of Saul and all other adversaries he reigned in honour. The like end awaits every saint, because Jesus who stooped to be lightly esteemed among men is now made to sit far above all principalities and powers.

49. Paul cites this verse (Rom. xv. 9) : "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." This is clear evidence that David's Lord is here, but David is here too, and is to be viewed as an example of a holy soul making its boast in God even in the presence of ungodly men. Who are the despisers of God that we should stop our mouths for them ? We will sing to our God whether they like it or no, and force upon them the knowledge of his goodness. Too much politeness to traitors may be treason to our King.

50. This is the winding-up verse into which the writer throws a fulness of expression, indicating the most rapturous delight of gratitude. "*Great deliverance.*" The word "*deliverance*" is plural, to show the variety and completeness of the salvation ; the adjective "*great*" is well placed if we consider from what, to what, and how we are saved. All this mercy is given to us in our King, the Lord's Anointed, and those are blessed indeed who as his seed may expect mercy to be built up for evermore. The Lord was faithful to the literal David, and he will not break his

covenant with the spiritual David, for that would far more involve the honour of his crown and character.

The Psalm concludes in the same loving spirit which shone upon its commencement ; happy are they who can sing on from love to love, even as the pilgrims marched from strength to strength.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—The general argument of the Psalm may be thus stated : it is a magnificent eucharistic ode. It begins with a celebration of the glorious perfections of the Divinity, whose assistance the speaker had so often experienced. He describes, or rather, he delineates, his perils, the power of his enemies, his sudden deliverance from them, and the indignation and power of his divine deliverer manifested in their overthrow. He paints these in so lively colours, that while we read we seem to see the lightning, to hear the thunders, to feel the earthquake. He afterwards describes his victories, so that we seem to be eye-witnesses of them, and take part in them. He predicts a wide-extended empire, and concludes with a lofty expression of grateful adoration of Jehovah, the Author of all his deliverances and triumphs. The style is highly oratorical and poetical, sublime, and full of uncommon figures of speech. It is the natural language of a person of the highest mental endowments, under a divine inspiration, deeply affected by remarkable divine benefits, and filled with the most lofty conceptions of the divine character and dispensations.—*John Brown, D.D., 1853.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Kittó, in "The Pictorial Bible," has the following note upon 2 Samuel xxii. :—"This is the same as the eighteenth Psalm . . . The Rabbins reckon up seventy-four differences between the two copies, most of them very minute. They probably arose from the fact that the poem was, as they conjecture, composed by David in his youth, and revised in his later days when he sent it to the chief musician. The present is, of course, supposed to be the earlier copy."

*Whole Psalm.*—The eighteenth Psalm is called by Michaelis more artificial, and less truly terrible than the Mosaic odes. In structure it may be so, but surely not in spirit. It appears to many besides us, one of the most magnificent lyrical raptures in the Scriptures. As if the poet had dipped his pen in "the brightness of that light which was before his eye," so he describes the descending God. Perhaps it may be objected that the *nodus* is hardly worthy of the *vindex*—to deliver David from his enemies, could Deity ever be imagined to come down ? But the objector knows not the character of the ancient Hebrew mind. God in its view had not to descend from heaven ; he was nigh—a cloud like a man's hand might conceal—a cry, a look might bring him down. And why should not David's fancy clothe him, as he came, in a panoply befitting his dignity, in clouds spangled with coals of fire ? If he was to descend, why not in state ? The proof of the grandeur of this Psalm is in the fact, that it has borne the test of almost every translation, and made doggerel erect itself, and become divine. Even Sternhold and Hopkins its fiery whirlwind lifts up, purifies, touches into true power, and then throws down, helpless and panting, upon their ancient common. Perhaps the great charm of the eighteenth, apart from the poetry of the descent, is the exquisite and subtle alternation of the *I* and the *Thou*. We have spoken of parallelism, as the key to the mechanism of Hebrew song. We find this as existing between David and God—the delivered and the deliverer—beautifully pursued throughout the whole of this Psalm. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." "He sent from above ; he took me ; he drew me out of many waters." "Thou wilt light my candle." "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation." "Thou hast girded me with strength unto battle." "Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies." "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen." It has been ingeniously argued, that the existence of the *I* suggests, inevitably as a polar opposite, the thought of the *Thou*, that the personality of man proves thus the personality of God ; but, be this as it may, David's per-

ception of that personality is nowhere so intense as here. He seems not only to see, but to feel and touch, the object of his gratitude and worship.—*George Gi fillan, in "The Bards of the Bible," 1852.*

*Whole Psalm.*—He that would be wise, let him read the Proverbs; he that would be holy, let him read the Psalms. Every line in this book breathes peculiar sanctity. This Psalm, though placed among the first, was penned among the last, as the preface assures us, and is left as the epitome of the general history of David's life. It is twice recorded in the Scripture (2 Sam. xxii., and in this book of Psalms), for the excellency and sweetness thereof; surely that we should take double notice of it. Holy David, being near the shore, here looks on his former dangers and deliverances with a thankful heart, and writes this Psalm to bless the Lord: as if each of you that are grown into years should review your lives and observe the wonderful goodness and providence of God towards you; and then sit down and write a modest memorial of his most remarkable mercies, for the comfort of yourselves and posterity; an excellent practice. What a comfort would it be for you to read how good your God was to your father or grandfather, that are dead and gone! So would your children rejoice in the Lord upon the reading of his goodness to you; and you cannot have a better pattern for this than holy David, who wrote this Psalm when he was threescore and seven years old; when he had outlived most of his troubles, and almost ready for his journey to his Father in heaven, he resolves to leave this good report of him upon earth. And I pray mark how he begins: he sets not up trophies to himself, but triumphs in his God—"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." As the love of God is the beginning of all our mercies, so love to God should be the end and effect of them all. As the stream leads us to the spring, so all the gifts of God must lead us to the giver of them. Lord, thou hast saved me from sickness, "I will love thee;" from death and hell, "I will love thee; on me thou hast bestowed grace and comfort, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." And after he had heaped on God all the sweet names he could devise (verse 2), as the true saint thinks he can never speak too well of God, or too ill of himself, then he begins his narrative. 1. Of his dangers (verse 4); "Snares of death," "Floods of ungodly men," "Sorrows of hell." Hell and earth are combined against each holy man, and will trouble sufficiently in this world, if they cannot keep him out of a better. 2. Of his retreat, and that was, earnest prayer to God (verse 6), "I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God." When our prayers are cries ardent and importunate, then they speed: "My cry came before him, even into his ears." The mother trifles while the child whimpers, but when he raises his note—strains every nerve and cries every vein—then she throws all aside, and gives him his desire. While our prayers are only whispers, our God can take his rest; but when we fall to crying, "Now will I arise, saith the Lord." 3. Of his rescue (verses 7 to 20), by the powerful and terrible arm of the Lord, who is in a lofty strain brought in to his servant's help, as if he would mingle heaven and earth together, rather than leave his child in the lion's paws. 4. Of the reason of this gracious dealing of God with him (verse 20, etc.) He was a righteous person, and he had a righteous cause. And thereupon he turns to God, saying, Thou hast dealt with me just as thou art wont to do, for "with the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright."—*Richard Steele's "Plain Discourse upon Uprightness," 1670.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Sometimes the Lord cheers and comforts the hearts of his people with smiling and reviving providences, both public and personal. There are times of lifting up, as well as casting down by the hand of providence. The scene changes, the aspects of providence are very cheerful and encouraging; their winter seems to be over; they put off their garments of mourning; and then, ah, what sweet returns are made to heavenly gracious souls! Doth God lift them up by prosperity? they also will lift up their God by praises. See title, and verses 1—3 of Psalm xviii. So Moses, and the people with him (Exodus xv.), when God had delivered them from Pharaoh, how do they exalt him in a song of thanksgiving, which for the elegance and spirituality of it, is made an emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the saints. Rev. xv. 1.—*John Flavel.*

*Title.*—"The servant of the Lord;"—the name given to Moses (Josh. i. 1, 13, 15, and in nine other places of that book) and to Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 29; Judg. ii. 8); but to none other except David (here, and in the title to Ps. xxxvi.). Cp. Acts xiii. 36, Ἰσραηλῆστας. This is significant; reminding us of the place occupied by David in the history of Israel. He was the appointed successor of Moses and Joshua,

who extended the power of Israel over the whole region allotted to them by Divine promise.—*W. Kay*, 1871.

*Title*.—This Psalm, which is entitled a *shirah* (or song), is David's hymn of praise to God for his deliverance from all his enemies (see the title, and above, 2 Sam. xxii), and has an appropriate place in the present group of Psalms, which speak of resurrection after suffering. It is entitled a Psalm of David, "*the servant of the Lord*," and thus is coupled with another Psalm of deliverance, Ps. xxxvi.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

*Verse 1*.—"I will love thee, O Lord."—The word whereby the Psalmist expresseth his entire affection, in the noun signifieth a womb, and importeth such an affection as cometh from the innermost part of man (or matrix), from his bowels, from the bottom of his heart, as we speak. It is, therefore, oft put for such pity and compassion as moveth the bowels. Some, therefore, thus translate that phrase, "From my innermost bowels will I love thee, O Lord." To give evidence of his entire and ardent love of God, he oft professeth his wonderful great love to God's commandments, whereof he saith with admiration, "Oh, how I love thy law! I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. I love them exceedingly" (Psalm cxix. 97, 127, 167); therefore, he saith to God, "Consider how I love thy precepts" (verse 159).—*William Gouge*, 1575—1653.

*Verse 1*.—"I will love thee." Intimately as a mother loves the child that comes out of her womb.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations*, 1651.

*Verses 1, 2*.—God hath, as it were, made himself over to believers. David doth not say, God will give or bestow salvation upon me; but he saith, "He is the horn of my salvation." It is God himself who is the salvation and the portion of his people. They would not care much for salvation if God were not their salvation. It more pleaseth the saints that they enjoy God, than that they enjoy salvation. False and carnal spirits will express a great deal of desire after salvation, for they like salvation, heaven, and glory well; but they never express any longing desire after God and Jesus Christ. They love salvation, but they care not for a Saviour. Now that which faith pitcheth most upon is God himself; he shall be my salvation, let me have him, and that is salvation enough; he is my life, he is my comfort, he is my riches, he is my honour, and he is my all. Thus David's heart acted immediately upon God, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." It pleased holy David more that God was his strength, than that God gave him strength; that God was his deliverer, than that he was delivered; that God was his fortress, his buckler, his horn, his high tower, than that he gave him the effect of all these. It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints more that God is their salvation, whether temporal or eternal, than that he saves them: the saints look more at God than at all that is God's.—*Joseph Caryl*.

*Verses 1, 2*.—David speaks like one in love with God, for he doth adorn him with confession of praise, and his mouth is filled with the praise of the Lord, which he expresseth in this exuberancy and redundancy of holy oratory.—*Edward Marbury*.

*Verse 2*.—"The Lord is my rock." As the rocks that are hard to be clambered unto are good refuges to fly unto from the face of pursuers, so God is the safety of all such as in distress do fly to him for succour.—*Robert Cawdry*.

*Verse 2*.—"My deliverer." He who took himself to one of these inaccessible retreats, was sometimes obliged by famine to surrender to his enemy, who lay in wait for him beneath; but Jehovah gives him not only security but liberty; not only preserves him, as it were, in an inaccessible retreat, but at the same time enables him to go forth in safety.—*Jarchi*.

*Verse 2*.—"The horn of my salvation." The allusion here is doubtful. Some have supposed the reference to be to the horns of animals, by which they defend themselves and attack their enemies. "God is to me, does for me, what their horns do for them." Others consider it as referring to the well-established fact, that warriors were accustomed to place horns, or ornaments like horns, on their helmets. The horn stands for the helmet; and "the helmet of salvation" is an expression equivalent to "a saving, a protecting helmet." Others consider the reference as to the corners or handles of the altar in the court of the tabernacle or temple, which are called its horns. Others suppose the reference to be to the highest point of a lofty and precipitous mountain, which we are accustomed to call its peak. No



doubt, in the Hebrew language, horn is used for mountain as in Isaiah v. 1. A very fertile mountain is called a horn of oil. The sense is substantially the same, whichever of these views we take; though, from the connection with "shield" or "buckler," I am induced to consider the second of these views as the most probable. It seems the same idea as that expressed, Psalm cxi. 7, "Thou hast covered," and thou wilt cover "my head in the day of battle."—*John Brown.*

*Verse 2.*—"The horn of my salvation." Horns are the well-known emblems of strength and power, both in the sacred and profane writers; by a metaphor taken from horned animals, which are frequently made subjects of comparison by poetical writers, and the strength of which, whether for offence or defence, consists principally in their horns. Bruce speaks of a remarkable head-dress worn by the governors of provinces in Abyssinia, consisting of a large broad fillet, bound upon their foreheads and tied behind their heads, and having in the middle of it a horn, or a conical piece of silver, gilt, about four inches long, much in the shape of our common candle extinguishers. It is called *kirn* or horn, and is only worn on reviews or parades after victory. He supposes this, like other Abyssinian usages, to be taken from the Hebrews, and is of opinion that there are many allusions to the practice in Scripture, in the expressions, "lifting up the horn," "exalting the horn," and the like.—*Richard Mant.*

*Verse 2.*—"The Lord is my high tower." If a man do run to a tower, yet if that be a weak and an insufficient tower, without men and munition, and a ruinous shaken tower; or if a man do make choice of a tower, a strong sufficient tower, yet if in his danger he betake not himself to that tower, but he sit still; or if he sit not still, yet he but only go and walk on easily towards it, he may well be met withal, and a danger may arrest him, surprise him, and cut him off before he get the tower over his head. But the man that will be safe, as he must choose a strong tower, so he must go to, nay, *run* into that tower. Running will not secure a man unless the tower be strong. . . . David was got unto his tower, and in that tower there was thundering ordnance, and David put fire to them by prayer, verse 6, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears." Here David prays and gives fire to the cannon, and what followed? See verses 7, 8, 13, 14. "Then the earth shook and trembled," etc. "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils," etc. "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them." There were no guns nor ordnance invented and in use in David's time, and yet David's prayers being in this tower, did him as good service against his enemies as all the ordnance and cannons in the world have done. David had thundering ordnance, and with them discomfited his enemies long before powder and guns were invented. It is a memorable and well known story of that Christian legion that was in Marcus Aurelius's army: the enemy being in great straits, those Christian soldiers did by their prayers not only procure rain, by which his languishing army was refreshed, but also obtained hail mixed with thunderbolts against his enemies, upon which he honoured them with the name of *Legio fulminatrix*, the Thundering Legion. They used David's cannon against the enemy, and discharged that thundering ordnance by their prayers, and that to the confusion of their enemies.—*Jeremiah Dyke's "Righteous Man's Tower,"* 1639.

*Verse 2.*—"My high tower." Even as the fowls of the air, that they may escape the nets and snares of the fowlers, are wont to fly up on high; so we, to avoid the infinite snares of innumerable temptations, must fly to God; and lift up ourselves from the corruptions, lying vanities, and deceitful sleights of the world.—*Robert Cawdray.*

*Verse 3.*—"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." Prayer and invocation of God should always be joined with praises and thanksgivings, and used as a means whereby faith shall extract the good which it knoweth is in God, and of which he hath made promise.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 3.*—"So shall I be saved from mine enemies." Whoso comes to God as he should will not call in vain. The right kind of prayer is the most potent instrumentality known on earth.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse 4.*—"Sorrrows of death." It is heaven's peculiar to be the land of the living; all this life is at most but the shadow of death, the gate of death, the sorrows

of death, the *snares* of death, the *terrors* of death, the *chambers* of death, the *sentence* of death, the *savour* of death, the *ministration* of death, the *way* of death. *Matthew Griffith*. 1634.

*Verse 4.*—"The bands or cords of death encompassed me." It is not very easy to fix the precise meaning of the phrase, "bands" or "cords" of death. It may either be considered as equivalent to "the bands by which the dead are bound," in which case, to be encircled with the bands of death is just a figurative expression for being dead; or it may be considered as equivalent to the bands in which a person is bound in the prospect of a violent death, and by which his violent death is secured, he being prevented from escaping. It has been supposed by some, that the allusion is to the ancient mode of hunting wild animals. A considerable tract of country was surrounded with strong ropes. The circle was gradually contracted, till the object of pursuit was so confined as to become an easy prey to the hunter. These cords were the cords of death, securing the death of the animal. The phrase is applicable to our Lord in both senses; but as "the floods" of wickedness, or the wicked, are represented as making him afraid subsequently to his being encircled with the cords of death, I am disposed to understand it in the latter of these two senses.—*John Brown*.

*Verse 4.*—"The floods." There is no metaphor of more frequent occurrence with the sacred poets, than that which represents dreadful and unexpected calamities under the images of overwhelming waters. This image seems to have been especially familiar with the Hebrews, inasmuch as it was derived from the peculiar habit and nature of their own country. They had continually before their eyes the river Jordan, annually overflowing its banks, when at the approach of summer the snows of Libanus and the neighbouring mountains melted, and, suddenly pouring down in torrents, swelled the current of the river. Besides, the whole country of Palestine, although it was not watered by many perennial streams, was, from the mountainous character of the greater part of it, liable to numerous torrents, which precipitated themselves through the narrow valleys after the periodical rainy seasons. This image, therefore, however known, and adopted by other poets, may be considered as particularly familiar and, as it were, domestic with the Hebrews; who accordingly introduce it with greater frequency and freedom.—*Robert Lowth* (*Bishop*), 1710—1787.

*Verse 5.*—"The snares of death prevented me." The word "snares," signifies such traps or gins as are laid for birds and wild beasts. The English word "prevent" has changed its meaning in some measure since our authorised translation of the Bible was made. Its original meaning is to "come before."—*John Brown*.

*Verse 6.*—"In my distress." If you listen even to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Spirit hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see, in needleworks and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground; judge, therefore, of the pleasures of the heart by the pleasures of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odours—most fragrant when they are crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.—*Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, etc.*, 1561—1626.

*Verse 6.*—"I called upon the Lord and cried." Prayer is not eloquence but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; it is the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.—*Hannah Moore*, 1745—1833.

*Verse 6.*—"He heard my voice out of his temple," etc. The *Ædiles* or chamberlains among the Romans, had ever their doors standing open for all who had occasion of request or complaint to have free access to them. "God's mercy-doors are wide open to the prayers of his faithful people." The Persian kings held it a piece of their silly glory to deny an easy access to their greatest subjects. It was death to solicit them uncalled. Esther herself was afraid. But the king of heaven manifesteth himself to his people, he calls to his spouse, with, "Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice," etc., and assigneth her negligence herein as the cause of her soul-sickness. The door of the tabernacle was not of any hard or debarring matter, but a veil, which is easily penetrable. And whereas in the temple none came near to worship, but only the high priest, others stood without in the outer court. God's

people are now a kingdom of priests, and are said to worship in the temple, and at the altar. Rev. xi. 1. "Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith;" "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. x. 22; iv. 16.—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels," 1785.*

Verse 6.—Oh! how true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

Verses 6, 7.—The prayer of a single saint is sometimes followed with wonderful effects; "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth:" what then can a thundering legion of such praying souls do? It was said of Luther, *iste vir potuit cum Deo quicquid voluit*, That man could have of God what he would; his enemies felt the weight of his prayers; and the church of God reaped the benefits thereof. The Queen of Scots professed she was more afraid of the prayers of Mr. Knox, than of an army of ten thousand men. These were mighty wrestlers with God, howsoever contemned and vilified among their enemies. There will a time come when God will hear the prayers of his people who are continually crying in his ears, "How long, Lord, how long?"—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"Then the earth shook and trembled." The word *נָדָה* signifies, to move or shake violently: it is employed, also, to denote the reeling and staggering of a drunken man. Jer. xxv. 16.—*John Morison, in loc.*

Verse 7.—Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough if God hath said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation and the Author of the promise will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other. Isaiah lxiii. 1. "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iiii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because he defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves as Psalm lxxvii. 8; "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. Accuse him not of slowness who hath said, "I come quickly," that is, he comes as soon as all things are ready and ripe for his appearance. 'Tis as true that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Peter iii. 9), as that he is never guilty of breaking his promise. Wait, therefore, how long soever he tarry; do not give over expecting: the heart of God is not turned though his face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 7, 8.—The volcanic phenomena of Palestine open a question of which the data are, in a scientific point of view, too imperfect to be discussed; but there is enough in the history and literature of the people to show that there was an agency of this kind at work. The valley of the Jordan, both in its desolation and vegetation, was one continued portent; and from its crevices ramified even into the interior of Judæa the startling appearances, if not of the volcano, at least of the earthquake. Their historical effect in the special theatres of their operation will appear as we proceed; but their traces on the permanent feeling of the nation must be noticed here. The writings of the psalmists and prophets abound with indications which

escape the eye of a superficial reader. Like the soil of their country, they actually heave and labour with the fiery convulsions which glow beneath their surface.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

*Verses 7—9.*—While Jesus hung on the cross a preternatural “darkness covered all the land;” and no sooner had he yielded up his spirit, than “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top even to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”—*John Brown.*

*Verses 7—9.*—In the night in which the Idumæans lay before Jerusalem, there arose a prodigious tempest and fierce winds, with most vehement rains, frequent lightnings, and terrible thunderings, and great roarings of the shaken earth; and it was manifest that the state of the universe was disordered at the slaughter of men; so that one might guess that these were signs of no small calamity . . . . At the day of Pentecost, when the priests, by night, went into the inner temple, according to their custom, to execute their office, they said they perceived, first of all, a shake and a noise, and after that a sudden voice, “Let us go hence.” . . . . A few days after the feast of unleavened bread, a strange and almost incredible sight was seen, which would, I suppose, be taken for a mere fable, were it not related by such as saw it, and did not the miseries which followed appear answerable to the signs; for, before the sun set, were seen on high, in the air, all over the country, chariots and armed regiments moving swiftly in the clouds, and encompassing the city.—*Flavius Josephus, 37—103.*

*Verse 8.*—“*There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,*” אָנַחַן מִנְּסָוֹתָי. Or there ascended into his nose, as the words, literally rendered, signify. The ancients placed the seat of anger in the nose, or nostrils; because when it grows warm and violent, it discovers itself, as it were, by a heated vehement breath, that proceeds from them.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D., F.R. and A.S.S., 1766.*

*Verses 8—19.*—David calls the full force of poetical imagery to aid, to describe in a becoming manner the marvels of his deliverances. He means to say that they were as manifest as the signs of heaven and earth, as sudden and powerful as the phenomena in the kingdom of nature surprise terrified mortals. *Deliverance* being his theme, he might have taken the figure from the *peaceable* phenomena of the heavens. But since man heeds heaven more in *anger* than in *blessing*, and regards God more when he descends on earth in the *storm* than in the *rainbow*, David describes the blessed condescension of God by the figure of a tempest. In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of this figure, we should endeavour to realise the full power of an Oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm xxix. Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the *coals* in verse 8: the clouds approach the mountain summits—the *heavens bow*, as verse 9 has it; the storm shakes its pinions; enwrapped in thick clouds as in a tent, God descends to the earth; hail (not unfrequently attending Eastern storms) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendour which hides the Lord of nature. He speaks, and thunder is his voice; he shoots, and flashes of lightning are his arrows. At his rebuke, and at the blast of his breath the earth recedes—the sea foams up, and its beds are seen—the land bursts, and the foundations of the world are discovered. And lo! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds, and the destructive fire grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the All-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, D.D., Ph.D. 1856.*

*Verse 9.*—“*He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*” As in a tempest the clouds come nearer to the earth, and from the mountains to the valleys, so the Psalmist adopts this figure peculiar to such occasions as described God’s near approach to judgment (Psalm cxliv. 5, etc.; Heb. iii. 6); “*and darkness was under his feet.*” We have here the increase of the horrors of the tempest, and its still nearer approach, but God is not yet revealed, it is darkness under his feet. Thick darkness was the

people are now a kingdom of priests, and are said to worship in the temple, and at the altar. Rev. xi. 1. "Let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith: "let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. x. 22; iv. 16.—*Charles Bradbury's "Cabinet of Jewels,"* 1785.

*Verse 6.*—Oh! how true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!—*Robert Leighton, D.D.*

*Verses 6, 7.*—The prayer of a single saint is sometimes followed with wonderful effects; "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth: "what then can a thundering legion of such praying souls do? It was said of Luther, *iste vir potuit cum Deo quicquid voluit*, That man could have of God what he would; his enemies felt the weight of his prayers; and the church of God reaped the benefits thereof. The Queen of Scots professed she was more afraid of the prayers of Mr. Knox, than of an army of ten thousand men. These were mighty wrestlers with God, howsoever contemned and vilified among their enemies. There will a time come when God will hear the prayers of his people who are continually crying in his ears, "How long, Lord, how long?"—*John Flavel.*

*Verse 7.*—"Then the earth shook and trembled." The word שָׁקַע signifies, to move or shake violently: it is employed, also, to denote the reeling and staggering of a drunken man. Jer. xxv. 16.—*John Morison, in loc.*

*Verse 7.*—Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough if God hath said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation and the Author of the promise will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other. Isaiah lxiii. 1. "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because he defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves as Psalm lxxvii. 8; "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. Accuse him not of slowness who hath said, "I come quickly," that is, he comes as soon as all things are ready and ripe for his appearance. 'Tis as true that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (2 Peter iii. 9), as that he is never guilty of breaking his promise. Wait, therefore, how long soever he tarry; do not give over expecting: the heart of God is not turned though his face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered.—*Timothy Cruso.*

*Verses 7, 8.*—The volcanic phenomena of Palestine open a question of which the data are, in a scientific point of view, too imperfect to be discussed; but there is enough in the history and literature of the people to show that there was an agency of this kind at work. The valley of the Jordan, both in its desolation and vegetation, was one continued portent; and from its crevices ramified even into the interior of Judæa the startling appearances, if not of the volcano, at least of the earthquake. Their historical effect in the special theatres of their operation will appear as we proceed; but their traces on the permanent feeling of the nation must be noticed here. The writings of the psalmists and prophets abound with indications which

escape the eye of a superficial reader. Like the soil of their country, they actually heave and labour with the fiery convulsions which glow beneath their surface.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

*Verses 7—9.*—While Jesus hung on the cross a preternatural “darkness covered all the land;” and no sooner had he yielded up his spirit, than “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top even to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”—*John Brown.*

*Verses 7—9.*—In the night in which the Idumæans lay before Jerusalem, there arose a prodigious tempest and fierce winds, with most vehement rains, frequent lightnings, and terrible thunderings, and great roarings of the shaken earth; and it was manifest that the state of the universe was disordered at the slaughter of men; so that one might guess that these were signs of no small calamity . . . . At the day of Pentecost, when the priests, by night, went into the inner temple, according to their custom, to execute their office, they said they perceived, first of all, a shake and a noise, and after that a sudden voice, “Let us go hence.” . . . . A few days after the feast of unleavened bread, a strange and almost incredible sight was seen, which would, I suppose, be taken for a mere fable, were it not related by such as saw it, and did not the miseries which followed appear answerable to the signs; for, before the sun set, were seen on high, in the air, all over the country, chariots and armed regiments moving swiftly in the clouds, and encompassing the city.—*Flavius Josephus, 37—103.*

*Verse 8.*—“*There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,*” יָבִיחַ מִנְּזִמָּה לְנֹסֶה. Or there ascended into his nose, as the words, literally rendered, signify. The ancients placed the seat of anger in the nose, or nostrils; because when it grows warm and violent, it discovers itself, as it were, by a heated vehement breath, that proceeds from them.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D., F.R. and A.S.S., 1766.*

*Verses 8—19.*—David calls the full force of poetical imagery to aid, to describe in a becoming manner the marvels of his deliverances. He means to say that they were as manifest as the signs of heaven and earth, as sudden and powerful as the phenomena in the kingdom of nature surprise terrified mortals. *Deliverance* being his theme, he might have taken the figure from the *peaceable* phenomena of the heavens. But since man heeds heaven more in *anger* than in *blessing*, and regards God more when he descends on earth in the *storm* than in the *rainbow*, David describes the blessed condescension of God by the figure of a tempest. In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of this figure, we should endeavour to realise the full power of an Oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm xxix. Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the *coals* in verse 8: the clouds approach the mountain summits—the *heavens bow*, as verse 9 has it; the storm shakes its pinions; enwrapped in thick clouds as in a tent, God descends to the earth; hail (not infrequently attending Eastern storms) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendour which hides the Lord of nature. He speaks, and thunder is his voice; he shoots, and flashes of lightning are his arrows. At his rebuke, and at the blast of his breath the earth recedes—the sea foams up, and its beds are seen—the land bursts, and the foundations of the world are discovered. And lo! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds, and the destructive fire grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the All-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, D.D., Ph.D. 1856.*

*Verse 9.*—“*He bowed the heavens also, and came down.*” As in a tempest the clouds come nearer to the earth, and from the mountains to the valleys, so the Psalmist adopts this figure peculiar to such occasions as described God’s near approach to judgment (Psalm cxliv. 5, etc.; Heb. iii. 6); “*and darkness was under his feet.*” We have here the increase of the horrors of the tempest, and its still nearer approach, but God is not yet revealed, it is darkness under his feet. Thick darkness was the

me had not God upheld and supported me when I was in danger of perishing. God was to the Psalmist *מִשְׁבֵּט*, for a staff to support him. What the staff is to one that is ready to fall, the means of recovering and preserving him; that was God to David in the time of his extremity. For he several times preserved him from Saul, when he, David, thought his destruction by him almost unavoidable. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 26, 27.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 18.—“*They prevented me in the day of my calamity : but the Lord was my stay.*” When Henry the Eighth had spoken and written bitterly against Luther; saith Luther, Tell the Henries, the bishops, the Turks, and the devil himself, do what they can, we are the children of the kingdom, worshipping of the true God, whom they, and such as they, spit upon and crucified. And of the same spirit were many martyrs. Basil affirms of the primitive saints, that they had so much courage and confidence in their sufferings, that many of the heathens seeing their heroic zeal and constancy, turned Christians.—*Charles Bradbury*.

Verse 20.—“*The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness ; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.*” We must stand our ground, and be stiff for ourselves against all misjudgings. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good matter, whether it respects the glory of God immediately and alone, or whether it respects the credit of our brethren or our own. To desire to be famous in the world, and as those giants in the old world (Gen. vi. 4), men of renown, or, as the original text hath it, men of name, is a very great vanity; but to protect and preserve our good name is a great and necessary duty.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 21.—“*I have not wickedly departed from my God ;*” that is, with a purpose and resolution of heart to continue in a way of sinning; and that is the property of sincerity. A man indeed may be overtaken and surprised by a temptation, but it is not with a resolution to forsake God and to cleave unto the sin, or rest in it. He will not sleep in it, spare it, or favour it; that is, to do wickedly against God, to have a double heart and a double eye; to look upon two objects, partly at God and partly at sin; so to keep God, as to keep some sin also, as it is with all false-hearted men in the world. They look not upon God alone, let them pretend to religion never so much, yet they look not unto God alone, but upon something else together with God; as Herod regarded John, but regarded his Herodias more; and the young man in the gospel, comes to Christ, yet he looks after his estate; and Judas followed in Christ, yet looks after the bag; this is to *depart wickedly from God*.—*William Strong*, 1650.

Verse 21 (*last clause*).—Although a godly man may break a particular commandment again and again against knowledge, yet his knowledge never suffers him to go so far as to venture knowingly to break the covenant of grace with God, and to depart from him; when he hath gone on so far in a sin as he comes to apprehend he must break with God, and lose him if he goes on any further, this apprehension stays him, stops and brings him back again; he may presumptuously venture (though seldom; and always to his cost) to commit an act of sin against knowledge, because he may withal think, that by one act the covenant is not broken, nor all friendship and love hazarded between God and him, nor his interest in the state of grace, nor God, quite lost by it, though he may well think he would be displeased with him; but if he should begin to allow himself in it, and to continue to go on again and again in it, then he knows the covenant would be broken, it cannot stand with grace; and when this apprehension comes, and comes in strongly, he cannot sin against it, for this were to cast away the Lord, and to depart wickedly from him, now so he doth not. So David, though he sinned highly and presumptuously, yet says he, “*I have not departed wickedly from my God ;*” that is, I have not so far departed from him as though I apprehended I should utterly lose my interest in him, yet I would go on. No; for he is my God, there lies the consideration that kept him from departing from him. So Psalm xliv. 17, “*We have not dealt falsely in thy covenant,*” says the church there. Many acts of displeasing him may pass and be ventured, but if the holy soul thinks that the covenant lay at stake, that he and God must utterly part and break off, thus far he will never go.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verses 22, 23.—An unsound soul will not take notice of such a precept as opposeth his special sin; such a precept must go for a blank, which the soul throws by, and will not think of, but as conscience now and then puts him in mind of it, whether

he will or no. But it is not so with a man in whom sincerity is : that precept which doth most oppose that sin to which he is most inclined, he labours to obey as well as any other. An unsound soul sets so many of God's statutes before him, as rulers to walk by, as suits with himself and the times, and no more. Such precepts as oppose his special corruptions, or displease the times, and so expose him to suffering, these he baulks and puts away, as David here saith, and calls them as the rotten Scribes and Pharisees were wont to do, "least commandments," small things not to be regarded ; which rottenness Christ took up roundly in those ironical words, "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God." Godly sincerity makes no difference of greatest and least between the precepts of God, but sets all before a man as a rule to walk by, and makes the soul laborious to observe all. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Psalm cxix. 6.—*Nicholas Lockyer, 1649.*

*Verse 23.*—"I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." He who says, "Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart ;" and who by the apostle, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, is identified with Jesus Christ, says also (verse 12), "innumerable evils have compassed me about ; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up : they are more than the hairs of mine head ; therefore mine heart faileth me ;" and in the forty-first Psalm, "He whose familiar friend, to whom he had committed a trust, who ate of his bread, lifted up his heel against him," whom our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of the gospel of John identifies with himself, says (verse 4), "Lord, be merciful to me : heal my soul for I have sinned ;" I am guilty "before thee." The difficulty is removed by the undoubtedly true principle—the principle which, above all others, gives Christianity its peculiar character—"He who knew no sin, was made sin ;" "On his righteous servant, Jehovah made to fall the iniquities of us all." In this sense, "innumerable iniquities compassed him," the iniquities made to fall on him made "his" as to their liabilities—by divine appointment laid hold of him. In the sense of *culpa*—blame-worthyness—he had no sin. In the sense of *reatus*—liability to the penal effects of sin—never had any one so much sin to bear as he—"He bore the sins of many."—*John Brown.*

*Verse 23.*—"I was upright before him." Hence observe :—first, that a godly man may have his heart upright and perfect even in the imperfection of his ways. Secondly, a man that is sincere is in God's account a perfect man : sincerity is the truth of all grace, the highest pitch that is to be attained here. Thirdly, sincerity of heart gives a man boldness even in the presence of God, notwithstanding many failings. The Lord doth "charge his angels with folly," how much more man that "dwells in a house of clay" ? Job. iv. David, whose faith failed, and who had said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," and whose tongue had faltered also to Abimelech, the priest ; three or four several lies he had told ; yet David can say to God, that he was perfect with him for all that. It is a strange boldness that the saints have in the presence of God by virtue of the new covenant. All their sins shall be laid open at the last day as a cancelled bond, that they wonder how they shall look upon them and not blush ; but the same spirit of sonship that shall give them perfect boldness then, doth give them boldness in a great measure even now in this life ; that they shall be able to say, "Neither height nor depth," etc., nothing "shall separate us from the love of Christ."—*William Strong.*

*Verse 23.*—"I was upright," etc. An upright Christian will not allow himself in any known sin ; he dares not touch the forbidden fruit. Gen xxxix. 9. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" Though it be a complexion-sin, he disinherits it. There is no man but doth propend and incline more to one sin than another ; as in the body there is one humour predominant, or as in the hive there is one master-bee ; so in the heart there is one master-sin ; there is one sin which is not only near to a man as the garment, but dear to him as the right eye. This is Satan's fort-royal, all his strength lies here ; and though we beat down his out-works, gross sin, yet if we let him hold this fort of complexion-sin, it is as much as he desires. The devil can hold a man as fast by this one link, as by a whole chain of vices. The fowler hath the bird fast enough by one wing. Now, an upright Christian will not indulge himself in this complexion-sin : "I was upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity." An upright Christian takes the sacrificing knife of mortification, and runs it through his dearest sin. Herod did many things,



but there was one sin so dear to him, that he would sooner behead the prophet, than behead that sin. Herod would have a gap for his incest. An upright heart is not only angry with sin (which may admit of reconciliation), but hates sin; and if he sees this serpent creeping into his bosom, the nearer it is the more he hates it.—*Thomas Watson.*

*Verse 23.*—"I kept myself." Kept himself! Who made man his own keeper? It's the Lord that is his keeper: he is the keeper of Israel, and the preserver of man. If a man cannot keep himself from sorrow, how is he able to keep himself from sin? God indeed in our first conversion works upon us as he did upon the earth, or Adam's body in paradise, before he breathed a soul into it, and made it a living creature; such a power as Christ put forth on Lazarus in his grave, for we are "dead in trespasses and sins;" but yet being living he must walk and act of himself, the Lord will have us to co-operate together with him, for we are built upon Christ, not as dead, but as "living stones." 1 Pet. ii. 5. The grace whereby we are made alive is his, and the power is his; he it is that works in us both to will and to do, when we perform anything; and yet by his grace we do it also; *ille facit ut nos faciamus, quæ præcepit (Augustine).*—*William Strong.*

*Verse 23.*—"I kept myself from mine iniquity." It is possible to keep ourselves from such sins as David did, who professes here of himself great sincerity, that he had kept himself from that iniquity to which he was strongly tempted, and which he was prone to fall into. The method which holy David made use of gives us the first and best direction; and that is, by constant and fervent prayer to implore the divine aid and the continual assistance of his Holy Spirit, that God would not only keep us from falling into them, but even turn our hearts from inclining to them, and help us to see our folly and our danger. For alas! we are not able of ourselves to help ourselves, not so much as to think a good thought, much less to resist an evil inclination, or a strong temptation; but "our sufficiency is of God:" "It is God (says the Psalmist here), that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect:" verse 32. . . . Next, that we take care to avoid such things and decline such occasions as are most likely to snare us and gain upon us, lest one thing hook in another, and we be caught in the gin before we suspect the danger.—*Henry Dove, 1690.*

*Verse 23.*—"Mine iniquity." A man's darling sin may change with the change of a man's condition, and some occasion that may present itself. What was Saul's and Jehu's sin before they came unto the crown we know not; but surely it was that wherein their lust did afterwards run out—the establishing a kingdom upon their posterity. Wantonness may be the darling of a man's youth, and worldliness the darling of his age; and a man's being raised unto honour, and having the opportunities that he had not in times past, the lust may run in another channel, he having now such an opportunity as before he never expected.—*William Strong.*

*Verse 23.*—"Mine iniquity." There is some particular sin to which one is more prone than to another, of which he may say by way of emphasis, 'tis "mine iniquity," at which he may point with his finger, and say, "That's it." . . . There are more temptations to some sins than others, from the different professions or courses of life men take upon themselves. If they follow the court I need not tell you what temptations and snares there are to divers sins, and what danger there is of falling into them, unless your vows for virtue, and a tender regard to the honour which cometh of God only, keep you upright. If they be listed in the camp, that tempts them to rapine and violence, neglect of God's worship, and profaneness. If they exercise trading and merchandise, they meet with greater enticements to lying and cozening, over-reaching and unjust dealing; and the mystery of some trades, as bad men manage them, is a downright "mystery of iniquity." If husbandry, to anxiety about the things of the world, a distrust of God's providence, or murmuring against it. Nay, I could wish in the most sacred profession of all there might be an exception made in this particular; but Paul tells us that even in his days "some preached Christ even of envy and strife," some for filthy lucre only, as well as "some of good will." Phil. i. 15.—*Henry Dove.*

*Verse 23.*—"Mine iniquity." The actual reign of sin is commonly of some particular master-just, which is as the viceroy over all the rest of the sins in the soul, and commands them all as lord paramount, and makes them all subservient and subordinate unto it; and this is according to custom, calling, constitution, abilities, relations, and according to the different administrations of the Spirit of God; for though God be not the author of sin, yet he is the orderer of sin. So that

it is that way of sin and death that a man chooseth to himself, he having looked abroad upon all the contentments of the world, his own corrupt inclination doth choose unto himself to follow with greatest sweetness and contentment and delight as that wherein the happiness of his life consists; that as in the body there is in every one some predominant humour, so there is in the body of sin also; that as in the natural man, though there be all the faculties, yet some faculties are in some more lively and vigorous than in others, some are more witty, some are more strong, some quick of sight, some have a ready ear, and others a nimble tongue, etc. So it is in the old man also; there is all the power of sin in an unregenerate man, but in some more dexterous one way than another; as men in the choice of calling, some have a greater inclination to one thing than to another, so it is in the choice of contentments also: as in the appetite for food, so it is in lust, being nothing else but the appetite of the creature corrupted to some sinful object.—*William Strong.*

*Verse 23.—Growth in mortification . . . .* Men may deceive themselves when they estimate their progress herein by having overcome such lusts as their natures are not so prone unto. The surest way is to take a judgment of it from the decay of a man's bosom-sin, even as David did estimate his uprightness by his "*keeping himself from his iniquity*;" so a man of his growth in uprightness. When physicians would judge of a consumption of the whole, they do it not by the falling away of any part whatever, as of the flesh in the face alone, or any the like; such a particular abatement of flesh in some one part may come from some other cause; but they use to judge by the falling away of the brawn of the hands, or arms and thighs, etc., for these are the more solid parts. The like judgments do physicians make upon other diseases, and of the abatement of them from the decrease in such symptoms as are pathognomical, and proper, and peculiar to them. In like manner also the estimate of the progress of the victories of a conqueror in an enemy's kingdom is not taken from the taking or burning of a few villages or corps, but by taking the forts and strongest holds, and by what ground he hath won upon the chief strength, and by what forces he hath cut off the main army. Do the like in the decrease of, and victory over, your lusts.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verse 23.—*We must always remember that though the grace of God prevents us, that we may have a good will, and works in us when we have it, that so we may find success; yet in vain do we expect the continuance of his help without diligent endeavours. Whilst he assists our weakness, he does not intend to encourage our laziness, and therefore we are also "to labour, and strive according to his working, which worketh in us mightily," as the apostle expresses it, Col. i. 29.—*Henry Dove.*

*Verses 24—26.—*As you may see a proportion between sins and punishments which are the rewards of them, that you can say, Such a sin brought forth this affliction, it is so like the father; so you might see the like proportion between your prayers and your walking with God, and God's answers to you, and his dealings with you. So did David; "*According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me,*" etc. His speech notes some similitude or likeness; as, for example, the more by-ends or carnal desires you had in praying, and the more you mingled of these with your holy desires, and the more want of zeal, fervency, etc., were found in your prayers, the more you shall, it may be, find of bitterness mingled with the mercy, when it is granted, and so much imperfection, and want of comfort in it. So says David in this same Psalm (verses 25, 26), "*With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.*" Pure prayers have pure blessings; *et à contra*, "*With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.*" And again, as you in praying sometimes slackened and grew cold, so you might see the business in like manner to cool, and cast backward; as, "When Moses' hands were down, Amalek prevailed; but when they were lifted up, Israel had the better." Exod. xvii. 12. God let him see a proportion, which argued his prayer was the means of prevailing. A man finds in praying that his suit sometimes sticks, and goes not on as he expected; this is because he gives not so good a fee as he was wont, and doth not ply God and solicit him; but on the contrary, when he was stirred up to pray, then still he found things to go well. By this a man may clearly see that it was the prayer which God did hear and regarded. Thus, likewise, when a man see hills and dales in a business, fair hopes often and then all dashed again, and the thing in the end brought to pass, let him look back upon his prayers. Didst not thou in like manner just deal with God? when thou hadst prayed earnestly, and thought thou hadst even carried it, then dash all again by interposing some sin, and thus again and again? Herein God would have you

observe a proportion, and it may help you to discern how and when they are answered and obtained by prayer, because God deals thus with you therein in such a proportion to your prayers.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verses 24—27.*—Even as the sun, which, unto eyes being sound and without disease, is very pleasant and wholesome, but unto the same eyes, when they are feeble, sore and weak, is very troublesome and hurtful, yet the sun is ever all one and the selfsame that was before; so God, who hath ever shown himself benign and bountiful to those who are kind and tender-hearted towards his saints, and are merciful to those who show mercy. But unto the same men, when they fall into wickedness and grow to be full of beastly cruelty, the Lord showeth himself to be very wrathful and angry, and yet is one and the same immutable God from everlasting to everlasting.—*Robert Cawdray.*

*Verse 25.*—“*With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.*” “*An upright*”—the same word is oft translated “perfect,” he is good throughout, though not thoroughly; not one that personates religion, but that is a religious person. He is perfect, because he would be so. So Noah is termed (Gen. vi. 9); “Noah was a just man and perfect (i.e., upright) in his generation:” he was a good man in a bad age. He was like a glowing spark of fire in a sea of water, which is perfect goodness; and therefore the Holy Ghost doth so hang upon his name, as if he could not give over—it is an excellent preacher’s observation—verse 8, “But Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God. And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah begat three sons.” Noah, Noah, Noah, I love the sound of thy name; and so are all your names precious to God, though hated by men, if the name of God be dear and sweet to you. ‘Tis also sometimes translated “plain.” Gen. xxv. 27. Jacob was *עֵשָׂו*, “a plain,” that is, an upright man, “dwelling in tents.” Esau was “a cunning hunter,” but Jacob was a plain man without welt or gard; you might well know his heart by his tongue, save once when Rebekah put a cunning trick into his head, otherwise he was a most “upright,” downright man. And the plain meaning of it is, a simple, cordial, unfeigned, and exact man: this is the man we are looking for.

“*Man.*” This substantive the Hebrews use to drown in the adjective, but here the Holy Ghost exhibits a word, and a choice one too, signifying a *strong, valiant man*; the same word (Psalm xlv. 3), “O mighty man!” that’s meant of our Lord Christ, who was a most strong and valiant man, that could meet the wrath of God, the malice of the devil, and the sin of man, in the face, and come off with triumph. And so the Dutch translate this clause in 2 Sam. xxii.: “With the right valiant person, thou behavest thyself upright.” In short, if the words were literally translated, they run thus:—*a man of uprightness*: that is every way you behold him, an upright man: like an even die, cast him which way you will he will be found square and right; a stiff and strong man to tread down both lusts within and temptations without; an *Athanasius contra mundum*, a *Luther contra Romam*; this is a man of an excellent spirit, and such is our upright man. “*Thou wilt show thyself upright,*” or, “wilt be upright with him;” for one word in the Hebrew makes all these six, “*Thou wilt upright it with him.*” If men will deal plainly with God, he will deal plainly with them. He that is upright in performing his duty shall find God upright in performing his promises. It is God’s way to carry to men as they carry to him: If thou hast a design to please him, he will have a design to please thee; if thou wilt echo to him when he calls, he’ll echo to thee when thou callest. On the other side; if a man will wrestle with God, he will wrestle with him; if thou wilt be fast and loose with him, and walk *frowardly* towards him, thou shalt have as good as thou bringest; if thou wilt provoke him with never-ending sins, he will pursue thee with never-ending torments; if thou wilt sin in *tuò eterno*, thou must suffer in *suo eterno*, and every man shall find like for like. . . . An upright heart is *single without division*. Unto an hypocrite there be “gods many and lords many,” and he must have an heart for each; but to the *upright* there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ, and one heart will serve them both. He that fixes his heart upon the creatures, for every creature he must have an heart, and the dividing of his heart destroys him. Hos. x. 2. Worldly profits knock at the door, he must have an heart for them; carnal pleasures present themselves, he must have an heart for them also; if sinful preferences appear, they must have an heart too—*Necessarium numerus parvus, opintonum nullus*; of necessary objects the

number is few, of needless vanities the number is endless. The upright man hath made choice of God and hath enough.—*Richard Steele.*

Verse 25.—“*With the merciful,*” etc. In Jupiter’s hall-floor there are set two barrels of gifts, the one of good gifts or blessings, the other of evil gifts or plagues. Thus spake Homer falsely of Jupiter; it may be truly spoken of the true God, Jehovah; that he hath in his hand two cups, the one of comforts, the other of crosses, which he poureth out indifferently for the good and for the bad; “*with the kind (or merciful) he will shew himself kind, and with the froward, froward.*” Now this is not to make God the author of evil, but of justice, which is good; *quorum deus non est author eorum est justus ultor*, saith Augustine; “God is not the author of sin, but he punisheth the sinner justly.”—*Miles Smith (Bishop), 1632.*

Verse 26.—“*With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure,*” etc. But doth the Lord take colour from every one he meets, or change his temper as the company changes? That’s the weakness of sinful man: he cannot do so with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of changing. God is pure, and upright with the unclean and hypocritical, as well as with the pure and upright, and his actions show him to be so. God shows himself froward with the froward when he deals with him as he hath said he will deal with the froward—deny them and reject them. God shows himself pure with the pure, when he deals with them as he hath said he will—hear them and accept them. Though there be nothing in purity and sincerity which deserveth mercy, yet we cannot expect mercy without them. Our comforts are not grounded upon our graces, but our comforts are the fruits or consequents of our graces.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 26.—“*The froward one.*” Here, as in the first promise, the two combatants stand contrasted—the seed of the woman and the serpent—the benignantly bountiful, perfect, pure One, and the froward one, whose works he came to destroy, and who made it his great business to circumvent him whom he feared. The literal meaning of the word is “*tortuous,*” or “*crooked,*” and both the ideas of perversity and cunning which the figure naturally suggests, are very applicable to “*that old serpent the devil.*” From the concluding part of the sentence, I think there is no doubt that it is the latter idea that is intended to be conveyed. God cannot deal perversely with any one; but he outwits the wise, and takes the cunning in their own craftiness.—*John Brown.*

Verse 26.—“*With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.*” The Hebrew word in the root significeth to wrest or writhe a thing, or to wrest or turn a thing, as wrestlers do their bodies. Hence by a trope, it is translated often to wrestle, because a cunning man in wrestling, turneth and windeth his body, and works himself in and out every way, to get an advantage of his adversary any way; therefore your cunning-headed men, your crafty men, are fitly presented under this word; they are like wrestlers who turn and wind themselves in and out, and lie for all advantages; or as we speak, they “*lie at catch.*” A man knows not where to have them, or what they mean when they speak plainest, or swear solemnest; when we think we see their faces, we see but their vizards; all their promises and performances too are under a disguise. . . . And this word is applied to the Lord himself, “*With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward;*” that is, if men will be winding and turning, and thinking to catch others or over-reach the Lord himself with tricks and turnings of wit, the Lord will meet and answer them in their own kind; he can turn as fast as they, he can put himself into such intricate labyrinths of infinite wisdom and sacred craft, as shall entangle and ensnare the most cunning wrestler or tumbler of them all. He will Cretize the Creteans, supplant the supplanters of his people.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 26.—“*Wilt shew thyself froward.*” It is a similitude taken from wrestlers, and noteth a writhing of one’s self against an adversary. Compare herewith Deut. xxxii. 5. “*They are a perverse and crooked generation,*” the same two words that are here in this text; the latter importeth that they wriggled and writhed after the manner of wrestlers that wave up and down, and wind the other way, when one thinks to have him here or there. But all will not serve their turn to save them from punishment. God will be sure to meet with them, his Word will lay hold on them, and their sin shall find them out.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 27.—“*The afflicted people.*” The word rendered “*afflicted,*” properly signifies “*poor*” or “*needy.*” The persons spoken of are obviously afflicted ones, for they need to be saved or delivered; but it is not their affliction, so much as their

poverty, that is indicated by the epithet here given them; and, from the poor being contrasted, not with the wealthy, but with the proud—for that is the meaning of the figurative expression, "the man of high looks"—it seems plain that, though the great body of the class referred to have always been found among the comparatively "poor in this world," the reference is to those poor ones whom our Lord represents as "poor in spirit."—*John Brown.*

Verse 27.—"High looks:" namely, the proud; the raising up of the eyebrows being a natural sign of that vice. Psalm ci. 5; Prov. vi. 17.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 28.—"For thou wilt light my candle," etc. The Psalmist speaks in this place of artificial light; "a candle," or "lamp;" which has been supposed to be illustrated by the custom prevailing in Egypt of never suffering their houses to be without lights, but burning lamps even through the night, so that the poorest people would rather retrench part of their food than neglect it. Supposing this to have been the ancient custom, not only in Egypt, but in the neighbouring countries of Arabia and Judæa, "the lighting of the lamp" in this passage may have had a special allusion. In the parallel passage, 2 Sam. xxii. 29, Jehovah is figuratively styled the "lamp" of the Psalmist, as above.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 28 (first clause).—"Thou also shalt"—when none else can. And notice too, how here, and often elsewhere, the Psalmist begins with speaking of God, and ends with speaking to him. So the bride in the Canticles, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine."—*Dionysius the Carthusian* (1471), quoted by *J. M. Neale.*

Verse 29.—"By thee I have run through a troop," etc. David ascribes his victories to God, declaring that, under his conduct, he had broken through the wedges or phalanxes of his enemies, and had taken by storm their fortified cities. Thus we see that, although he was a valiant warrior, and skilled in arms, he arrogates nothing to himself.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 29.—"By my God have I leaped over a wall;" or, "taken a fort."—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 29.—"Leaped over a wall." This probably refers to his having taken some remarkable town by scaling the ramparts.—*John Kitto*, in "The Pictorial Bible."

Verse 31.—"For who is God save the Lord?" Here first in the Psalms, occurs the name *Eloah*, rendered *God*. It occurs more than fifty times in the Scriptures, but only four times in the Psalms. It is the singular of *Elohim*. Many have supposed that this name specially refers to God as an object of religious worship. That idea may well be prominent in this place.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 32.—"It is God that girdeth me with strength." One of the few articles of Eastern dress which I wore in the East, was the *girdle*, which was of great use as a support to the body in the long and weary camel-rides through the Desert. The support and strengthening I received in this way, gave me a clearer idea than I had before the meaning of the Psalmist.—*John Anderson*, in "Bible from Bible Lands," 1856.

Verse 33.—"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places:" that is, he doth give swiftness and speed to his church; as Augustine interpreteth it, *transcendendo spinosa, et umbrosa implicamenta hujus sæculi*, passing lightly through the thorny and shady incumbrances of this world. "He will make me walk upon my high places." David saith, "He setteth me upon high places." For, consider David, as he then was, when he composed this Psalm, it was at the time when God had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. For then God set his feet on high places, settling his kingdom, and establishing him in the place of Saul.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 33.—"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet:" אָרְגַלַי כְּאֲרְגַלַי חַיָּה וְאֲנִי עַל גְּבוּהֹת. Celerity of motion was considered as one of the qualities of an ancient hero. Achilles is celebrated for being ἄσπασ ὤκιστος. Virgil's Nisus is hyperbolically described, "Et ventis et fulminis oclor atis;" and the men of God, who came to David, "Men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler," are said

to have had "faces like the faces of lions," and to have been "as swift as the roes upon the mountains.") 1 Chron. xii. 8. Asahel is described as "light of foot as a wild roe" (2 Sam. ii. 18); and Saul seems called the roe (in the English translation, "the beauty of Israel." 2 Sam. i. 19. It has been said that the legs of the hind are straighter than those of the buck, and that she is swifter than he is; but there is no sufficient proof of this. Gataker gives the true account of it when he says, "The female formula is often used for the species." This is not uncommon in Hebrew. The female ass obviously stands for the ass species. Gen. xii. 16; Job. i. 3; xlii. 12. Some (at the head of whom is Bochart, *Hieroicozon*, P. i. L. ii. c. 17), have supposed the reference to be to the peculiar hardness of the hoof of the roe, which enables it to walk firmly, without danger of falling, on the roughest and rockiest places. Virgil calls the hind "*æri-pedem*," brass-footed. Others suppose the reference to be to its agility and celerity. There is nothing to prevent our supposing that there is a reference to both these distinguishing qualities of the hind's feet. *John Brown*.

Verse 33.—"He maketh my feet like hinds' feet," etc. *He maketh me able to stand on the sides of mountains and rocks*, which were anciently used as fastnesses in time of war. The feet of the sheep, the goat, and the hart are particularly adapted to standing in such places. Mr. Merrick has here very appositely cited the following passage from Xenophon; *Lib. de Venatione*: *Επισκοπέτω δει έχοντα τὰς κύνας τὰς μὲν ἐν ὄρει ἐστῶσας λαφύου*. See also Psalm clv. 18, where the same property of standing on the rocks and steep cliffs is attributed to the wild goat.—*Stephen Street, M.A., in loc.*, 1790.

Verse 34.—"He teacheth my hands to war," etc. To him I owe all that military skill, or strength, or courage, which I have. My strength is sufficient, not only to bend "a bow of steel," but to break it.—*Matthew Poole*.

Verse 34.—"Steel." The word so rendered in the authorised version, properly means "copper" (נְחָשֶׁת). It is doubtful if the Hebrews were acquainted with the process of hardening iron into steel, for though the "northern iron" of Jer. xv. 12, has been supposed by some to be steel, this is by no means certain; it may have only been a superior sort of iron.—*William Lindsay Alexander, in "Kitto's Cyclopædia."*

Verse 34.—The drawing of a mighty bow was a mark of great slaughter and skill.

"So the great master drew the mighty bow,  
And drew with ease. One hand aloft display'd,  
The bending horns, and one the string essay'd."

*Alexander Pope, 1688—1744. [Translation of Homer.*

Verses 37, 38:—

Oh, I have seen the day,  
When with a single word,  
God helping me to say,  
"My trust is in the Lord;"  
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,  
Fearless of all that could oppose.

*William Cowper, 1731—1800.*

Verse 38.—"I have wounded them," etc. Greater is he that is in us than he that is against us, and God shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Rom. xv. 20. *W. Wilson*.

Verses 38—40.—Though passion possess our bodies, let "patience possess our souls." The law of our profession binds us to a warfare; *patiendo vincimus*, our troubles shall end, our victory is eternal. Hear David's triumph, "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 given me the necks 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!—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 39.—To be well girt was to be well armed in the Greek and Latin idioms, as well as in the Hebrew.—*Alexander Geddes, LL.D., 1737—1802.*

*Verse 41.*—" *They shall cry, but there shall be none to help them,*" etc. Sad examples enough there are of the truth of this prophecy. Of Esau it is written that he "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 17. Of Antiochus, though he vowed in his last illness, "that also he would become a Jew himself, and go through all the world that was inhabited, and declare the power of God, yet," continues the historian, "for all this his pains would not cease, for the just judgment of God was come upon him." 2 Macc. ix. 17, 18. But most appropriately to this passage, it is written of Saul, "When he enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets." 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. And therefore, the prophet warns us: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains (Jer. xlii. 16): as Saul's feet, indeed, stumbled on the dark mountains of Gilboa. "Even unto the Lord shall they cry:" but not, as it has been well remarked, by a Mediator: and so, crying to him in their own name, and by their own merits, they cry in vain.—*John Lorinus* (1569—1634), and *Remigius* (900), quoted by *J. M. Neale*.

*Verse 41.*—" *Even unto the Lord.*" As nature prompteth men in an extremity to look up for help; but because it is but the prayer of the flesh for ease, and not of the Spirit for grace, and a good use of calamities, and not but in extreme despair of help elsewhere, therefore God hears them not. In Samuel it is, "They looked, but there was none to save them," *q.d.*, If they could have made any other shift, God should never have heard of them.—*John Trapp*.

*Verse 42.*—" *I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets,*" or rather "of the streets." In the East, all household refuse and filth is cast forth into the streets, where all of it that is at all edible is soon cleared away by birds and dogs, and all that is not is speedily dried up by the sun. To cast forth any one, therefore, as the dirt of the streets, is a strong image of contempt and rejection.—*John Kitto*.

*Verses 43, 44.*—If these words can be explained literally of David, they apply much more naturally to Jesus Christ, who has been delivered from the strivings of the Jewish people; when, after the terrible opposition he met with on their part, to the establishment of the gospel, he was made the head of the Gentiles who were a strange people, and whom he had not formerly acknowledged as his, but who nevertheless obeyed him with astonishing readiness as soon as they heard his voice. *Louis Isaac le Maistre de Stacy*, 1613—1684.

*Verse 45.*—The first clause is comparatively easy. "The strangers shall fade away"—"shall gradually wither and disappear;" but the second clause is very difficult, "They shall be afraid out of their close places." One Jewish scholar interprets it, "They shall fear for the prisons in which I will throw them and keep them confined."\* Another, "They shall tremble in their castles to which they have betaken themselves for fear of me." Another,† "They shall surrender themselves from their fortresses." The general meaning is plain enough. The class referred to are represented as reduced to a state of complete helpless subjugation. As to the event referred to, if we keep to the rendering of our translators the meaning may be, "The Pagans, retired now generally to villages and remote places, shall gradually dwindle away, and fearfully anticipate the complete extinction of their religion." This exactly accords with history. If with some interpreters we read, "The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid because of their prisons," then the meaning may be, "that they who only feigned submission, when persecution for the word should arise should openly apostatise." This, too, would be found consonant with fact. The first of these interpretations seems the more probable.—*John Brown*.

*Verse 46.*—" *The Lord liveth: and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.*"—Let us unite our hearts in this song for a close of our praises. Honours die, pleasures die, the world dies; but "The Lord liveth." My flesh is as sand; my fleshly life, strength, glory, is as a word written on sand; but blessed be my Rock." Those are for a moment; this stands for ever. The curse shall devour those; everlasting blessings on the head of this. Let outward salvations vanish; let the saved be crucified; let the "God" of our salvations "be exalted." This Lord is my rock; this God is my salvation.—*Peter Sterry*, 1649.

\* Jarchi.

† Abenzra.

*Verse 46.*—"The Lord liveth." Why do you not oppose one God to all the armies of evils that beset you round? why do you not take the more content in God when you have the less of the creature to take content in? why do you not boast in your God? and bear up yourselves big with your hopes in God and expectations from him? Do you not see young heirs to great estates act and spend accordingly? And, why shall you, being the King of heaven's son, be lean and ragged from day to day, as though you were not worth a groat? O sirs, live upon your portion, chide yourselves for living besides what you have. There are great and precious promises, rich, enriching mercies; you may make use of God's all-sufficiency; you can blame none but yourselves if you be defective or discouraged. A woman, truly godly for the main, having buried a child, and sitting alone in sadness, did yet bear up her heart with the expression, "God lives"; and having parted with another, still she redoubled, "Comforts die, but God lives." At last her dear husband dies, and she sat oppressed and most overwhelmed with sorrow. A little child she had yet surviving, having observed what before she spoke to comfort herself, comes to her and saith, "Is God dead, mother? is God dead?" This reached her heart, and by God's blessing recovered her former confidence in her God, who is a *living* God. Thus do you chide yourselves; ask your fainting spirits under pressing outward sorrows, is not God alive? and why then doth not thy soul revive? why doth thy heart die within thee when comforts die! Cannot a living God support thy dying hopes? Thus, Christians, argue down your discouraged and disquieted spirits as David did.—*Oliver Heywood's "Sure Mercies of David."* 1672.

*Verse 47.*—"It is God." Sir, this is none other than the hand of God; and to him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with him. The General served you with all faithfulness and honour; and the best commendation I can give him is that I dare say he attributes all to God, and would rather perish than assume to himself.—*Written to the Speaker of the House of Commons, after the battle of Naseby, June 14, 1645, by OLIVER CROMWELL.*

*Verse 49.*—I admire King David a great deal more when I see him in the quire than when I see him in the camp; when I see him singing as the sweet singer of Israel, than when I see him fighting as the worthy warrior of Israel. For fighting with others he did overcome all others; but singing, and delighting himself, he did overcome himself.—*Thomas Playfer.*

---

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—Love's resolve, love's logic, love's trials, love's victories.

*James Hervey* has two sermons upon "Love to God" from this text.

*Verse 2.*—The many excellences of Jehovah to his people.

*Verse 2.*—God the all-sufficient portion of his people.—*C. Simeon's Works*, Vol. v., p. 85.

*Verse 3.*—Prayer resolved upon; praise rendered; result anticipated.

*Verses 4—6.*—Graphic picture of a distressed soul, and its resorts in the hour of extremity.

*Verse 5 (first clause).*—The condition of a soul convinced of sin.

*Verse 5 (second clause).*—The way in which snares and temptations are, by Satanic craft, arranged so as to forestall or prevent us.

*Verse 6.*—The time, the manner, the hearing, and the answering of prayer.

*Verse 7.*—The quaking of all things in the presence of an angry God.

*Verse 10.*—Celestial and terrestrial agencies subservient to the divine purposes.

*Verse 11.*—The darkness in which Jehovah hides. Why? When? What then? etc.

*Verse 13.*—"Hailstones and coals of fire." The terrific in its relation to Jehovah.

*Verse 16.*—The Christian, like Moses, "one taken out of the water." The whole verse a noble subject; may be illustrated by life of Moses.

*Verse 17.*—The saint's pæan of victory over Satan, and all other foes.

*Verse 17 (last clause).*—Singular but sound reason for expecting divine help.



Verse 18.—The enemy's "craft," "*They prevented me in the day of my calamity.*" The enemy chained. "*But the Lord was my stay.*"

Verse 19.—The reason of grace, and the position in which it places its chosen ones.

Verse 21.—Integrity of life, its measure, source, benefit, and dangers.

Verse 22.—The need of considering sacred things, and the wickedness of carelessly neglecting them.

Verse 23.—The upright heart and its darling sin.—*W. Strong's Sermons.*

Verse 23.—*Peccata in deliciis*; a discourse of bosom sins.—*P. Newcome.*

Verse 23.—The sure trial of uprightness.—*Dr. Bates.*

Verse 26.—Echoes, in providence, grace, and judgment.

Verse 25.—Equity of the divine procedure.—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 27.—Consolation for the humble, and desolation for the proud.

Verse 27 (*second clause*).—The bringing down of high looks. In a way of grace and justice. Among saints and sinners, etc. A wide theme.

Verse 28.—A comfortable hope for an uncomfortable state.

Verse 29.—Believing exploits recounted. Variety, difficulty in themselves, ease in performance, completeness, impunity, and dependence upon divine working.

Verse 30.—God's way, word, and warfare.

Verse 31.—A challenge. I. To the *gods*. World, pleasure, etc. Which among these deserve the name? II. To the *rocks*, self-confidence, superstition, etc. On which can we trust?

Verses 32—34.—Trying positions, gracious adaptations, graceful accomplishments, secure abidings, grateful acknowledgement.

Verse 35.—"*The shield of thy salvation.*" What it is? Faith. Whence it comes? "*Thou hast given.*" What it secures? "*Salvation.*" Who have received it?

Verse 35.—See "*Spurgeon's Sermons,*" No. 683. "*Divine Gentleness Acknowledged.*"

Verse 36.—Divine benevolence in the arranging of our lot.

Verse 39.—The Red Cross Knight armed for the fray.

Verse 41.—Unavailing prayers—on earth and in hell.

Verse 42.—The sure overthrow, final shame, and ruin of evil.

Verse 43 (*last clause*).—Our natural and sinful distance from Christ, no bar to grace.

Verse 44.—Rapid advance of the gospel in some places, slow progress in others. Solemn considerations.

Verse 46.—The living God, and how to bless and exalt him.

Verse 50.—The greatness of salvation, "*great deliverance*;" its channel, "*the King*;" and its perpetuity, "*for evermore.*"