

PSALM XXVII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*Nothing whatever can be drawn from the title as to the time when this Psalm was written, for the heading, "A Psalm of David," is common to so many of the Psalms; but if one may judge from the matter of the song, the writer was pursued by enemies, verses 2 and 3, was shut out from the house of the Lord, verse 4, was just parting from father and mother, verse 10, and was subject to slander, verse 12; do not all these meet in the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spake against him to Saul? It is a song of cheerful hope, well fitted for those in trial who have learned to lean upon the Almighty arm. The Psalm may with profit be read in a threefold way, as the language of David, of the Church, and of the Lord Jesus. The plenitude of Scripture will thus appear the more wonderful.*

DIVISION.—*The poet first sounds forth his sure confidence in his God, 1—3, and his love of communion with him, 4—6. He then betakes himself to prayer, 7—12, and concludes with an acknowledgment of the sustaining power of faith in his own case, and an exhortation to others to follow his example.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh they stumbled and fell.

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will* I be confident.

1. "*The Lord is my light and my salvation.*"—Here is personal interest, "*my light,*" "*my salvation;*" the soul is assured of it, and therefore, declaring it boldly. "*My light*"—into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to see our own darkness and to long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. Salvation finds us in the dark, but it does not leave us there; it gives light to those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light; he is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that he "*is*" light; nor that he gives salvation, but that he *is* salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God has all covenant blessings in his possession. Every light is not the sun, but the sun is the father of all lights. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, "*Whom shall I fear?*" A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it is based upon a very different foundation; it rests not upon the conceited vigour of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM. "*The Lord is the strength of my life.*" Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from him who is the author of it; and if he deigns to make us strong we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary. "*Of whom shall I be afraid?*" The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God be for us," who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

2. This verse records a past deliverance, and is an instance of the way in which experience should be employed to reassure our faith in times of trial. Each word is instructive. "*When the wicked.*" It is a hopeful sign for us when the wicked hate us; if our foes were godly men it would be a sore sorrow, but as for the wicked their hatred is better than their love. "*Even mine enemies and my foes.*"

There were many of them, they were of different sorts, but they were unanimous in mischief and hearty in hatred. "*Came upon me*"—advanced to the attack, leaping upon the victim like a lion upon its prey. "*To eat up my flesh,*" like cannibals they would make a full end of the man, tear him limb from limb, and make a feast for their malice. The enemies of our souls are not deficient in ferocity, they yield no quarter, and ought to have none in return. See in what danger David was; in the grip and grasp of numerous, powerful, and cruel enemies, and yet observe his perfect safety and their utter discomfiture! "*They stumbled and fell.*" God's breath blew them off their legs. There were stones in the way which they never reckoned upon, and over these they made an ignominious tumble. This was literally true in the case of our Lord in Gethsemane, when those who came to take him went backward and fell to the ground; and herein he was a prophetic representative of all wrestling believers who, rising from their knees shall, by the power of faith, throw their foes upon their faces.

3. "*Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.*" Before the actual conflict, while as yet the battle is untried, the warrior's heart, being held in suspense, is very liable to become fluttered. The encamping host often inspires greater dread than the same host in actual affray. Young tells us of some—

"Who feel a thousand deaths in fearing one."

Doubtless the shadow of anticipated trouble is, to timorous minds, a more prolific source of sorrow than the trouble itself, but faith puts a strengthening plaister to the back of courage, and throws out of the window the dregs of the cup of trembling. "*Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*" When it actually comes to push of pike, faith's shield will ward off the blow; and if the first brush should be but the beginning of a war, yet faith's banners will wave in spite of the foe. Though battle should succeed battle, and one campaign should be followed by another, the believer will not be dismayed at the length of the conflict. Reader, this third verse is the comfortable and logical inference from the second, confidence is the child of experience. Have you been delivered out of great perils? then set up your ensign, wait at your watch-fire, and let the enemy do his worst.

4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

4. "*One thing.*" Divided aims tend to distraction, weakness, disappointment. The man of one book is eminent, the man of one pursuit is successful. Let all our affection be bound up in one affection, and that affection set upon heavenly things. "*Have I desired*"—what we cannot at once attain, it is well to desire. God judges us very much by the desire of our hearts. He who rides a lame horse is not blamed by his master for want of speed, if he makes all the haste he can, and would make more if he could; God takes the will for the deed with his children. "*Of the Lord.*" This is the right target for desires, this is the well into which to dip our buckets, this is the door to knock at, the bank to draw upon; desire of men, and lie on the dunghill with Lazarus: desire of the Lord, and be carried of angels into Abraham's bosom. Our desires of the Lord should be sanctified, humble, constant, submissive, fervent, and it is well if, as with the Psalmist, they are all molten into one mass. Under David's painful circumstances we might have expected him to desire repose, safety, and a thousand other good things, but no, he has set his heart on the pearl, and leaves the rest. "*That will I seek after.*" Holy desires must lead to resolute action. The old proverb says, "Wishers and woulders are never good housekeepers," and "wishing never fills a sack." Desires are seeds which must be sown in the good soil of activity for they will yield no harvest. We shall find our desires to be like clouds without

rain, unless followed up by practical endeavours. "*That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" For the sake of communion with the King, David longed to dwell always in the palace; so far from being wearied with the services of the Tabernacle, he longed to be constantly engaged in them, as his life-long pleasure. He desired above all things to be one of the household of God, a home-born child, living at home with his Father. This is our dearest wish, only we extend it to those days of our immortal life which have not yet dawned. We pine for our Father's house above, the home of our souls; if we may but dwell there for ever, we care but little for the goods or ills of this poor life. "Jerusalem the golden" is the one and only goal of our heart's longings. "*To behold the beauty of the Lord.*" An exercise both for earthly and heavenly worshippers. We must not enter the assemblies of the saints in order to see and be seen, or merely to hear the minister; we must repair to the gatherings of the righteous, intent upon the gracious object of learning more of the loving Father, more of the glorified Jesus, more of the mysterious Spirit, in order that we may the more lovingly admire, and the more reverently adore our glorious God. What a word is that, "*the beauty of the Lord!*" Think of it, dear reader! Better far—behold it by faith! What a sight will that be when every faithful follower of Jesus shall behold "the King in his beauty!" Oh, for that infinitely blessed vision! "*And to enquire in his temple.*" We should make our visits to the Lord's house enquirers' meetings. Not seeking sinners alone, but assured saints should be enquirers. We must enquire as to the will of God and how we may do it; as to our interest in the heavenly city, and how we may be more assured of it. We shall not need to make enquiries in heaven, for there we shall know even as we are known; but meanwhile we should sit at Jesus' feet, and awaken all our faculties to learn of him.

5. This verse gives an excellent reason for the Psalmist's desire after communion with God, namely, that he was thus secured in the hour of peril. "*For in the time of trouble,*" that needy time, that time when others forsake me, "*he shall hide me in his pavilion:*" he shall give me the best of shelter in the worst of danger. The royal pavilion was erected in the centre of the army, and around it all the mighty men kept guard at all hours; thus in that divine sovereignty which almighty power is sworn to maintain, the believer peacefully is hidden, hidden not by himself furtively, but by the king, who hospitably entertains him. "*In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.*" Sacrifice aids sovereignty in screening the elect from harm. No one of old dared to enter the most holy place on pain of death; and if the Lord has hidden his people there, what foe shall venture to molest them? "*He shall set me up upon a rock.*" Immutability, eternity, and infinite power here come to the aid of sovereignty and sacrifice. How blessed is the standing of the man whom God himself sets on high above his foes, upon an impregnable rock which never can be stormed! Well may we desire to dwell with the Lord who so effectually protects his people.

6. "*And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.*"—He is quite sure of it. Godly men of old prayed in faith, nothing wavering, and spoke of the answer to their prayers as a certainty. David was by faith so sure of a glorious victory over all those who beset him, that he arranged in his own heart what he would do when his foes lay all prostrate before him; that arrangement was such as gratitude suggested. "*Therefore will I offer in his tabernacles sacrifices of joy.*" That place for which he longed in his conflict, should see his thankful joy in his triumphant return. He does not speak of jubilations to be offered in his palace, and feasting in his banqueting halls, but holy mirth he selects as most fitting for so divine a deliverance. "*I will sing.*" This is the most natural mode of expressing thankfulness. "*Yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.*" The vow is confirmed by repetition, and explained by addition, which addition vows all the praise unto Jehovah. Let who will be silent, the believer when his prayer is heard, must and will make his praise to be heard also; and let who will sing unto the vanities of the world, the believer reserves his music for the Lord alone.

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger:

thou hast been my help ; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies : for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

7. "*Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice.*"—The pendulum of spirituality swings from prayer to praise. The voice which in the last verse was tuned to music is here turned to crying. As a good soldier, David knew how to handle his weapons, and found himself much at home with the weapon of "all prayer." Note his anxiety to be heard. Pharisees care not a fig for the Lord's hearing them, so long as they are heard of men, or charm their own pride with their sounding devotions ; but with a genuine man, the Lord's ear is everything. The *voice* may be profitably used even in private prayer ; for though it is unnecessary, it is often helpful, and aids in preventing distractions. "*Have mercy also upon me.*" Mercy is the hope of sinners and the refuge of saints. All acceptable petitioners dwell much upon this attribute. "*And answer me.*" We may expect answers to prayer, and should not be easy without them any more than we should be if we had written a letter to a friend upon important business, and had received no reply.

8. In this verse we are taught that if we would have the Lord hear our voice, we must be careful to respond to *his* voice. The true heart should echo the will of God as the rocks among the Alps repeat in sweetest music the notes of the peasant's horn. Observe, that the command was in the plural, to all the saints, "*Seek ye ;*" but the man of God turned it into the singular by a personal application, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*" The voice of the Lord is very effectual where all other voices fail, "*When thou saidst,*" then my "*heart,*" my inmost nature was moved to an obedient reply. Note the promptness of the response—no sooner said than done ; as soon as God said "*seek,*" the heart said, "*I will seek.*" Oh, for more of this holy readiness ! Would to God that we were more plastic to the divine hand, more sensitive of the touch of God's Spirit.

9. "*Hide not thy face far from me.*" The word "*far*" is not in the original, and is a very superfluous addition of the translators, since even the least hiding of the Lord's face is a great affliction to a believer. The command to seek the Lord's face would be a painful one if the Lord, by withdrawing himself, rendered it impossible for the seeker to meet with him. A smile from the Lord is the greatest of comforts, his frown the worst of ills. "*Put not thy servant away in anger.*" Other servants had been put away when they proved unfaithful, as for instance, his predecessor Saul ; and this made David, while conscious of many faults, most anxious that divine long-suffering should continue him in favour. This is a most appropriate prayer for us under a similar sense of unworthiness. "*Thou hast been my help.*" How truly can we join in this declaration ; for many years, in circumstances of varied trial, we have been upheld by our God, and must and will confess our obligation. "*Ingratitude,*" it is said, "*is natural to fallen man,*" but to spiritual men it is unnatural and detestable. "*Leave me not, neither forsake me.*" A prayer for the future, and an inference from the past. If the Lord had meant to leave us, why did he begin with us ? Past help is but a waste of effort if the soul now be deserted. The first petition, "*leave me not,*" may refer to temporary desertions, and the second word to the final withdrawal of grace, both are to be prayed against ; and concerning the second, we have immutable promises to urge. "*O God of my salvation.*" A sweet title worthy of much meditation.

10. "*When my father and my mother forsake me.*" These dear relations will be the last to desert me, but if the milk of human kindness should dry up even from their breasts, there is a Father who never forgets. Some of the greatest of the saints have been cast out by their families, and persecuted for righteousness' sake. "*Then the Lord will take me up.*" Will espouse my cause, will uplift me from my woes, will carry me in his arms, will elevate me above my enemies, will at last receive me to his eternal dwelling place.

11. "*Teach me thy way, O Lord.*" He does not pray to be indulged with his own way, but to be informed as to the path in which the righteous Jehovah would

have him walk. This prayer evinces an humble sense of personal ignorance, great teachableness of spirit, and cheerful obedience of heart. "*Lead me in a plain path.*" Help is here sought as well as direction; we not only need a map of the way, but a guide to assist us in the journey. A path is here desired which shall be open, honest, straightforward, in opposition to the way of cunning, which is intricate, tortuous, dangerous. Good men seldom succeed in fine speculations and doubtful courses; plain simplicity is the best spirit for an heir of heaven: let us leave shifty tricks and political expediences to the citizens of the world—the New Jerusalem owns plain men for its citizens. Esau was a cunning hunter, Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. "*Because of mine enemies.*" These will catch us if they can, but the way of manifest, simple honesty is safe from their rage. It is wonderful to observe how honest simplicity baffles and outwits the craftiness of wickedness. Truth is wisdom. "*Honesty is the best policy.*"

12. "*Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies;*" or I should be like a victim cast to the lions, to be rent to pieces and utterly devoured. God be thanked that our foes cannot have their way with us, or Smithfield would soon be on a blaze again. "*For false witnesses are risen up against me.*" Slander is an old-fashioned weapon out of the armoury of hell, and is still in plentiful use; and no matter how holy a man may be, there will be some who will defame him. "*Give a dog an ill name, and hang him;*" but glory be to God, the Lord's people are not dogs, and their ill names do not injure them. "*And such as breathe out cruelty.*" It is their vital breath to hate the good; they cannot speak without cursing them; such was Paul before conversion. They who breathe out cruelty may well expect to be sent to breathe their native air in hell; let persecutors beware!

13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

13. Faintness of heart is a common infirmity; even he who slew Goliath was subject to its attacks. Faith puts its bottle of cordial to the lip of the soul, and so prevents fainting. Hope is heaven's balm for present sorrow. In this land of the dying, it is our blessedness to be looking and longing for our fair portion in the land of the living, whence the goodness of God has banished the wickedness of man, and where holy spirits charm with their society those persecuted saints who were vilified and despised among men. We must believe to see, not see to believe; we must wait the appointed time, and stay our soul's hunger with foretastes of the Lord's eternal goodness which shall soon be our feast and our song.

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

14. "*Wait on the Lord.*" Wait at his door with prayer; wait at his foot with humility; wait at his table with service; wait at his window with expectancy. Suitors often win nothing but the cold shoulder from earthly patrons after long and obsequious waiting; he speeds best whose patron is in the skies. "*Be of good courage.*" A soldier's motto. Be it mine. Courage we shall need, and for the exercise of it we have as much reason as necessity, if we are soldiers of King Jesus. "*And he shall strengthen thine heart.*" He can lay the plaister right upon the weak place. Let the heart be strengthened, and the whole machine of humanity is filled with power; a strong heart makes a strong arm. What strength is this which God himself gives to the heart? Read the "*Book of Martyrs,*" and see its glorious deeds of prowess; go to God rather, and get such power thyself. "*Wait, I say, on the Lord.*" David, in the words "*I say,*" sets his own private seal to the word which, as an inspired man, he had been moved to write. It is his testimony as well as the command of God, and indeed he who writes these scanty notes has himself found it so sweet, so reviving, so profitable to draw near to God, that on his own account he also feels bound to write, "*Wait, I say, on the Lord.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—“*The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ?*” Alice Driver, martyr, at her examination, put all the doctors to silence, so that they had not a word to say, but one looked upon another ; then she said, “ Have you no more to say ? God be honoured, you be not able to resist the Spirit of God, in me, a poor woman. I was an honest poor man’s daughter, never brought up at the University as you have been ; but I have driven the plough many a time before my father, I thank God ; yet, notwithstanding, in the defence of God’s truth, and in the cause of my Master, Christ, by his grace I will set my foot against the foot of any of you all, in the maintenance and defence of the same ; and if I had a thousand lives they should go for payment thereof.” So the Chancellor condemned her, and she returned to the prison joyful.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 1.—“*The Lord is my light,*” etc. St. John tells us, that “ in Christ was life ; and the life was the light of men ;” but he adds that “ the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not.” John i. 4, 5. There is a great difference between the *light*, and the eye that sees it. A blind man may know a great deal about the shining of the sun, but it does not shine for him—it gives him no light. So, to know that “ God is light,” is one thing (1 John i. 5), and to be able to say, “ The Lord is *my* light,” is quite another thing. The Lord must be the light by which the way of life is made plain to us—the light by which we may see to walk in that way—the light that exposes the darkness of sin—the light by which we can discover the hidden sins of our own hearts. When he is thus *our light*, then he is *our salvation* also. He is pledged to guide us right : not only to show us sin, but to save us from it. Not only to make us see God’s hatred of sin, and his curse upon it, but also to draw us unto God’s love, and to take away the curse. With the Lord lighting us along the road of salvation, who, or what need we fear ? Our life is hid with Christ in God. Col. iii. 3. We are weak, very weak. but his “ strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor. xii. 9. With the Lord himself pledged to be the strength of our life, of whom need we be afraid ?—*From Sacramental Meditations on the Twenty-seventh Psalm, 1843.*

Verse 1.—“*The Lord is my light.*” “*Light*” which makes all things visible, was the first made of all visible things ; and whether God did it for our example, or no, I know not ; but ever since, in imitation of this manner of God’s proceeding, the first thing we do when we intend to do anything, is to get us “*light.*”—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1.—“*The Lord is my light.*” Adorable Sun, cried St. Bernard, I cannot walk without thee : enlighten my steps, and furnish this barren and ignorant mind with thoughts worthy of thee. Adorable fulness of light and heat, be thou the true noonday of my soul ; exterminate its darkness, disperse its clouds ; burn, dry up, and consume all its filth and impurities. Divine Sun, rise upon my mind, and never set.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon, 1652—1729.*

Verse 1.—“*Whom shall I fear ?*” Neither spiritual nor military heroes do exploits through cowardice. Courage is a necessary virtue. In Jehovah is the best possible foundation for unflinching intrepidity.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 1.—“*Of whom shall I be afraid ?*” I have no notion of a timid, disingenuous profession of Christ. Such preachers and professors are like a rat playing at hide-and-seek behind a wainscot, who puts his head through a hole to see if the coast is clear, and ventures out if nobody is in the way ; but slinks back again if danger appears. We cannot be honest to Christ except we are bold for him. He is either worth *all* we can lose for him, or he is worth *nothing.*—*H. G. Salter, A.M., in “ The Book of Illustrations,” 1840.*

Verse 2.—“*When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*” There is no such dainty dish to a malicious stomach, as the flesh of an enemy ; it goes down without chewing, and they swallow it up whole like cormorants. But though malice have a ravenous stomach, yet she hath but slow digestion ; though her teeth be sharp, yet her feet are lame, at least apt to stumble ; and this made well for David, for when his enemies came upon him to eat up his flesh, because they came upon the feet of malice, “*they stumbled and fell.*” A man may *stumble* and yet not *fall* ; but to *stumble* and *fall* withal, is the proper stumbling of “*the wicked,*” and especially of the maliciously wicked ;

and such, it seems, was the stumbling of David's enemies, because the enemies were such; and such I doubt not shall be the stumbling of mine enemies, because mine are such; and of what then, of whom now, should I be afraid?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—“*When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*” He describes his enemies by their malice, and by their ruin. 1. His enemies were *cruel enemies*, blood-suckers, eaters of flesh. We call them cannibals. As indeed men that have not grace, if they have greatness, and be opposed, their greatness is inaccessible, one man is a devil to another. The Scripture calls them “wolves, that leave nothing till morning,” Zeph. iii. 3. As the great fishes eat up the little ones, so great men they make no more conscience of eating up other men, than of eating bread; they make no more bones of overthrowing men and undoing them, than of eating bread. “They eat up my people as they eat bread.” Psalm xiv. 4. 2. But notwithstanding their cruelty, *they were overthrown.* Saith David, “*When my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*” For, indeed, God's children, when they are delivered, it is usually with the confusion of their enemies. God doth two things at once, because the special grievance of God's children it is from inward and outward enemies. He seldom or never delivers them but with the confusion of their enemies. This will be most apparent at the day of judgment, when Satan, and all that are led by his spirit, all the malignant church, shall be sent to their own place, and the church shall be for ever free from all kind of enemies. When the church is most free, then the enemies of the church are nearest to destruction; like a pair of balances, when they are up at the one end, they are down at the other. So when it is up with the church, down go the enemies.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 2.—“*The wicked, mine enemies.*” The wicked hate the godly; there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent. Gen. iii. 15. As in nature there is an antipathy between the vine and the bay-tree, the elephant and the dragon. Vultures have an antipathy against sweet smells: so in the wicked there is an antipathy against the people of God; they hate the sweet perfumes of their graces. It is true the saints have their infirmities; but the wicked do not hate them for these, but for their holiness; and from this hatred ariseth open violence: the thief hates the light, therefore would blow it out.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—There was great wisdom in the prayer of John Wesley: “Lord, if I must contend, let it not be with thy people.” When we have for foes and enemies those who hate good men, we have at least this consolation, that God is not on their side, and therefore it is essentially weak.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—“*Though an host should encamp against me,*” etc. He puts the case of the greatest danger that can be. Though an host should encompass me, “*my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.*” Here is great courage for the time to come. *Experience breeds hope and confidence.* David was not so courageous a man of himself; but upon experience of God's former comfort and assistance, his faith brake as fire out of the smoke, or as the sun out of a cloud. Though I was in such-and-such perplexities, yet for the time to come, I have such confidence and experience of God's goodness, that I will not fear. He that seeth God by a spirit of faith in his greatness and power, he sees all other things below as nothing. Therefore, he saith here, he cares not for the time to come for any opposition; no, not of an army. “If God be with us, who can be against us?” Rom. viii. 31. He saw God in his power; and then, looking from God to the creature, alas! who was he? As Micah, when he had seen God sitting upon his throne; what was Ahab to him, when he had seen God once? So when the prophet David had seen God once, then “*though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear,*” etc.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—“*Though an host should encamp against me,*” etc. If I love my God, and I love him with a noble-spirited love, all my enemies will fight against me in vain; I shall never fear them, and the whole world cannot harm me. Charity cannot be offended, because she takes offence at nothing. Enemies, enviers, slanderers, persecutors, I defy you; if I love, I shall triumph over your attacks. Ye can take away my goods; but if my love has a generous spirit, I shall be always rich enough, and ye cannot take away my love, which alone makes all my riches and treasures. Ye may blacken my reputation; but as I hold you cheaply quit of all homage of praise and applause, I, with all my heart, give you a free leave to blame and to defame. Happily for me, ye cannot blacken me before my God, and his

esteem alone makes amends to me, and rewards me, for all your contempt. Ye can persecute my body, but there I even will help you on by my penances; the sooner it shall perish, the sooner shall I be delivered from this domestic enemy, which is a burden to me. What harm, then, can ye do me? If I am resolved to suffer all and if I think I deserve all the outrages ye can do me, ye will only give more loftiness of spirit to my love, more brilliancy to my crown.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon.*

Verse 3.—Those who are willing to be combatants for God, shall also be more than conquerors through God. None are so truly courageous as those who are truly religious. If a Christian live, he knows by whose might he stands; and if he die, he knows for whose sake he falls. Where there is no confidence in God, there will be no continuance with God. When the wind of faith ceases to fill the sails, the ship of obedience ceases to plough the seas. The taunts of Ishmael shall never make an Isaac disesteem his inheritance.—*William Secker.*

Verses 3, 4.—The favourite grows great by the many favours, gifts, jewels, offices, the prince bestows on him. The Christian grows rich in experiences, which he wears as bracelets, and keeps as his richest jewels. He calls one *Ebenezer*—"hitherto God hath helped;" another *Naphtali*—"I have wrestled with God and prevailed;" another *Gershom*—"I was a stranger;" another *Joseph*—"God will yet add more;" and another, *Peniel*—"I have seen the face of God." 1 Sam. vii. 12; Gen. xxx. 8; Ex. ii. 22; Gen. xxx. 24, and xxxii. 30. I have been delivered from the lion, therefore shall be from the bear; from lion and bear, therefore from the *Philistines*; from the Philistine, therefore from *Saul*; from Saul, therefore God will deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me blameless to his heavenly kingdom.—*John Sheffield.*

Verse 4.—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Some interpreters vary concerning what the Psalmist aims at; I understand thus much in a generality, which is clear, that he means a communion and fellowship with God, which is that *one thing*, which if a Christian had, he needs desire no more: that we should all desire and desire again and be in love with, and that is enough even to satisfy us, the fruition of God, and the beholding of him in his ordinances, in his temple, to have correspondency and fellowship and communion with him there. O God, vouchsafe us that! Now this is so infinitely sweet, that it was the Psalmist's only desire, and the sum of all his desires here, and therefore much more in the tabernacle of heaven which doth make up the consummation and completeness of all our happiness.—*John Stoughton.*

Verse 4.—"One thing have I desired of the Lord," etc. Seeing David would make but *one* request to God, why would he not make a greater? for, alas! what a poor request is this—to desire to dwell in God's house? and what to do? but only to see? and to see what? but only a *beauty*, a fading thing, at most but to enquire; and what is enquiring? but only to hear news; a vain fancy. And what cause in any of these why David should make it his request to God? But mark, O my soul, what goes with it! Take altogether—"to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." And now tell me, if there be, if there can be, any greater request to be made? any greater cause to be earnest about it? For though worldly beauty be a fading thing, yet "the beauty of the Lord," shall continue when the world shall fade away; and though enquiring after news be a vain fancy, yet to enquire in God's Temple is the way to learn there is no new thing under the sun, and there it was that Solomon learned that "all is vanity." Indeed, this "*one thing*," that David desires, is in effect that *unum necessarium* that Christ speaks of in the gospel; which Mary makes choice of there, as David doth here.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"One thing," etc. A heavenly mind gathers itself up into one wish and no more. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require." Grant me thyself, O Lord, and I will ask no more. The new creature asks nothing of God, but to enjoy God: give me this, O Lord, and for the rest, let Ziba take all. I will part with all to buy that one pearl, the riches of heavenly grace.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 4.—"One thing." The first thing, then, is David's choice, summarily described in the word, "*one thing*." So Christ confirmeth the prophet's word, while he called Mary's choice, "*one thing*." Luke x. 42. And that for these three reasons: First, because it is not a common but a *chief* good. If there be any good above it, it is not the chief good; and if there be any good equal unto it, it is not

alone. Next, because it is the *last end* which we mind eternally to enjoy ; if there be any end beyond it, it is not the last, but amids, and a degree to it. All mids and ends are used for it, but it is sought for itself, and, therefore, must be but one. Thirdly, it is a *centre* whereunto all reasonable spirits draw. As all lines from a circle meet in the centre, so every one that seeketh happiness aright meeteth in the chief good, as the only thing which they intend, and, therefore, must be *one*. William Struther, in " *True Happiness, or King David's Choice,*" 1633.

Verse 4.—" *One thing.*" Changes, great changes, and many bereavements there have been in my life. I have been emptied from vessel to vessel. But one thing has never failed—one thing makes me feel that my life has been *one* ; it has calmed my joys, it has soothed my sorrows, it has guided me in difficulty, it has strengthened me in weakness. It is the *presence* of God—a faithful and loving God. Yes, brethren, the presence of God is not only *light*, it is *unity*. It gives *unity* to the heart that believes it—*unity* to the life that is conformed to it. It was the presence of God in David's soul that enabled him to say, " *One thing have I desired of the Lord ;*" and in St. Paul's that enabled him to say, " *This one thing I do.*"—George Wagner, in the " *Wanderings of the Children of Israel,*" 1862.

Verse 4.—" *One thing.*"—

One master passion in the breast.
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

Alexander Pope.

Verse 4.—" *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" To approach continually unto the temple, and thither continually to repair was the *dwelling*, no doubt, here meant ; to *dwell*, to reside continually there, not to come for a spurt or a fit. . . . And thus dwelt Hannah, the daughter of Phanuel, who is said, in the second of Luke, for the space of four score and four years not to have gone out of the temple. Not that she was there always, but often, saith Lyra ; and venerable Bede to the same purpose. Not that she was never absent, no, not an hour ; but for that she was often in the temple. And the same St. Luke, speaking of our Saviour's disciples, after they had seen him ascended into heaven—" They returned," saith he, " to Jerusalem with great joy : and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God," chapter xxiv. 52, 53. Thus, St. Austin's mother, in her time too, might be said to *dwell* in God's house, whereunto she came so duly and truly twice a day, " *That she, in thy Scriptures,*" saith St. Austin, " might hear, O God, what thou saidst to her, and thou, in her prayers, what she said to thee." In a word, such were the Christians the same St. Austin speaks of in another place, whom he calleth the *emmetts of God*. " Behold the emmet of God," saith he, " it riseth early every day, it runneth to God's church, it there prayeth, it heareth the lesson read, it singeth a Psalm, it ruminateth what it heareth, it meditateth thereupon, and hoardeth up within itself the precious corn gathered from that barn-floor." John Day's " *David's Desire to go to Church,*" 1609.

Verse 4.—" *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" In the beginning of the Psalm, David keeps an audit of his soul's accounts, reckoning up the large incomes and lasting treasures of God's bounty, grace, and mercy ; the sum whereof is this : The Lord is my light and my life, my strength and my salvation. And now, where shall David design his presence, but where is his light ? Where shall he desire his person, but where is his strength ? Where shall he wish his soul, but where is his life ? and where shall he fix his habitation, but where is his salvation ? even in communion with his God ; and this, especially, in the holy worship of his sanctuary. No wonder, then, if above all things he desires and seeks after this " *one thing,*" " *to dwell in the house of the Lord,*" etc.—Robert Mossom.

Verse 4.—" *The house of the Lord.*" It [the tabernacle, the sanctuary] is called the house of God because he is present there, as a man delights to be present in his house. It is the place where God will be met withal. As a man will be found in his house, and there he will have suitors come to him, where he reveals his secrets. A man rests, he lies, and lodgeth in his house. Where is a man so familiar as in his house ? and what other place hath he such care to protect and provide for as his house ? and he lays up his treasures and his jewels in his house. So God lays up all the treasures of grace and comfort in the visible church. In the church he is to be spoken with as a man in his house. There he gives us sweet meetings ; there are mutual, spiritual kisses. " *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.*" Cant. i. 2. A man's house is his castle, as we say, that he will protect and provide for.

God will be sure to protect and provide for his church. Therefore he calls the church of God, that is, the tabernacle (that was the church at that time), *the house of God*. If we apply it to our times, that that answers the tabernacle now, is particular visible churches under particular pastors, where the means of salvation are set up. Particular visible churches now are God's tabernacle. The church of the Jews was a national church. There was but one church, but one place, and one tabernacle; but now God hath erected particular tabernacles. Every particular church and congregation under one pastor, their meeting is the church of God, a several church independent. *Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—"To behold the beauty of the Lord." That was one end of his desire, to dwell in the house of God; not to feed his eyes with speculations and goodly sights (as indeed there were in the tabernacle goodly things to be seen). No; he had a more spiritual sight than that. He saw the inward spiritual beauty of those spiritual things. The other were but outward things, as the apostle calls them. I desire to dwell in the house of the Lord, "to behold the beauty of the Lord," the inward beauty of the Lord especially.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—"The beauty of the Lord." In connection with these words, we would try to show that the character of God is attractive, and fitted to inspire us with love for him, and to make us, as it were, run after him. The discussion of our subject may be arranged under three heads. I. Some of the elements of the beauty of the Lord. II. Where the beauty of the Lord may be seen. III. Peculiar traits of the beauty of the Lord. I. Some of the elements of the beauty of the Lord. God is a Spirit. Hence his beauty is spiritual, and its elements must be sought for in spiritual perfection. 1. One of the elements of this beauty is holiness. 2. But the elements of the divine beauty on which we intend at this time to dwell, are those which are included under the general description of God's mercy and grace. The attractiveness of these is more easily perceived, and their influence is sooner felt by persons in our fallen condition. It is mainly through the instrumentality of these that sinners are won over from their enmity against God, and that the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. 3. Another thing, which we may call an element of beauty in God, is the combination of his various attributes in one harmonious whole. The colours of the rainbow are beautiful, when taken one by one: but there is a beauty in the rainbow, which arises not from any single tint; there is a beauty in it which would not exist if the several hues were assumed in succession—a beauty which is the result of their assemblage and collocation, and consists in their blended radiance. In like manner do the several perfections, which co-exist and unite in the nature of God, produce a glorious beauty. Holiness is beautiful; mercy is beautiful; truth is beautiful. But, over and above, there is a beauty which belongs to such combinations and harmonies as the Psalmist describes, when he tells us, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep," etc. II. We are next to enquire where the beauty of the Lord may be seen. It may so far be seen in the *natural world*. The throne of nature, although in some respects clouds and darkness are round about it, is not without its rainbow of beauty, any more than the throne of grace. The beauty of the Lord may be seen in the *moral law*. In the law! Even so. In the unbending law, with its terrible anathema, his beauty and amiableness shine forth. The law is full of love. The duties of the law are duties of love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The curse of the law is designed and employed for the maintenance of love. Obedience to the law, and the reign of love, are but different aspects of the same state of things. And one of the sublimest lessons of the law is the fact, that God is love. Again, the beauty of the Lord may be seen in the *gospel*. We see it, as it were, by reflection, in the law; in the gospel, we see it directly. The law shows us the hearts of men, as God would have them to be; the gospel shows us God's own heart. Again, the beauty of the Lord is seen in *Christ*. It is seen in Christ, for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. The beauty of the Lord is seen in Christ, when we consider him as the Father's gift, and when we look to his offices and to his character. The character of Christ was the finest spectacle of moral beauty which men or angels ever set their eyes on. III. We conclude by noticing some traits of the beauty of the Lord. 1. It never deceives. 2. It never fades. 3. It never loses its power. 4. It never dis-

appoints.—*Condensed from Andrew Gray (1805—1861), in “Gospel Contrasts and Parallels.”*

Verse 4.—“*The beauty of the Lord.*” The Lord’s *beauty*, to be seen in his house, is not the beauty of his essence, for so no man can see God and live (Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20); before this glorious beauty the angels cover their faces with their wings (Isa. vi. 1, 2); but it is the beauty of his ordinances, wherein God doth reveal to the eyes of men’s minds, enlightened by his Spirit, the pleasant beauty of his goodness, justice, love, and mercy in Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Pierson, M.A., 1570—1633.*

Verse 4.—“*The beauty of the Lord.*”—“*Beauty*” is too particular a word to express the fulness of the Holy Ghost, the pleasantness or the delight of God. Take the word in a general sense, in your apprehensions. It may be the object of all senses, inward and outward. Delight is most transcendent for pleasantness; for indeed God in his ordinances, is not only “*beauty*” to the eye of the soul, but is ointment to the smell, and sweetness to the taste, and all in all to all the powers of the soul. God in Christ, therefore, he is delightful and sweet. . . . “*The beauty of the Lord*” is especially the amiable things of God, which is his mercy and love, that makes all other things beautiful that is in the church.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 4.—“*To enquire in his temple.*” The more grace the more business ye will find ye have to do with God in his ordinances; little grace hath little to do, and much grace hath much to do; he hath always business with God, special earnest business. “*To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*” Oh, I have somewhat to enquire after; I am to do something by this duty, and therefore cannot trifle. He that comes to visit his friend in a compliment, he talks, he walks, he trifles, and goes home again; but he that comes upon business, he is full of it: he is like Abraham’s honest and faithful servant. Gen. xxiv. 33. “*And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told my errand.*” I have great business with the Lord, about the church, and about my soul, and I will not eat, nor talk, nor think, nor dally about anything, till I have told mine errand, or heard my Maker’s errand unto me. And for this end it’s a rare thing to carry somewhat always on the spirit, to spread before God, a heart pregnant with some needful request or matter whereof to treat with God. Psalm xlv. 1.—*Richard Steele’s “Antidote against Distractions,” 1673.*

Verse 4.—It was David’s earnest prayer, “*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.*” There are many that pray David’s words, but not with David’s heart. *Unum petii*, one thing have I desired, *de præterito*, for the time past; *et hoc requiram*, this I will still seek after, *de futuro*, for the time to come: I have required it long, and this suit I will urge till I have obtained it. What? To dwell in some of the houses of God all the days of my life, and to leave them to my children after me; not to serve him there with devotion, but to make the place mine own possession? These love the house of God too well; they love it to have and to hold: but because the conveyance is made by the lawyer, and not by the minister, their title will be found nought in the end; and if there be not a *nisi prius* to prevent them, yet at that great day of universal audit, the Judge of all the world shall condemn them. By this way, the nearer to the church, the further from God. The Lord’s temple is ordained to gain us to him, not for us to gain it from him. If we love the Lord, we “*will love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth;*” that so by being humble frequenters of his temple below, we may be made noble saints of his house above, the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—David being in this safe condition, what doth he now think upon or look at, as his main scope? Not as Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, to sit still and be merry, when he had overcome the Romans and all his enemies, as he sometime said to Cyneas, the philosopher, but to improve his rest to perpetual piety, in going from day to day to God’s house, as Hannah is said afterwards to have done. Luke ii. And this, first, for the solace of his soul, in seeing the beauty of his sanctuary. Secondly, that he might still be directed aright and be safe. Thirdly, that he might yet be more highly exalted in kingly glory. Fourthly, for all this, as he should have abundant cause, sacrificing and singing Psalms to God without ceasing: see verses 5, 6.—*John Mayer.*

Verse 4.—O my soul, what sights have I seen in the house of God! what provisions have I tasted! what entertainments have I had! what enlargements in prayer and answers thereto! what impressions under his word, what enter-

tainment at his table, as he has sometimes brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me has been love! And though I cannot, it may be, say so much of this as some others; yet what I have found, I cannot but remember with thankfulness, and desire more; and as this was *in the house of God, here would I still desire to dwell.*—*Daniel Wilcox, 1676—1733.*

Verse 5.—“*The time of trouble.*” Though God does not always deliver his people out of trouble, yet he delivers them from the evil of trouble, the despair of trouble, by supporting the spirit; nay, he delivers by trouble, for he sanctifies the trouble to cure the souls, and by less troubles delivers from greater.—*From a Broad Sheet in the British Museum, dated, “London: printed for D.M., 1678.”*

Verse 5.—“*He shall hide me.*” The word here used means to hide, to secrete, and then, to defend or protect. It would properly be applied to one who had fled from oppression, or from any impending evil, and who should be *secreted* in a house or cavern, and thus rendered safe from pursuers, or from the threatening evil.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5.—“*Pavilion*” comes from *papilio*, a *butterfly*. It signifies a *tent* made of cloth stretched out on poles, which in form resembles in some measure the insect above named.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—“*In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.*” He alludes to the ancient custom of offenders, who used to flee to the tabernacle or altar, where they esteemed themselves safe. 1 Kings ii. 28.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 5.—“*In the secret of his tabernacle.*” Were there no other place, he would put me in the *holy of holies*, so that an enemy would not dare to approach me.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—“*Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.*” A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water. Now, it is the proper office of hope to do this for the Christian in times of any danger. Luke xxi. 28. “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.” A strange time, one would think, for Christ then to bid his disciples *lift up their heads* in, when they see other men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth (verse 26); yet now is the time of the rising of their sun, when others’ is setting, and the blackness of darkness is overtaking others; because now the Christian’s feast is coming, for which hope hath saved its stomach so long. “Your redemption draweth nigh.” Two things make the head hang down—fear and shame; hope easeth the Christian’s heart of both these, and so forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 6.—“*Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy.*” “Surely.” some may say, “he could have called on God beyond the precincts of the temple, Wherever he wandered as an exile, he carried with him the precious promise of God, so that he needed not to put so great a value upon the sight of the external edifice. He appears, by some gross imagination or other, to suppose that God could be enclosed by wood and stones.” But if we examine the words more carefully, it will be easy to see, that his object was altogether different from a mere sight of the noble building and its ornaments, however costly. He speaks, indeed, of the temple, but he places that beauty not so much in the goodness that was to be seen by the eye, as in its being the celestial pattern which was shown to Moses, as it is written in Exod. xxv. 40: “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.” As the fashion of the temple was not framed according to the wisdom of man, but was an image of spiritual things, the prophet directed his eyes and all his affections to this object. Their madness is, therefore, truly detestable who wrest this place in favour of pictures and images, which, instead of deserving to be numbered among temple ornaments, are rather like dung and filth, defiling all the purity of holy things.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—“*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*” In the former verse, David begins a prayer to God, “Hear, O Lord; have mercy upon me, and answer me.” This verse is a ground of that prayer, “*Seek ye my face,*” saith God. The heart answers again, “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek;*” therefore I am encouraged to pray to thee. In the words are contained God’s command and David’s obedience. God’s warrant and David’s work

answerable, the voice and the echo: the voice, "*Seek my face*;" the rebound back again of a gracious heart, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*." "*When thou saidst*." It is not in the original. It only makes way to the sense. Passionate speeches are usually abrupt: "*Seek my face*:" "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*." . . . *God is willing to be known*. He is willing to open and discover himself; God delights not to hide himself. God stands not upon state, as some emperors do that think their presence diminisheth respect. God is no such God, but he may be searched into. Man, if any weakness be discovered, we can soon search into the depth of his excellency; but with God it is clean otherwise. The more we know of him, the more we shall admire him. None admire him more than the blessed angels, that see most of him, and the blessed spirits that have communion with him. Therefore he hides not himself, nay, he desires to be known; and all those that have his Spirit desire to make him known. Those that suppress the knowledge of God in his will, what he performs for men, and what he requires of them, they are enemies to God and of God's people. They suppress the opening of God, clean contrary to God's meaning; "*Seek my face*;" "I desire to be made known, and lay open myself to you. Therefore we may observe by the way, that when we are in any dark condition, that a Christian finds not the beams of God shining on him, let him not lay the blame upon God, as if God were a God that delighted to hide himself. Oh, no! it is not his delight. He loves not strangeness to his poor creatures. It is not a point of his policy. He is too great to affect* such poor things. No; the fault is altogether in us. We walk not worthy of such a presence; we want humility and preparation. If there be any darkness in the creature, that he finds God doth not so shine on him as in former times, undoubtedly the cause is in himself; for God saith, "*Seek my face*." He desires to reveal himself.—*Richard Sibbes*.

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face*," etc. All the Spirit's motions are reasonable, and therefore not to be put off; for delay is a kind of denial, and savours of such ungrateful contempt, as must needs be very displeasing to him. "*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek*." God does not only expect such an answer, but expects it immediately upon his call. Whenever he blows with his wind, he looks that we should spread our sails. If we refuse his offered help, we may deservedly want it when desired. As Christ withdrew himself from the spouse because she let him stand knocking so long at the door of her heart, and she still deferred to open, and tired out his loving forbearance with vain and frivolous excuses. Sol. Song, v. 2, etc. But as we must not omit the present performance of any duty which he excites unto, we must not check his influences by being weary of the duties which he assists us in: if we do not improve extraordinary aids by holding out the longer, we provoke him to depart.—*Timothy Cruso*.

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst, Seek ye my face*," etc. We see here thus much, that God must *begin* with us, before we can *close with him*; God must seek us, before we can seek him; God must first desire that we should draw near to him, before we for our particulars are able to draw near unto God. Thou saidst, Seek my face; and then, and not till then my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 8.—"*When thou saidst*," etc. Now God then speaks to the heart to pray when not only he puts upon the duty by saying to the conscience, This thou oughtest to do; but God's speaking to pray is such as his speech at first was, when he made the world, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so he says, let there be a prayer, and there is a prayer; that is, he pours upon a man a spirit of grace and supplication, a praying disposition; he puts in motives, suggests arguments and pleas to God; all which you shall find come in readily, and of themselves, and that likewise with a quickening heat and enlargement of affection, and with a lingering, and longing, and restlessness of spirit to be alone, to pour out the soul to God, and to vent and form those motions and suggestions into a prayer, till you have laid them together, and made a prayer of them. And this is a speaking to the heart. Observe such times when God doth thus, and neglect them not, then to strike whilst the iron is hot; thou hast then his ear; it is a special opportunity for that business, such a one as thou mayst never have the like. Suitors at court observe *molissima fandi tempora*, their times of begging when they have

* Choose=love.

kings in a good mood, which they will be sure to take the advantage of ; but especially if they should find that the king himself should begin of himself to speak of the business which they would have of him : and thus that phrase of Psalm x. 17, that God prepares the heart, is understood by some, that God prepares the heart, and causeth the ear to hear ; that is, he fashions it and composeth it into a praying frame. And sure it is a great sign that God means to hear us when himself shall thus indite the petition.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—“*When thou saidst,*” etc. And well may this be pleaded, in that God useth not so to stir up and strengthen us to seek him, but when he intendeth to be found of us. Psalm x. 17. “*Thou hast heard the desire of the humble : thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*” Jer. xxix. 13. “*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” And God maketh it an argument to himself, that if he say to any inwardly as well as outwardly, “*Seek my face,*” he that speaketh righteousness cannot speak thus to them, and frustrate their prayers, and so bid them seek his face in vain. Isaiah xlv. 19, “*I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain ; I the Lord speak right things.*” If Ahasuerus bid his spouse to ask, surely he will not fail to grant her petition (Esther vii. 2) ; so here. And as when Christ called the blind man to come to him to tell him his grievance, it was truly said to him by them, “*Be of good comfort, rise, for he calleth thee.*” Mark x. 49. So it is in this case.—*Thomas Cobbett.*

Verse 8.—“*My heart said unto thee.*” The heart is between God and our obedience, as it were, an ambassador. It understands from God what God would have done, and then it lays a command upon the whole man. The heart and conscience of man is partly divine, partly human. It hath some divinity in it, especially if the man be a holy man. God speaks, and the heart speaks. God speaks to the heart, and the heart speaks to us. And oftentimes when we hear conscience speaking to us, we neglect it ; and as St. Augustine said of himself, “*God spake often to me, and I was ignorant of it.*” When there is no command in the word that the heart directly thinks of (as indeed many profane careless men scarce have a Bible in their houses), God speaks to them thus ; conscience speaks to them some broken command, that they learn against their wills. They heed it not, but David did not so. God said, “*Seek ye my face ;*” his heart answers, “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*” The heart looks upward to God, and then to itself, “*My heart said.*” It said to thee, and then to itself. First, his heart said to God, “*Lord, I have encouragement from thee. Thou hast commanded that I should seek thy face.*” So his heart looked to God, and then it speaks to itself, “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*” It looks first to God, and then to all things that come from itself.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 8.—There are divers things considerable of us in this answer and compliance of David’s with God’s command or invitation to him. First, it was *seasonable, and in due time* ; presently does David make this return : “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*” This is the property and disposition of every wise and prudent Christian, to close with the very first opportunities of God’s invitation. Secondly, this answer, as it was seasonable and present, so it was also *full and complete* ; the performance was proportionable to the injunction. Ye shall have some kind of people in the world that God bids them do one thing and they will be sure to do the quite contrary ; or, at least, not do as much as they should do, but do it by halves. But, now, here David makes return to God in the full extent and proportion of obedience. God said, “*Seek my face,*” and he answered, “*Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*” Thirdly, it was *real and entire, and sincere* ; “*My heart said.*” It is one thing to say it with the *mouth*, and it is another thing to say it with the *heart*. With the *mouth* it is both easy and ordinary, and nothing more usual. Lord, thy face will we seek, especially in any trouble or calamity, which is incident unto us ; but for the heart to say it, that is not so frequent. Fourthly, it was *settled, and peremptory*, “*Thy face will I seek ;*” there is nothing shall hinder me of it, or keep me from it, but I will do it against all opposition. Lastly, this protestation of David was *absolute and indefinite and unlimited* ; “*I will seek thy face ;*” without prescription of time, or place, or condition ; not only now, but hereafter ; not only for a time, but for ever, in all seasons, in all estates, in all circumstances, still I shall keep me to this—to hold my communion with thee. Then are we Christians, indeed, when we are so immutably and irreversibly and independently upon the opinions or practices of any other person.—*Condensed from Thomas Horton.*

Verse 8.—God hath promised his favour, and, therefore, his people may seek

his favour. Nay, he hath commanded his people to seek his favour, and therefore they should seek it. It is an unadvised folly, during the suspension of God's favour, to unson ourselves, and unpeople ourselves, *i.e.*, by denying the grace and spiritual relation which exist between us and God. That is not the way to gain favour ; for when we have undone our relation of children we exclude ourselves from the expectation of favour. No, the wisest and surest way is to seek the renewing of God's loving countenance, and not to be driven away from God by our unbelief.—*Obadiah Sedgwick, in "The Doubting Believer," 1653.*

Verse 9.—"Hide not thy face far from me." When I seek thy face, vouchsafe, O God, not to hide thy face from me ; for to what purpose should I seek it if I cannot find it ? and what hope of finding it if thou be bent to hide it ?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 9.—"Put not thy servant away in anger." God puts away many in anger for their supposed goodness, but not any at all for their confessed badness.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"Thy servant." It is a blessed and happy thing to be God's true "servant." Consider what the Queen of Sheba said of Solomon's servants (1 Kings x. 8) : "Happy are these thy servants," etc. Now Christ Jesus is greater than Solomon (Matt. xii. 42), and so a better Master. Good earthly masters will honour good servants, as Prov. xxvii. 18, "He that waiteth on his master shall be honoured ;" chap. xvii. 2, "A wise servant shall have a portion, or inheritance, among the brethren." But however some earthly masters may be Nabals and Labans, yet God will not be so : John xii. 26 : "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour," see Luke xii. 37. The watchful servants are blessed ; their master will make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them, as Matt. xxv. 21, 23 : "Well done, thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Thomas Pierson.*

Verse 9.—"Thou hast been my help ; leave me not," etc. One act of mercy engages God to another. Men argue thus : I have showed you kindness already, therefore trouble me no more ; but because God has shown mercy he is more ready still to show mercy ; his mercy in election makes him justify, adopt, glorify.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 9.—"Leave me not ;" rather, "dismiss me not ;" "let not go thy hold of me." This is the proper sense of the Hebrew verb *עזב*, to set a thing loose, to let it go, to abandon it.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 10.—"When my father and my mother forsake me." As there seems to be some difficulty in supposing the Psalmist's parents to have "deserted" him, they might perhaps be said to have "forsaken" him (as Muis conjectures), that is, to have left him behind them, as being dead.—*James Merrick, M.A., 1720—1769.*

Verse 10.—"When my father and my mother forsake me." It is indeed the nature of all living creatures, though never so tender of their young ones, yet when they are grown to a ripeness of age and strength, to turn them off to shift for themselves ; and even a father and a mother, as tender as they are, have yet somewhat of this common nature in them ; for while their children are young they lead them by the hand, but when they are grown up they leave them to their own legs, and if they chance to fall let them rise as they can. But God even then takes his children up, for he knows of what they are made ; he knows their strength must be as well supported as their weakness be assisted ; he knows they must as well be taken up when they fall, as be held up when they stand.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"Father and Mother." First, who are they ? Properly and chiefly our natural parents, of whom we were begotten and born ; to whom (under God) we owe our being and breeding. Yet here, not they only ; but by *synecdoche* all other kinsfolks, neighbours, friends, acquaintances, or, indeed, more generally yet, all worldly comforts, stays, and helps whatsoever. 2. But, then, why these named the rather, and the rest to be included in these ? Because we promise to ourselves more help from them than from any of the other. We have a nearer relation to, and a greater interest in them than any other ; and they of all other are the unlike-liest to forsake us. The very brute creatures forsake not their young ones. A hen will not desert her chickens, nor a bear endure to be robbed of her whelps. 3. But, then, thirdly, why *both* named—*father* and *mother* too ? Partly because

it can hardly be imagined that both of them should forsake their child, though one should hap to be unkind. Partly because the *father's love* being commonly with more *providence*, the *mother's* with more *tenderness*; both together do better express than alone either would do, the abundant love of God towards us, who is infinitely dear over us, beyond the care of the most provident father, beyond the affection of the tenderest mother. 4. But, then, fourthly, when may they be said to *forsake* us? When at any time they leave us destitute of such help as we stand in need of; whether it be out of *choice*, when they list not to help us, though they might if they would; or out of *necessity*, when they cannot help us, though they would if they could.—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 10.—“*Then the Lord will take me up.*” But *di tum factum*: these are but *words*: Are there producible any *deeds* to make it good? Verily, there are, and that to the very letter. When Ishmael's mother, despairing of his life, had *forsaken* him, and laid him down gasping (his last, for ought she knew or could do to help it), in the wilderness, the Lord *took him up*; he opened a new spring of water, and opened her eyes to see it, and so the child was preserved. Genesis xxi. When Moses' parents had also *forsaken* him (for they durst not stand by him any longer), and laid him down among the rushy flags, the Lord *took him up* too. He provided him of a saviour, the king's own daughter, and of a nurse the child's own mother—and so he was preserved too. Exodus ii. 6—9. Take but two examples more, out of either Testament one. David and St. Paul, both *forsaken* of men, both *taken up* of God. How was David forsaken, in Psalm cxlii. 4, when he had looked upon his right hand, and saw no man that would know him; he had no place to fly unto, and no man cared for his soul. But all the while *Dominus ad dextris*, there was one at his right hand (though at first he was not aware of him), ready to *take him up*; as it there followeth, verse 5, “I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” And how St. Paul was forsaken; take it from himself, 2 Timothy iv. 16, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me:” a heavy case, and had been heavier had there not been one ready to take his part, at the next verse, “Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me,” etc. What need we any more witnesses? *In ore duorum*—in the mouth of two such witnesses the point is sufficiently established. But you will yet say, these two might testify what they had already found *post factum*. But David, in the text, pronounceth it *de futuro*, beforehand, and that somewhat confidently: “*The Lord will take me up.*” As he doth also elsewhere: “Sure I am that the Lord will avenge the poor, and maintain the cause of the helpless.” Psalm cxl. But is there any ground for that? Doubtless there is; a *double* ground; one in the *nature*, another in the *promise* of God. In his *nature* four *qualities* there are (we take leave so to speak, suitably to our own low apprehensions, for in the Godhead there are properly no *qualities*); but call them *qualities* or *attributes*, or what else you will; there are *four perfections* in God, opposite to those *defects* which in our *earthly parents* we have found to be the chief causes why they do so oft *forsake* us; which give us full assurance that he will *take us up* when all other succours fail us. Those are his *love*, his *wisdom*, his *power*, his *eternity*, and all in his nature. To which *four*, add his *promise*, and you have the fulness of all the assurance that can be desired.—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 10.—“*The Lord will take me up.*” Hebrew, *will gather me*, that is, take me into his care and keeping. In the civil law we find provision made for outcasts and friendless persons; some hospitals to entertain them, some liberties to comfort and compensate their trouble. 'Tis sure, that in God the forlorn and fatherless find mercy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—“*Teach me thy way, O Lord.*” Having compared himself to an exposed, deserted infant, adopted by God, he anon fairly asks to be shown how to walk. He asks the grace of being able to observe all his holy commandments, which he never loses sight of through the whole one hundred-and-fifty Psalms. What else could he do? when it was the only path to that heavenly house of God, which he had just declared to be the only wish and desire of his heart.—*Robert Bellarmine (Cardinal), 1542—1621.*

Verse 11.—“*Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.*” If a man, travelling in the King's highway, be robbed between sun and sun, satisfaction is recoverable upon the county where the robbery was made; but if he takes his journey in the night, being an unseasonable time, then it is at his own peril, he must

take what falls. So, if a man keep in *God's ways*, he shall be sure of *God's protection*; but if he stray out of them, he exposeth himself to danger.—*Robert Skinner (Bishop), 1636.*

Verse 11.—“*Because of mine enemies.*” If once a man commence a professor, the eyes of all are upon him; and well they may, for his profession *in the world* is a separation *from the world*. Believers condemn those by their lives who condemn them by their lips. Righteous David saw many who were waiting to triumph in his mistakes. Hence the more they watched, the more he prayed: “Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.” It may be rendered, *because of mine observers*. Christian, if you dwell in the open tent of licentiousness, the wicked will not walk backward, like modest Shem and Japheth, to cover your shame: but they will walk forward, like cursed Ham, to publish it. Thus they make use of your weakness as a plea for their wickedness. Men are merciless in their censures of Christians; they have no sympathy for their infirmity: while God weighs them in more equal scales, and says, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” While a saint is a *dove* in the eyes of God, he is only a *raven* in the estimation of sinners.—*William Seeker.*

Verse 13.—“*I had fainted,*” etc. Study much the all-sufficiency, the power, the goodness, the unchangeableness of God. 1. The all-sufficiency of God. What fulness there is in him to make up all you can lose for him; what refreshments there are in him to sweeten all you can suffer for him. What fulness! You may as well doubt that all the waters of the ocean cannot fill a spoon, as that the divine fulness cannot be enough to you, if you should have nothing left in this world; for all the waters that cover the sea are not so much as a spoonful, compared with the boundless and infinite fulness of all-sufficiency. What refreshments in him! One drop of divine sweetness is enough to make one in the very agony of the cruellest death to cry out with joy, “The bitterness of death is past.” Now in him there are not only drops, but rivers; not a scanty sprinkling, but an infinite fulness. 2. Eye much the power of God, how it can support under the cross, what it can bring to pass for you by the cross. No cross so sharp and grievous, but he can make it sweet and comfortable. No cross so heavy and intolerable, but he can make light and easy. No cross so ignominious and reproachful, but he can turn it to your honour. No cross so fastened to you, but he can easily remove it. 3. His *goodness*. His all-sufficiency and power make him able, his *goodness* makes him willing to do for his people under the cross what his all-sufficiency and almighty power can afford. His *goodness* sets his mighty power a-work for his suffering saints. His *goodness* sets his all-sufficiency, his fulness, abroad for them, so that it runs freely upon them; and never more freely than when they are under the cross. “*I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord,*” &c. What is it that makes you ready to *faint* under the cross, or thoughts and foresight of it? Look to the *goodness of God*, there is support.—*Condensed from David Clarkson.*

Verse 13.—“*I had fainted.*” The words in italics are supplied by our translators; but, far from being necessary, they injure the sense. Throw out the words *I had fainted*, and leave a *break* after the verse, and the elegant figure of the Psalmist will be preserved: “Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”—what! what, alas! should have become of me!—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—“*Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*” In the Hebrew this verse is elliptical, as Calvin here translates it. In the French version he supplies the ellipsis, by adding to the end of the verse the words, “*C'estoit fait de moy,*” “*I had perished.*” In our English version, the words, “*I had fainted,*” are introduced as a supplement in the beginning of the verse. Both the supplement of Calvin, and that of our English version, which are substantially the same, doubtless explain the meaning of the passage; but they destroy the elegant abrupt form of the expression employed by the Psalmist, who breaks off in the middle of his discourse without completing the sentence, although what he meant to say is very evident.—*Editorial Note to Calvin, in loc.*

Verse 13.—Under sore trouble and distress, labour to exercise a strong and lively faith. It was a noble and heroic resolution in that holy man Job, under his singular trials (Job xiii. 15): “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;” as if he had said, Let my strokes be never so sore and heavy, yet I will not let go my grips of his word and promises, I will not raze these foundations of my hope.

It was the way the Psalmist kept himself from sinking under his heavy burdens : “ *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*” . . . Faith brings new strength and auxiliary supplies of grace from heaven, when the former supply is exhausted and spent ; whereof David had the sweet experience here. As God doth plant and actuate grace in the soul, so he is pleased to come in with seasonable supplies and reinforcements to the weak and decayed graces of his people, answerable to their present exigences and pressures ; and thus he doth from time to time feed the believer’s lamp with fresh oil, give in more faith, more love, more hope, and more desires ; and hereby he gives power to the faint, and strengthens the things which remain when ready to die.—*John Willison.*

Verse 13.—“ *Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living :*” a cordial made up of three sovereign ingredients—a hope to see ; and to see the goodness of God ; and the goodness of God in the land of the living.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 13.—“ *The land of the living.*” Alas ! what a land of the living is this, in which there are more dead than living, more under ground than above it ; where the earth is fuller of graves than houses ; where life lies trembling under the hand of death ; and where death hath power to tyrannise over life ! No, my soul, there only is the land of the living where there are none but the living ; where there is a church, not militant, but triumphant ; a church indeed, but no church-yard, because none dead, nor none that can die ; where life is not passive, nor death active ; where life sits crowned, and where death is swallowed up in victory.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 14.—“ *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage.*” Be comfortable, hold fast (as the Greek hath), be manly, or, quit thee as a man ; which word the apostle useth. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. These are the words of encouragement against remissness, fear, faintness of heart, or other infirmities.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 14.—“ *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage.*”

Stand but your ground, your ghostly foes will fly—
Hell trembles at a heaven-directed eye ;
Choose rather to defend than to assail—
Self-confidence will in the conflict fail :
When you are challenged you may dangers meet—
True courage is a fixed, not sudden heat ;
Is always humble, lives in self-distrust,
And will itself into no danger thrust.
Devote yourself to God, and you will find
God fights the battles of a will resigned.
Love Jesus ! love will no base fear endure—
Love Jesus ! and of conquest rest secure.

Thomas Ken (Bishop), 1637—1710—11.

Verse 14.—Think not the government is out of Christ’s hand, when men are doing many sad things, and giving many heavy blows to the work of God. No, no ; men are but his hand ; and it is the hand of God that justly and righteously is lying heavy upon his people. Look above men, then ; you have not to do with them : there is a turn of matters, just as he is pleased to turn his hand.—*Ralph Erskine, 1685—1752.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (first clause).—The relation of illumination to salvation, or the need of light if men would be saved.

Verse 1.—The Christian hero, and the secret springs of his courage.

Verse 1.—The believer’s fearless challenge.

Verse 2.—The character, number, power, and cruelty of the enemies of the church, and the mysterious way in which they have been defeated.

Verse 3.—Christian peace. 1. Exhibited in the calm foresight of trouble.

II. Displayed in the confident endurance of affliction. III. Sustained by divine help and past experience (*verses* 1, 2). IV. Producing the richest results, glory to God, etc.

Verse 4.—Model Christian life. I. Unity of desire. II. Earnestness of action. III. Nearness of communion. IV. Heavenliness of contemplation. V. Progress in divine education.

Verse 4.—The affection of moral esteem towards God.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 4.—A breathing after God.—*R. Sibbes's Sermon.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Sabbath occupations and heavenly delights.

Verse 4 (*final clause*).—Matters for enquiry in the Temple of old opened up in the light of the New Testament.

Verse 5.—The threefold sheiter. See Exposition.

Verse 6.—The saint's present triumph over his spiritual foes, his practical gratitude, and his vocal praises.

Verse 7.—Prayer. To whom addressed? How? "*Cry*," etc. When? *Left indefinite*. On what it is based? "*Mercy*." What it needs? "*Hear*," "*answer*."

Verse 8.—The heart in tune with its God. Note, the promptness, heartiness, personality, unreservedness, accuracy, and resolution of the response to the precept.

Verse 8.—The successful seeker.—*R. Sibbes's Sermon.*

Verse 8.—The echo. See Spurgeon's Sermons. No. 767.

Verse 9.—I. Desertion deprecated in all its forms. II. Experience pleaded. III. Divine aid implored.

Verse 9.—The horror of saints at the hell of sinners.—*James Scot.*

Verse 10.—The portion of the orphan, the comfort of the persecuted, the paradise of the departing.

Verse 11.—The plain man's pathway desired, described, divinely approved, "*thy way*," "*a plain way*," and divinely taught, "*teach me, O Lord*," "*lead me*."

Verse 13.—Faith, its precedence of sight, its objects, its sustaining power.

Verse 13.—Believing to see. See Spurgeon's Sermons. No. 766.

Verse 11.—The believer's position, "*wait*;" his condition, "*good courage*;" his support, "*he shall*," etc.; his perseverance, "*wait*" repeated a second time; his reward.