

PSALM XXVIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*Again, the title, "A Psalm of David," is too general to give us any clue to the occasion upon which it was written. Its position, as following the twenty-seventh, seems to have been designed, for it is a most suitable pendant and sequel to it. It is another of those "songs in the night" of which the pen of David was so prolific. The thorn at the breast of the nightingale was said by the old naturalists to make it sing: David's griefs made him eloquent in holy psalmody. The main pleading of this Psalm is that the suppliant may not be confounded with the workers of iniquity for whom he expresses the utmost abhorrence; it may suit any slandered saint who, being misunderstood by men, and treated by them as an unworthy character, is anxious to stand aright before the bar of God. The Lord Jesus may be seen here pleading as the representative of his people.*

DIVISION.—*The first and second verses earnestly entreat audience of the Lord in a time of dire emergency. From verses 2—5, the portion of the wicked is described and deprecated. In verses 6, 7, and 8, praise is given for the Lord's mercy in hearing prayer, and the Psalm concludes with a general petition for the whole host of militant believers.*

EXPOSITION.

UNTO thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

1. "*Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock.*"—A cry is the natural expression of sorrow, and is a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and his ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation, and shall use language of firm resolve like that in the text, "I will cry." The immutable Jehovah is our *rock*, the immovable foundation of all our hopes and our refuge in time of trouble: we are fixed in our determination to flee to him as our stronghold in every hour of danger. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our rock attends to our cries. "*Be not silent to me.*" Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, if possible; they dread even a little of God's silence. God's voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but his silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close his ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, he will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful ease should we be in if the Lord should become for ever silent to our prayers! This thought suggested itself to David, and he turned it into a plea, thus teaching us to argue and reason with God in our prayers. "*Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.*" Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We *must* have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for he never can find it in his heart to permit his own elect to perish.

2. This is much to the same effect as the first verse, only that it refers to future as well as present pleadings. Hear me! Hear me! "*Hear the voice of my supplications!*" This is the burden of both verses. We cannot be put off with a refusal when we are in the spirit of prayer; we labour, use importunity, and agonise in supplications until a hearing is granted us. The word "supplications," in the plural, shows the number, continuance, and variety of a good man's prayers,

while the expression, "hear *the voice*," seems to hint that there is an inner meaning, or heart-voice, about which spiritual men are far more concerned than for their outward and audible utterances. A silent prayer may have a louder voice than the cries of those priests who sought to awaken Baal with their shouts. "*When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle:*" which holy place was the type of our Lord Jesus; and if we would gain acceptance, we must turn ourselves evermore to the blood-besprinkled mercy seat of his atonement. Uplifted hands have ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward towards God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies; we lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. O that whenever we use devout gestures, we may possess contrite hearts, and so speed well with God.

3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

3. "*Draw me not away with the wicked.*"—They shall be dragged off to hell like felons of old drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn, like logs drawn to the fire, like fagots to the oven. David fears lest he should be bound up in their bundle, drawn to their doom; and the fear is an appropriate one for every godly man. The best of the wicked are dangerous company in time, and would make terrible companions for eternity; we must avoid them in their pleasures, if we would not be confounded with them in their miseries. "*And with the workers of iniquity.*" These are overtly sinful, and their judgment will be sure; Lord, do not make us to drink of their cup. Activity is found with the wicked even if it be lacking to the righteous. Oh! to be "workers" for the Lord. "*Which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*" They have learned the manners of the place to which they are going: the doom of liars is their portion for ever, and lying is their conversation on the road. Soft words, oily with pretended love, are the deceitful meshes of the infernal net in which Satan catches the precious life; many of his children are learned in his abominable craft, and fish with their father's nets, almost as cunningly as he himself could do it. It is a sure sign of baseness when the tongue and the heart do not ring to the same note. Deceitful men are more to be dreaded than wild beasts: it were better to be shut up in a pit with serpents than to be compelled to live with liars. He who cries "peace" too loudly, means to sell it if he can get his price. "Good wine needs no bush:" if he were so very peaceful he would not need to say so; he means mischief, make sure of that.

4. When we view the wicked simply as such, and not as our fellow-men, our indignation against sin leads us entirely to coincide with the acts of divine justice which punish evil, and to wish that justice might use her power to restrain by her terrors the cruel and unjust; but still the desires of the present verse, as our version renders it, are not readily made consistent with the spirit of the Christian dispensation, which seeks rather the reformation than the punishment of sinners. If we view the words before us as prophetic, or as in the future tense, declaring a fact, we are probably nearer to the true meaning than that given in our version. Ungodly reader, what will be your lot when the Lord deals with you according to your desert, and weighs out to you his wrath, not only in proportion to what you have actually done, but according to what you would have done if you could? Our "*endeavours*" are taken as facts; God takes the will for the deed, and punishes or rewards accordingly. Not in this life, but certainly in the next, God will repay his enemies to their faces, and give them the wages of their sins. Not according to their fawning words, but after the measure of their mischievous deeds, will the Lord mete out vengeance to them that know him not.

5. "*Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*" God works in creation—nature teems with proofs of his wisdom and goodness, yet purblind atheists refuse to see him: he works in providence, ruling and overruling,

and his hand is very manifest in human history, yet the infidel will not discern him : he works in grace—remarkable conversions are still met with on all hands, yet the ungodly refuse to see the operations of the Lord. Where angels wonder, carnal men despise. God condescends to teach, and man refuses to learn. “ *He shall destroy them :* ” he will make them “ behold, and wonder, and perish.” If they would not see the hand of judgment upon others, they shall feel it upon themselves. Both soul and body shall be overwhelmed with utter destruction for ever and ever. “ *And not build them up.* ” God’s curse is positive and negative ; his sword has two edges, and cuts right and left. Their heritage of evil shall prevent the ungodly receiving any good ; the ephah shall be too full of wrath to contain a grain of hope. They have become like old, rotten, decayed houses of timber, useless to the owner, and harbouring all manner of evil, and, therefore, the Great Builder will demolish them utterly. Incurrible offenders may expect speedy destruction : they who will not mend, shall be thrown away as worthless. Let us be very attentive to all the lessons of God’s word and work, lest being found disobedient to the divine will, we be made to suffer the divine wrath.

6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield ; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped : therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise him.

8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

6. “ *Blessed be the Lord.* ” Saints are full of benedictions ; they are a blessed people, and a blessing people ; but they give their best blessings, the fat of their sacrifices, to their glorious Lord. Our Psalm was prayer up to this point, and now it turns to praise. They who pray well, will soon praise well : prayer and praise are the two lips of the soul ; two bells to ring out sweet and acceptable music in the ears of God ; two angels to climb Jacob’s ladder ; two altars smoking with incense ; two of Solomon’s lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh ; they are two young roes that are twins, feeding upon the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. “ *Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.* ” Real praise is established upon sufficient and constraining reasons ; it is not irrational emotion, but rises, like a pure spring, from the deeps of experience. Answered prayers should be acknowledged. Do we not often fail in this duty ? Would it not greatly encourage others, and strengthen ourselves, if we faithfully recorded divine goodness, and made a point of extolling it with our tongue ? God’s mercy is not such an inconsiderable thing that we may safely venture to receive it without so much as thanks. We should shun ingratitude, and live daily in the heavenly atmosphere of thankful love.

7. Here is David’s declaration and confession of faith, coupled with a testimony from his experience. “ *The Lord is my strength.* ” The Lord employs his power on our behalf, and moreover, infuses strength into us in our hour of weakness. The Psalmist, by an act of appropriating faith, takes the omnipotence of Jehovah to be his own. Dependence upon the invisible God gives great independence of spirit, inspiring us with confidence more than human. “ *And my shield.* ” Thus David found both sword and shield in his God. The Lord preserves his people from unnumbered ills ; and the Christian warrior, sheltered behind his God, is far more safe than the hero when covered with his shield of brass or triple steel. “ *My heart trusted in him, and I am helped.* ” Heart work is sure work ; heart trust is never disappointed. Faith must come before help, but help will never be long behind-hand. Every day the believer may say, “ I am helped,” for the divine assistance is vouchsafed us every moment, or we should go back unto perdition ; when more manifest help is needed, we have but to put faith into exercise, and it will be given us. “ *Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise him.* ” The heart is mentioned twice to show the truth of his faith and his joy. Observe the adverb “ *greatly,* ” we need not be afraid of being too full of rejoicing at the remembrance of grace received. We serve a great God, let us greatly rejoice in him. A song is the soul’s fittest method of giving vent to its happiness, it were well if we were more like the singing lark, and less like the croaking raven. When the heart is glowing, the lips should not be silent. When God blesses us, we should bless him with all our heart.

8. "*The Lord is their strength.*"—The heavenly experience of one believer is a pattern of the life of all. To all the militant church, without exception, Jehovah is the same as he was to his servant David, "the least of them shall be as David." They need the same aid and they shall have it, for they are loved with the same love, written in the same book of life, and one with the same anointed Head. "*And he is the saving strength of his anointed.*" Here behold king David as the type of our Lord Jesus, our covenant Head, our anointed Prince, through whom all blessings come to us. He has achieved full salvation for us, and we desire saving strength from him, and as we share in the unction which is so largely shed upon him, we expect to partake in his salvation. Glory be unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has magnified the power of his grace in his only begotten Son, whom he has anointed to be a Prince and a Saviour unto his people.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

9. This is a prayer for the church militant, written in short words, but full of weighty meaning. We must pray for the whole church, and not for ourselves alone. "*Save thy people.*" Deliver them from their enemies, preserve them from their sins, succour them under their troubles, rescue them from their temptations, and ward off from them every ill. There is a plea hidden in the expression, "*thy people ;*" for it may be safely concluded that God's interest in the church, as his own portion, will lead him to guard it from destruction. "*Bless thine inheritance.*" Grant positive blessings, peace, plenty, prosperity, happiness ; make all thy dearly-purchased and precious heritage to be comforted by thy Spirit. Revive, refresh, enlarge and sanctify thy church. "*Feed them also.*" Be a shepherd to thy flock, let their bodily and spiritual wants be plentifully supplied. By thy word, and ordinances, direct, rule, sustain, and satisfy those who are the sheep of thy hand. "*And lift them up for ever.*" Carry them in thine arms on earth, and then lift them into thy bosom in heaven. Elevate their minds and thoughts, spiritualise their affections, make them heavenly, Christlike, and full of God. O Lord, answer this our petition, for Jesus' sake.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"Unto thee do I cry." It is of the utmost importance that we should have a definite object on which to fix our thoughts. Man, at the best of times, has but little power for realising abstractions ; but least of all in his time of sorrow. Then he is helpless ; then he needs every possible aid ; and if his mind wander in vacancy, it will soon weary, and sink down exhausted. God has graciously taken care that this need not be done. He has so manifested himself to man in his word, that the afflicted one can fix his mind's eye on him, as the definite object of his faith, and hope, and prayer. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jer. xxxiii. 3. This was what the Psalmist did ; and the definiteness of God, as the object of his trust in prayer, is very clearly marked. And specially great is the privilege of the Christian in this matter. He can fix his eye on Jesus ; he, without any very great stretch of imagination, can picture that Holy One looking down upon him ; listening to him ; feeling for him ; preparing to answer him. Dear reader, in the time of your trouble, do not roam ; do not send out your sighs into vacancy ; do not let your thoughts wander, as though they were looking for some one on whom to fix ; for some one to whom you could tell the story of your heart's need and desolation. Fix your heart as the Psalmist did, and say, "Unto thee will I cry." . . . Oh ! how happy is that man, who feels and knows that when trouble comes, he cannot be bewildered and confused by the stroke, no matter how heavy it may be. Sorrow-stricken he will be, but he has his resource, and he knows it, and will avail himself of it. His is no vague theory of the general sympathy of God for man ; his is a knowledge of God, as a personal and feeling God ; he says with the Psalmist, "Unto thee will I cry."—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 1.—"My rock." One day a female friend called on the Rev. William

Evans, a pious minister in England, and asked how he felt himself. "I am weakness itself," he replied; "but I am on the *Rock*. I do not experience those transports which some have expressed in the view of death; but my dependence is on the mercy of God in Christ. Here my religion began, and here it must end."

Verse 1.—"My rock." The Rev. John Rees, of Crown Street, Soho, London, was visited on his death-bed by the Rev. John Leifchild, who very seriously asked him to describe the state of his mind. This appeal to the honour of his religion roused him, and so freshened his dying lamp, that raising himself up in his bed, he looked his friend in the face, and with great deliberation, energy, and dignity, uttered the following words:—"Christ in his person, Christ in the love of his heart, and Christ in the power of his arm, is the Rock on which I rest; and now" (reclining his head gently on the pillow), "Death, strike!"—*K. Arvine*.

Verse 1.—"Be not silent to me." Let us next observe what the heart desires from God. It is that he would speak. "Be not silent to me." Under these circumstances, when we make our prayer, we desire that God would let us know that he hears us, and that he would appear for us, and that he would say, he is our Father. And what do we desire God to say? We want him to let us know that he hears us; we want to hear him speak as distinctly to us, as we feel that we have spoken to him. We want to know, not only by faith that we have been heard, but by God's having spoken to us on the very subject whereupon we have spoken to him. When we feel thus assured that God has heard us, we can with the deepest confidence leave the whole matter about which we have been praying, in his hands. Perhaps an answer cannot come for a long time; perhaps things, meanwhile, seem working in a contrary way; it may be, that there is no direct appearance at all of God upon the scene; still faith will hold up and be strong; and there will be comfort in the heart, from the felt consciousness that God has heard our cry about the matter, and that he has told us so. We shall say to ourselves, "God knows all about it; God has in point of fact told me so; therefore I am in peace." And let it be enough for us that God tells us this, when he will perhaps tell us no more; let us not want to try and induce him to speak much, when it is his will to speak but little: the best answer we can have at certain times is simply the statement that "he hears;" by this answer to our prayer he at once encourages and exercises our faith. "It is said," said Rutherford, speaking of the Saviour's delay in responding to the request of the Syrophenician woman, "'he answered not a word,' but it is not said, he heard not a word. These two differ much. Christ often heareth when he doth not answer—his not answering is an answer, and speaks thus—'pray on, go on and cry, for the Lord holdeth his door fast bolted, not to keep you out, but that you may knock, and knock, and it shall be opened.'"—*Philip Bennett Power*.

Verse 1.—"Lest . . . I become like them that go down into the pit." Thou seest, great God, my sad situation. Nothing to me is great or desirable upon this earth but the felicity of serving thee, and yet the misery of my destiny, and the duties of my state, bring me into connection with men who regard all godliness as a thing to be censured and derided. With secret horror I daily hear them blaspheming the ineffable gifts of thy grace, and ridiculing the faith and fervour of the godly as mere imbecility of mind. Exposed to such impiety, all my consolation, O my God, is to make my cries of distress ascend to the foot of thy throne. Although for the present, these sacrilegious blasphemies only awaken in my soul emotions of horror and pity, yet I fear that at last they may enfeeble me and seduce me into a crooked course of policy, unworthy of thy glory, and of the gratitude which I owe to thee. I fear that insensibly I may become such a coward as to blush at thy name, such a sinner as to resist the impulses of thy grace, such a traitor as to withhold my testimony against sin, such a self-deceiver as to disguise my criminal timidity by the name of prudence. Already I feel that this poison is insinuating itself into my heart, for while I would not have my conduct resemble that of the wicked who surround me, yet I am too much biassed by the fear of giving them offence. I dare not imitate them, but I am almost as much afraid of irritating them. I know that it is impossible both to please a corrupt world and a holy God, and yet I so far lose sight of thy truth, that instead of sustaining me in decision, it only serves to render my vacillation the more inexcusable. What remains for me but to implore thy help! Strengthen me, O Lord, against these declensions so injurious to thy glory, so fatal to the fidelity which is due to thee. Cause me to hear thy strengthening and encouraging voice. If the voice of thy grace be not

lifted up in my spirit, reanimating my feeble faith, I feel that there is but a step between me and despair. I am on the brink of the precipice, I am ready to fall into a criminal complicity with those who would fain drag me down with them into the pit.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon, 1663—1742, freely translated by C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—“*I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.*” Called דְּבִיר, *debhir*, because there-hence God spake and gave answer. Toward this (a type of Christ, the Word essential), David lifteth up his hands, that it might be as a ladder, whereby his prayer might get up to heaven.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—“*Draw me not away with the wicked . . . which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*” The godly man abhors dissimulation towards men; his heart goes along with his tongue, he cannot flatter and hate, commend and censure. “Let love be without dissimulation.” Romans xii. 9. Dissembled love is worse than hatred; counterfeiting of friendship is no better than a lie (Psalm lxxviii. 36), for there is a pretence of that which is not. Many are like Joab: “He took Amasa by the beard to kiss him, and smote him with his sword in the fifth rib, that he died.” There is a river in Spain, where the fish seem to be of a golden colour, but take them out of the water, and they are like other fish. All is not gold that glitters; there are some pretend much kindness, but they are like great veins which have little blood; if you lean upon them they are as a leg out of joint. For my part, I much question his truth towards God, that will flatter and lie to his friend. “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander is a fool.” Proverbs x. 18.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—“*Draw me not out with.*” An allusion, I conceive, to a shepherd selecting out a certain portion of his flock. “*Reckon me not among.*”—*Professor Lee.*

Verse 3.—“*Draw me not away.*” אֶל־תִּקְשְׁבֵנִי from קָשָׁה; that signifies, both to draw and apprehend, will be best rendered here, *seize not on me*, as he that *seizeth* on any to carry or drag him to execution.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 4.—“*Give them according to their deeds,*” etc. Here, again, occurs the difficult question about praying for vengeance, which, however, I shall despatch in a few words. In the first place, then, it is unquestionable, that if the flesh move us to seek revenge, the desire is wicked in the sight of God. He not only forbids us to imprecate evil upon our enemies in revenge for private injuries, but it cannot be otherwise than that all those desires which spring from hatred must be disordered. David’s example, therefore, must not be alleged by those who are driven by their own intemperate passion to seek vengeance. The holy prophet is not inflamed here by his own private sorrow to devote his enemies to destruction; but laying aside the desire of the flesh, he gives judgment concerning the matter itself. Before a man can, therefore, denounce vengeance against the wicked, he must first shake himself free from all improper feelings in his own mind. In the second place prudence must be exercised, that the heinousness of the evils which offend us drive us not to intemperate zeal, which happened even to Christ’s disciples, when they desired that fire might be brought from heaven to consume those who refused to entertain their Master. Luke ix. 54. They pretended, it is true, to act according to the example of Elias, but Christ severely rebuked them, and told them that they knew not by what spirit they were actuated. In particular, we must observe this general rule, that we cordially desire and labour for the welfare of the whole human race. Thus it will come to pass, that we shall not only give way to the exercise of God’s mercy, but shall also wish the conversion of those who seem obstinately to rush upon their own destruction. In short, David, being free from every evil passion, and likewise endued with the spirit of discretion and judgment, pleads here not so much his own cause as the cause of God. And by this prayer, he further reminds both himself and the faithful, that although the wicked may give themselves loose reins in the commission of every species of vice with impunity for a time, they must at length stand before the judgment-seat of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4.—“*Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours.*” Yes, great God, since thou hast from the beginning been only occupied in saving men, thou wilt surely strike with an eternal malediction these children of iniquity who appear to have been born only to be lost them-

selves, and to destroy others. Thy very benevolence towards mankind solicits thy thunders against these corrupters of society. The more thou hast done for our race, the more surely will the severity of thy justice reveal itself in destroying the wretches whose only study is to counteract thy goodness towards mankind. They labour incessantly to put men far away from thee, O my God, and in return thou wilt put them far away from thee for ever. They count it great gain to make their fellows thine enemies, and they shall have the desperate consolation of being such themselves to all eternity. What more fitting punishment for the wretches who desire to make all hearts rebel against thine adorable Majesty, than to lie through the baseness of their nature, under the eternal and frightful necessity of hating thee for ever.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon, rendered very freely by C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—“*Give them according to their deeds.*” The Egyptians killed the Hebrew male children, and God smote the firstborn of Egypt. *Sisera*, who thought to destroy Israel with his iron chariots, was himself killed with an iron nail, stuck through his temples. *Adoni-bezek*, Judges i. 5—7. *Gideon* slew forty elders of Succoth, and his sons were murdered by Abimelech. *Abimelech* slew seventy sons of Gideon upon one stone, and his own head was broken by a piece of millstone thrown by a woman. *Samson* fell by the “lust of the eye,” and before death the Phillistines put out his eyes. *Agag*, 1 Sam. xx. 33. *Saul* slew the Gibeonites, and seven of his sons were hung up before the Lord. 2 Sam. xxi. 1—9. *Ahab*, after coveting Naboth’s vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 19, fulfilled 2 Kings ix. 24—26. *Jeroboam*, the same hand that was stretched forth against the altar was withered, 1 Kings xiii. 1—6. *Joab* having killed Abner, Amasa, and Absalom, was put to death by Solomon. *Daniel’s accusers* thrown into the lions’ den meant for Daniel. *Haman* hung upon the gallows designed for Mordecai. *Judas* purchased the field of blood, and then went and hanged himself. So in the history of *later days*, *Bajazet* was carried about by Tamerlane in an iron cage, as he intended to have carried Tamerlane. *Mazentius* built a bridge to entrap Constantine, and was overthrown himself on that very spot. *Alexander VI.* was poisoned by the wine he had prepared for another. *Charles IX.* made the streets of Paris to stream with Protestant blood, and soon after blood streamed from all parts of his body in a bloody sweat. *Cardinal Beaton* condemned George Wishart to death, and presently died a violent death himself; he was murdered in bed, and his body was laid out in the same window from which he had looked upon Wishart’s execution.—*G. S. Bowes, in “Illustrative Gatherings.”*

Verse 4.—“*Render to them their desert.*” Meditate on God’s righteousness, that it is not only his will, but his nature to punish sin; sin must damn thee without Christ, there is not only a possibility or probability that sin may ruin, but without an interest in Christ it must do so; whet much upon thy heart that *must*; God cannot but hate sin, because he is holy; and he cannot but punish sin, because he is righteous. God must not forego his own nature to gratify our humours.—*Christopher Fowler, in “Morning Exercises,”* 1676.

Verse 4.—He prayeth against his enemies, not out of any private revenge, but being led by the infallible spirit of prophecy, looking through these men to the enemies of Christ, and of his people in all ages.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5.—In these verses, as indeed in most of the imprecatory passages, the imperative and the future are used promiscuously: “*Give them—he shall destroy them.*” If therefore, the verbs, in all such passages, were uniformly rendered in the “future,” every objection against the Scripture imprecations would vanish at once, and they would appear clearly to be what they are, namely, prophecies of the divine judgments, which have been since executed against the Jews, and which will be executed against all the enemies of Jehovah, and his Christ; whom neither the “works” of creation, nor those of redemption, can lead to repentance.—*George Horne.*

Verse 6.—“*He hath heard.*” Prayer is the best remedy in a calamity. This is indeed a true *catholicum*, a general remedy for every malady. Not like the empiric’s *catholicum*, which sometimes may work, but for the most part fails: but that which upon assured evidence and constant experience hath its *probatum est*; being that which the most wise, learned, honest, and skilful Physician that ever was, or can be, hath prescribed—even he that teacheth us how to bear what is to be borne, or how to heal and help what hath been borne.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 7.—" *The Lord is my strength.*" Oh, sweet consolation! If a man have a burthen upon him, yet if he have *strength* added to him, if the burthen be doubled, yet if his *strength* be trebled, the burden will not be heavier, but lighter than it was before to his natural strength; so if our afflictions be heavy, and we cry out, Oh, we cannot bear them! yet if we cannot bear them with our own strength, why may we not bear them with the strength of Jesus Christ? Do we think that Christ could not bear them? or if we dare not think but that Christ could bear them, why may not we come to bear them? Some may question, can we have the strength of Christ? Yes; that very strength is made over to us by faith, for so the Scripture saith frequently, *The Lord is our strength; God is our strength; The Lord Jehovah is our strength; Christ is our strength* (Psalm xxviii. 7; xliii. 2; cxviii. 14; Isaiah xii. 2; Hab. iii. 19; Col. i. 11); and, therefore, is Christ's strength ours, made over unto us, that we may be able to bear whatsoever lies upon us.—*Isaac Ambrose.*

Verse 7.—" *The Lord is my strength*" inwardly, "*and my shield*" outwardly. Faith finds both these in Jehovah, and the one not without the other, for what is a shield without strength, or strength without a shield? "*My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:*" the idea of the former sentence is here carried out, that outward help was granted to inward confidence.—*W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 7.—" *My heart trusted in him, and I am helped.*" Faith substantiateth things not yet seen; it altereth the tenses, saith one, and putteth the future into the present tense as here.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—" *The Lord is their strength:*" not mine only, but the strength of every believer. Note—the saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours. 1 Cor. i. 2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of "*his anointed,*" *i.e.*, 1. Of David in the type: God in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his Anointed, his Messiah, in the antitype. God was his "*saving strength,*" qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—" *Lift them up.*" The word here used may mean *sustain* them, or *support* them; but it more properly means *bear*, and would be best expressed by a reference to the fact, that the shepherd carries the feeble, the young, and the sickly of his flock in his arms, or that he lifts them up when unable themselves to rise.—*Albert Barnes.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (first clause).—A sinner's wise resolution in the hour of despondency.

Verse 1.—The saint's fear of becoming like the ungodly.

Verse 1.—God's silence—what terror may lie in it.

Verse 1 (last clause).—How low a soul may sink when God hides his face.

Verses 1, 2.—Prayer. I. *Its nature*—a "*cry.*" 1. The utterance of life. 2. The expression of pain. 3. The pleading of need. 4. The voice of deep earnestness. II. *Its object*—" *O Lord, my rock.*" God is our Foundation, Refuge, and immutable Friend. III. *Its aim*—" *Hear,*" "*Be not silent.*" We expect an answer, a clear

and manifest answer, a speedy answer, a suitable answer, an effectual answer. IV. *Its medium*—"Toward thy holy oracle." Our Lord Jesus, the true mercy seat, etc.

Verse 3.—The characters to be avoided, the doom to be dreaded, the grace to keep us from both.

Verse 4.—Measure for measure, or punishment proportioned to desert.

Verse 4.—Endeavour the measure of sin rather than mere result. Hence some are guilty of sins which they were unable to commit.

Verse 5.—Culpable negligence constantly persisted in, losing much blessing, and involving terrible condemnation.

Verse 6.—Answered prayers, a retrospect and song.

Verse 7.—The heart's possessions, confidence, experience, joy, and music.

Verse 7.—Adoring God for his mercies. I. What God is to the believer.

II. What should be the disposition of our hearts towards him?—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 8.—All power given to believers because of their union with Jesus.

Verse 9.—"A prayer for the church militant." See Exposition and Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 768.

