

PSALM XXXI.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician—a Psalm of David. *The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung. Perhaps the Psalms, thus marked, might have been set aside as too mournful for temple worship, if special care had not been taken by the Holy Spirit to indicate them as being designed for the public edification of the Lord's people. May there not also be in Psalms thus designated a peculiarly distinct reference to the Lord Jesus? He certainly manifests himself very clearly in the twenty-second, which bears this title; and in the one before us we plainly hear his dying voice in the fifth verse. Jesus is chief everywhere, and in all the holy songs of his saints he is the chief musician. The surmises that Jeremiah penned this Psalm need no other answer than the fact that it is "a Psalm of David."*

SUBJECT.—*The Psalmist in dire affliction appeals to his God for help with much confidence and holy importunity, and ere long finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for his great goodness. Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone, and its allusion to his iniquity demand a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumours against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.*

DIVISION.—*There are no great lines of demarcation; throughout the strain undulates, falling into valleys of mourning, and rising with hills of confidence. However, we may for convenience arrange it thus: David testifying his confidence in God pleads for help, 1—6; expresses gratitude for mercies received, 7, 8; particularly describes his case, 9—13; vehemently pleads for deliverance, 14—18; confidently and thankfully expects a blessing, 19—22; and closes by showing the bearing of his case upon all the people of God.*

EXPOSITION.

IN thee, O LORD do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily; be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou *art* my strength.

5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities; but I trust in the LORD.

1. "*In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" Nowhere else do I fly for shelter, let the tempest howl as it may. The Psalmist has one refuge, and that the best one. He casts out the great sheet anchor of his faith in the time of storm. Let other things be doubtful, yet the fact that he relies upon Jehovah, David lays down most positively; and he begins with it, lest by stress of trial he should afterwards forget it. This avowal of faith is the fulcrum by means of which he labours to uplift and remove his trouble; he dwells upon it as a comfort to himself and a plea with God. No mention is made of merit, but faith relies upon divine favour and faithfulness, and upon that alone. "*Let me never be ashamed.*" How can the

Lord permit the man to be ultimately put to shame who depends alone upon him ? This would not be dealing like a God of truth and grace. It would bring dishonour upon God himself if faith were not in the end rewarded. It will be an ill day indeed for religion when trust in God brings no consolation and no assistance. "*Deliver me in thy righteousness.*" Thou art not unjust to desert a trustful soul, or to break thy promises ; thou wilt vindicate the righteousness of thy mysterious providence, and give me joyful deliverance. Faith dares to look even to the sword of justice for protection : while God is righteous, faith will not be left to be proved futile and fanatical. How sweetly the declaration of faith in this first verse sounds, if we read it at the foot of the cross, beholding the promise of the Father as yea and amen through the Son ; viewing God with faith's eye as he stands revealed in Jesus crucified.

2. "*Bow down thine ear to me.*" Condescend to my low estate ; listen to me attentively as one who would hear every word. Heaven with its transcendent glories of harmony might well engross the divine ear, but yet the Lord has an hourly regard to the weakest moanings of his poorest people. "*Deliver me speedily.*" We must not set times and seasons, yet in submission we may ask for swift as well as sure mercy. God's mercies are often enhanced in value by the timely haste which he uses in their bestowal ; if they came late they might be too late—but he rides upon a cherub, and flies upon the wings of the wind when he intends the good of his beloved. "*Be thou my strong rock.*" Be my Engedi, my Adullam ; my immutable, immovable, impregnable, sublime, resort. "*For an house of defence to save me,*" wherein I may dwell in safety, not merely running to thee for temporary shelter, but abiding in thee for eternal salvation. How very simply does the good man pray, and yet with what weight of meaning ! he uses no ornamental flourishes, he is too deeply in earnest to be otherwise than plain : it were well if all who engage in public prayer would observe the same rule.

3. "*For thou art my rock and my fortress.*" Here the tried soul avows yet again its full confidence in God. Faith's repetitions are not vain. The avowal of our reliance upon God in times of adversity is a principal method of glorifying him. Active service is good, but the passive confidence of faith is not one jot less esteemed in the sight of God. The words before us appear to embrace and fasten upon the Lord with a fiducial grip which is not to be relaxed. The two personal pronouns, like sure nails, lay hold upon the faithfulness of the Lord. O for grace to have our heart fixed in firm unshaking belief in God ! The figure of a rock and a fortress may be illustrated to us in these times by the vast fortress of Gibraltar, often besieged by our enemies, but never wrested from us : ancient strongholds, though far from impregnable by our modes of warfare, were equally important in those remoter ages—when in the mountain fastnesses, feeble bands felt themselves to be secure. Note the singular fact that David asked the Lord to be his rock (verse 2) because he was his rock ; and learn from it that we may pray to enjoy in experience what we grasp by faith. Faith is the foundation of prayer. "*Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.*" The Psalmist argues like a logician with his fors and therefores. Since I do sincerely trust thee, saith he, O my God, be my director. To lead and to guide are two things very like each other, but patient thought will detect different shades of meaning, especially as the last may mean *provide for me*. The double word indicates an urgent need—we require double direction, for we are fools, and the way is rough. Lead me as a soldier, guide me as a traveller ! lead me as a babe, guide me as a man ; lead me when thou art with me, but guide me even if thou be absent ; lead me by thy hand, guide me by thy word. The argument used is one which is fetched from the armoury of free grace : not for my own sake, but for *thy name's sake* guide me. Our appeal is not to any fancied virtue in our own names, but to the glorious goodness and graciousness which shine resplendent in the character of Israel's God. It is not possible that the Lord should suffer his own honour to be tarnished, but this would certainly be the case if those who trusted him should perish. This was Moses' plea, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name ?"

4. "*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me.*" The enemies of David were cunning as well as mighty ; if they could not conquer him by power, they would capture him by craft. Our own spiritual foes are of the same order—they are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by their guile. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird ; and, indeed, we are so foolish that this often happens. So deftly does the fowler do his

work that simple ones are soon surrounded by it. The text asks that even out of the meshes of the net the captive one may be delivered; and this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted; from between the jaws of the lion and out of the belly of hell can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp *pull* to save a soul from the net of temptation, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold his chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying: they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves. Villains who lay traps in secret shall be punished in public. "*For thou art my strength.*" What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we enter upon labours, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings when we can lay hold upon celestial power. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of the foe, confound their politics and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the strong God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

5. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" These living words of David were our Lord's dying words, and have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. Be assured that they are good, choice, wise, and solemn words; we may use them now and in the last tremendous hour. Observe, the object of the good man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his jewel, his secret treasure; if this be safe, all is well. See what he does with his pearl! He commits it to the hand of his God: it came from him, it is his own, he has aforesaid sustained it, he is able to keep it, and it is most fit that he should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. Without reservation the good man yields himself to his heavenly Father's hand; it is enough for him to be there; it is peaceful living and glorious dying to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit and continue to commit our all to Jesus' sacred care, then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places. "*Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*" Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done he will do again, for he changes not. He is a God of veracity, faithful to his promises, and gracious to his saints; he will not turn away from his people.

6. "*I have hated them that regard lying vanities.*" Those who will not lean upon the true arm of strength, are sure to make to themselves vain confidences. Man must have a god, and if he will not adore the only living and true God, he makes a fool of himself, and pays superstitious regard to a lie, and waits with anxious hope upon a base delusion. Those who did this were none of David's friends; he had a constant dislike to them: the verb includes the present as well as the past tense. He hated them for hating God; he would not endure the presence of idolaters; his heart was set against them for their stupidity and wickedness. He had no patience with their superstitious observances, and calls their idols vanities of emptiness, nothings of nonentity. Small courtesy is more than Romanists and Puseyites deserve for their fooleries. Men who make gods of their riches, their persons, their wits, or anything else, are to be shunned by those whose faith rests upon God in Christ Jesus; and so far from being envied, they are to be pitied as depending upon utter vanities. "*But I trust in the Lord.*" This might be very unfashionable, but the Psalmist dared to be singular. Bad example should not make us less decided for the truth, but the rather in the midst of general defection we should grow the more bold. This adherence to his trust in Jehovah is the great plea employed all along: the troubled one flies into the arms of his God, and ventures everything upon the divine faithfulness.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy : thou hast set my feet in a large room.

7. "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*" For mercy past he is grateful, and for mercy future, which he believingly anticipates, he is joyful. In our most importunate intercessions, we must find breathing time to bless the Lord : praise is never a hindrance to prayer, but rather a lively refreshment therein. It is delightful at intervals to hear the notes of the high-sounding cymbals when the dolorous sackbut rules the hour. Those two words, *glad* and *rejoice*, are an instructive reduplication, we need not stint ourselves in our holy triumph ; this wine we may drink in bowls without fear of excess. "*For thou hast considered my trouble.*" Thou hast seen it, weighed it, directed it, fixed a bound to it, and in all ways made it a matter of tender consideration. A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind ; what must God's consideration be ? "*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" God owns his saints when others are ashamed to acknowledge them ; he never refuses to know his friends. He thinks not the worse of them for their rags and tatters. He does not misjudge them and cast them off when their faces are lean with sickness, or their hearts heavy with despondency. Moreover, the Lord Jesus knows us in our pangs in a peculiar sense, by having a deep sympathy towards us in them all ; when no others can enter into our griefs, from want of understanding them experimentally, Jesus dives into the lowest depths with us, comprehending the direst of our woes, because he has felt the same. Jesus is a physician who knows every case ; nothing is new to him. When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us and will know us : O for grace to know more of him ! "*Man, know thyself,*" is a good philosophic precept, but "*Man, thou art known of God,*" is a superlative consolation. *Adversities* in the plural—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

8. "*And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.*" To be shut up in one's hand is to be delivered over absolutely to his power ; now, the believer is not in the hand of death or the devil, much less is he in the power of man. The enemy may get a temporary advantage over us, but we are like men in prison with the door open ; God will not let us be shut up, he always provides a way of escape. "*Thou hast set my feet in a large room.*" Blessed be God for liberty : civil liberty is valuable, religious liberty is precious, spiritual liberty is priceless. In all troubles we may praise God if these are left. Many saints have had their greatest enlargements of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a large room when their bodies have been lying in Bonner's coalhole, or in some other narrow dungeon. Grace has been equal to every emergency ; and more than this, it has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble : mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.

10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing : my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance : they that did see me without fled from me.

12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind : I am like a broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the slander of many : fear *was* on every side : while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

9. "*Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.*" Now, the man of God comes to a particular and minute description of his sorrowful case. He unbosoms his heart, lays bare his wounds, and expresses his inward desolation. This first sentence pithily comprehends all that follows, it is the text for his lamenting discourse. Misery moves mercy—no more reasoning is needed. "*Have mercy*" is the prayer ; the argument is as prevalent as it is plain and personal, "*I am in trouble.*" "*Mine eye is consumed with grief.*" Dim and sunken eyes are plain indicators of failing health. Tears draw their salt from our strength, and floods of them are very apt to consume the source from which they spring. God would have us tell him the symptoms of our disease, not for his information, but to show

our sense of need. "*Yea, my soul and my belly [or body].*" Soul and body are so intimately united, that one cannot decline without the other feeling it. We, in these days, are not strangers to the double sinking which David describes; we have been faint with physical suffering, and distracted with mental distress: when two such seas meet, it is well for us that the Pilot at the helm is at home in the midst of the waterfloods, and makes storms to become the triumph of his art.

10. "*For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.*" It had become his daily occupation to mourn; he spent all his days in the dungeon of distress. The sap and essence of his existence was being consumed, as a candle is wasted while it burns. His adversities were shortening his days, and digging for him an early grave. Grief is a sad market to spend all our wealth of life in, but a far more profitable trade may be driven there than in Vanity Fair; it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. Black is good wear. The salt of tears is a healthy medicine. Better spend our years in sighing than in sinning. The two members of the sentence before us convey the same idea; but there are no idle words in Scripture, the reduplication is the fitting expression of fervency and importunity. "*My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.*" David sees to the bottom of his sorrow, and detects sin lurking there. It is profitable trouble which leads us to trouble ourselves about our iniquity. Was this the Psalmist's foulest crime which now gnawed at his heart, and devoured his strength? Very probably it was so. Sinful morsels, though sweet in the mouth, turn out to be poison in the bowels: if we wantonly give a portion of our strength to sin, it will by-and-by take the remainder from us. We lose both physical, mental, moral, and spiritual vigour by iniquity. "*And my bones are consumed.*" Weakness penetrated the innermost parts of his system, the firmest parts of his frame felt the general decrepitude. A man is in a piteous plight when he comes to this.

11. "*I was a reproach among all mine enemies.*" They were pleased to have something to throw at me: my mournful estate was music to them, because they maliciously interpreted it to be a judgment from heaven upon me. Reproach is little thought of by those who are not called to endure it, but he who passes under its lash knows how deep it wounds. The best of men may have the bitterest foes, and be subjected to the most cruel taunts. "*But especially among my neighbours.*" Those who are nearest can stab the sharpest. We feel most the slights of those who should have shown us sympathy. Perhaps David's friends feared to be identified with his declining fortunes, and therefore turned against him in order to win the mercy if not the favour of his opponents. Self interest rules the most of men: ties the most sacred are soon snapped by its influence, and actions of the utmost meanness are perpetrated without scruple. "*And a fear to mine acquaintance.*" The more intimate before, the more distant did they become. Our Lord was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all in the hour of his utmost need. All the herd turn against a wounded deer. The milk of human kindness curdles when a despised believer is the victim of slanderous accusations. "*They that did see me without fled from me.*" Afraid to be seen in the company of a man so thoroughly despised, those who once courted his society hastened from him as though he had been infected with the plague. How villainous a thing is slander which can thus make an eminent saint, once the admiration of his people, to become the general butt, the universal aversion of mankind! To what extremities of dishonour may innocence be reduced!

12. "*I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.*" All David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance: he had been the saviour of his country, but his services were buried in oblivion. Men soon forget the deepest obligations; popularity is evanescent to the last degree: he who is in every one's mouth to-day may be forgotten by all to-morrow. A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the Psalmist's case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them. "*I am like a broken vessel,*" a thing useless, done for, worthless, cast aside, forgotten. Sad condition for a king! Let us see herein the portrait of the King of kings in his humiliation, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.

13. "*For I have heard the slander of many.*" One slanderous viper is death to all comfort—what must be the venom of a whole brood? What the ear does not hear the heart does not rue; but in David's case the accusing voices were loud

enough to break in upon his quiet—foul mouths had grown so bold, that they poured forth their falsehoods in the presence of their victim. Shimei was but one of a class, and his cry of "Go up, thou bloody man," was but the common speech of thousands of the sons of Belial. All Beelzebub's pack of hounds may be in full cry against a man, and yet he may be the Lord's anointed. "*Fear was on every side.*" He was encircled with fearful suggestions, threatenings, remembrances, and forebodings; no quarter was clear from incessant attack. "*While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.*" The ungodly act in concert in their onslaughts upon the excellent of the earth: it is to be wondered at that sinners should often be better agreed than saints, and generally set about their wicked work with much more care and foresight than the righteous exhibit in holy enterprises. Observe the cruelty of a good man's foes! they will be content with nothing less than his blood—for this they plot and scheme. Better fall into the power of a lion than under the will of malicious persecutors, for the beast may spare its prey if it be fed to the full, but malice is unrelenting and cruel as a wolf. Of all fiends the most cruel is envy. How sorely was the Psalmist bestead when the poisoned arrows of a thousand bows were all aimed at his life! Yet in all this his faith did not fail him, nor did his God forsake him. Here is encouragement for us.

14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.

15 My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In this section of the Psalm he renews his prayers, urging the same pleas as at first: earnest wrestlers attempt over and over again the same means of gaining their point.

14. "*But I trusted in thee, O Lord.*" Notwithstanding all afflicting circumstances, David's faith maintained its hold, and was not turned aside from its object. What a blessed saving clause is this! So long as our faith, which is our shield, is safe, the battle may go hard, but its ultimate result is no matter of question; if that could be torn from us, we should be as surely slain as were Saul and Jonathan upon the high places of the field. "*I said, Thou art my God.*" He proclaimed aloud his determined allegiance to Jehovah. He was no fair-weather believer, he could hold to his faith in a sharp frost, and wrap it about him as a garment fitted to keep out all the ills of time. He who can say what David did need not envy Cicero his eloquence: "*Thou art my God,*" has more sweetness in it than any other utterance which human speech can frame. Note that this adhesive faith is here mentioned as an argument with God to honour his own promise by sending a speedy deliverance.

15. "*My times are in thy hand.*" The sovereign arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair. "*Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.*" It is lawful to desire escape from persecution if it be the Lord's will; and when this may not be granted us in the form which we desire, sustaining grace will give us deliverance in another form, by enabling us to laugh to scorn all the fury of the foe.

16. "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.*" Give me the sunshine of heaven in my soul, and I will defy the tempests of earth. Permit me to enjoy a sense of thy favour, O Lord, and a consciousness that thou art pleased with my manner of life, and all men may frown and slander as they will. It is always enough for a servant if he pleases his master; others may be dissatisfied, but he is not their servant, they do not pay him his wages, and their opinions have no weight with him. "*Save me for thy mercies' sake.*" The good man knows no plea but mercy; whoever might urge legal pleas, David never dreamed of it.

17. "*Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee.*" Put not my

prayers to the blush! Do not fill profane mouths with jeers at my confidence in my God. "*Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.*" Cause them to their amazement to see my wrongs righted and their own pride horribly confounded. A milder spirit rules our prayers under the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace, and, therefore, we can only use such words as these in their prophetic sense, knowing as we do full well, that shame and the silence of death are the best portion that ungodly sinners can expect. That which they desired for despised believers shall come upon themselves by a decree of retributive justice, at which they cannot cavil "As he loved mischief, so let it come upon him."

18. "*Let the lying lips be put to silence.*" A right good and Christian prayer; who but a bad man would give liars more license than need be? May God silence them either by leading them to repentance, by putting them to thorough shame, or by placing them in positions where what they may say will stand for nothing. "*Which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.*" The sin of slanderers lies partly in the matter of their speech; "they speak grievous things;" things cutting deep into the feelings of good men, and wounding them sorely in that tender place—their reputations. The sin is further enhanced by the manner of their speech; they speak proudly and contemptuously; they talk as if they themselves were the cream of society, and the righteous the mere scum of vulgarity. Proud thoughts of self are generally attended by debasing estimates of others. The more room we take up ourselves, the less we can afford our neighbours. What wickedness it is that unworthy characters should always be the loudest in railing at good men! They have no power to appreciate moral worth of which they are utterly destitute, and yet they have the effrontery to mount the judgment seat, and judge the men compared with whom they are as so much draft. Holy indignation may well prompt us to desire anything which may rid the world of such unbearable impertinence and detestable arrogance.

19 *Oh* how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

Being full of faith, the Psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

19. "*Oh how great is thy goodness.*" Is it not singular to find such a joyful sentence in connection with so much sorrow? Truly the life of faith is a miracle. When faith led David to his God, she set him singing at once. He does not tell us how great was God's goodness, for he could not; there are no measures which can set forth the immeasurable goodness of Jehovah, who is goodness itself. Holy amazement uses interjections where adjectives utterly fail. Notes of exclamation suit us when words of explanation are of no avail. If we cannot measure we can marvel; and though we may not calculate with accuracy, we can adore with fervency. "*Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.*" The Psalmist in contemplation divides goodness into two parts, that which is in store and that which is wrought out. The Lord has laid up in reserve for his people supplies beyond all count. In the treasury of the covenant, in the field of redemption, in the caskets of the promises, in the granaries of providence, the Lord has provided for all the needs which can possibly occur to his chosen. We ought often to consider the laid-up goodness of God which has not yet been distributed to the chosen, but is already provided for them: if we are much in such contemplations, we shall be led to feel devout gratitude, such as glowed in the heart of David. "*Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.*" Heavenly mercy is not all hidden in the storehouse; in a thousand ways it has already revealed itself on behalf of those who are bold to avow their confidence in God; before their fellow men this goodness of the Lord has been displayed, that a faithless generation might stand rebuked. Overwhelming are the proofs of the Lord's

favour to believers, history teems with amazing instances, and our own lives are full of prodigies of grace. We serve a good Master. Faith receives a large reward even now, but looks for her full inheritance in the future. Who would not desire to take his lot with the servants of a Master whose boundless love fills all holy minds with astonishment?

20. "*Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man.*" Pride is a barbed weapon: the proud man's contumely is iron which entereth into the soul; but those who trust in God, are safely housed in the Holy of holies, the innermost court, into which no man may dare intrude; here in the secret dwelling place of God the mind of the saint rests in peace, which the foot of pride cannot disturb. Dwellers at the foot of the cross of Christ grow callous to the sneers of the haughty. The wounds of Jesus distil a balsam which heals all the scars which the jagged weapons of contempt can inflict upon us; in fact, when armed with the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, the heart is invulnerable to all the darts of pride. "*Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*" Tongues are more to be dreaded than beasts of prey—and when they strive, it is as though a whole pack of wolves were let loose; but the believer is secure even in this peril, for the royal pavilion of the King of kings shall afford him quiet shelter and serene security. The secret tabernacle of sacrifice, and the royal pavilion of sovereignty afford a double security to the Lord's people in their worst distresses. Observe the immediate action of God, "*Thou shalt hide,*" "*Thou shalt keep,*" the Lord himself is personally present for the rescue of his afflicted.

21. "*Blessed be the Lord.*" When the Lord blesses us we cannot do less than bless him in return. "*For he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.*" Was this in Mahanaim, where the Lord gave him victory over the hosts of Absalom? Or did he refer to Rabbath of Ammon, where he gained signal triumphs? Or, best of all, was Jerusalem the strong city where he most experienced the astonishing kindness of his God? Gratitude is never short of subjects: her Ebenezers stand so close together as to wall up her path to heaven on both sides. Whether in cities or in hamlets our blessed Lord has revealed himself to us, we shall never forget the hallowed spots: the lonely mount of Hermon, or the village of Emmaus, or the rock of Patmos, or the wilderness of Horeb, are all alike renowned when God manifests himself to us in robes of love.

22. Confession of faults is always proper; and when we reflect upon the goodness of God, we ought to be reminded of our own errors and offences. "*For I said in my haste.*" We generally speak amiss when we are in a hurry. Hasty words are but for a moment on the tongue, but they often lie for years on the conscience. "*I am cut off from before thine eyes.*" This was an unworthy speech; but unbelief will have a corner in the heart of the firmest believer, and out of that corner it will vent many spiteful things against the Lord if the course of providence be not quite so smooth as nature might desire. No saint ever was, or ever could be, cut off from before the eyes of God, and yet no doubt many have thought so, and more than one have said so. For ever be such dark suspicions banished from our minds. "*Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.*" What a mercy that if we believe not, yet God abideth faithful, hearing prayer even when we are labouring under doubts which dishonour his name. If we consider the hindrances in the way of our prayers, and the poor way in which we present them, it is a wonder of wonders that they ever prevail with heaven.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

23. "*O love the Lord, all ye his saints.*" A most affecting exhortation, showing clearly the deep love of the writer to his God: there is the more beauty in the expression, because it reveals love towards a smiting God, love which many waters could not quench. To bless him who gives is easy, but to cling to him who takes away is a work of grace. All the saints are benefited by the sanctified miseries of one, if they are led by earnest exhortations to love their Lord the better. If saints do not love the Lord, who will? Love is the universal debt of all the saved family: who would wish to be exonerated from its payment? Reasons for love are given, for believing love is not blind. "*For the Lord preserveth the faithful.*"

They have to bide their time, but the recompense comes at last, and meanwhile all the cruel malice of their enemies cannot destroy them. "*And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*" This also is cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.

24. "*Be of good courage.*" Keep up your spirit, let no craven thoughts blanch your cheek. Fear weakens, courage strengthens. Victory waits upon the banners of the brave. "*And he shall strengthen your heart.*" Power from on high shall be given in the most effectual manner by administering force to the fountain of vitality. So far from leaving us, the Lord will draw very near to us in our adversity, and put his own power into us. "*All ye that hope in the Lord.*" Every one of you, lift up your heads and sing for joy of heart. God is faithful, and does not fail even his little children who do but *hope*, wherefore then should we be afraid?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—" *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.*" Let us therefore shun mistrust; doubt is death, trust alone is life. Let us make sure that we trust the Lord, and never take our trust on trust. "*Let me never be ashamed.*" If David prays against being ashamed, let us strive against it. Lovers of Jesus should be ashamed of being ashamed.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—" *Deliver me in thy righteousness.*" For supporting thy faith, mark well whereon it may safely rest; even upon God's *righteousness*, as well as upon his mercy. On this ground did the apostle in faith expect the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8), because the Lord from whom he expected it is a righteous judge; and the Psalmist is bold to appeal to the righteousness of God. Ps. xxxv. 24. For we may be well assured that what God's goodness, grace, and mercy moved him to promise, his truth, his faithfulness, and righteousness will move him to perform.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 1, 2, 3:—

Shadows are faithless, and the rocks are false;
No trust in brass, no trust in marble walls;
Poor cots are e'en as safe as princes' halls.

Great God! there is no safety here below;
Thou art my fortress, thou that seem'st my foe,
'Tis thou, that strik'st the stroke, must guard the blow.

Thou art my God, by thee I fall or stand;
Thy grace hath giv'n me courage to withstand
All tortures, but my conscience and thy hand.

I know thy justice is thyself; I know,
Just God, thy very self is mercy too;
If not to thee, where, whither shall I go?

Francis Quarles.

Verse 2.—" *Bow down thine ear.*" Listen to my complaint. Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my *febleness* is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—" *Deliver me speedily.*" In praying that he may be delivered *speedily* there is shown the greatness of his danger, as if he had said, All will soon be over with my life, unless God make haste to help me.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 2, 3.—" *Be thou my strong rock,*" etc. What the Lord is engaged to be unto us by covenant, we may pray and expect to find him in effect. "*Be thou my strong rock,*" saith he, "*for thou art my rock.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—" *For thy name's sake.*" If merely a creature's honour, the credit of ministers or the glory of angels were involved, man's salvation would indeed be

uncertain. But every step involves the honour of God. We plead for *his name's sake*. If God should begin and not continue, or if he should carry on but not complete the work, all would admit that it was for some reason that must bring reproach on the Almighty. This can never be. God was self-moved to undertake man's salvation. His glorious name makes it certain the top-stone shall be laid in glory.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 3.—"For thy name's sake." On account of the fame of thy power, thy goodness, thy truth, etc. "*Lead me.*" As a shepherd an erring sheep, as a leader military bands, or as one leads another ignorant of the way. See Gen. xxiv. 27; Neh. ix. 12, 13; Ps. xxiii. 3; lxxiii. 24. Govern my counsels, my affections, and my thoughts.—*Martin Geier*, 1614—1681.

Verse 4.—"Pull me out of the net:" that *noted net*, as the Hebrew hath it.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 4.—"Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me." By these words, he intimateth that his enemies did not only by open force come against him, but by cunning and policy attempted to circumvent him, as when they put him on, as Saul instructed them, to be the king's son-in-law, and to this end set him on to get two hundred foreskins of the Philistines for a dowry, under a pretence of good-will, seeking his ruin; and when wait also was laid for him to kill him in his house. But he trusted in God, and prayed to be delivered, if there should be any the like enterprise against him hereafter.—*John Mayer*.

Verse 4.—"For thou art my strength." Omnipotence cuts the net which policy weaves. When we poor puny things are in the net, God is not. In the old fable the mouse set free the lion, here the lion liberates the mouse.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—"Into thine hand I commit my spirit." These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, Melancthon, and many others. "Blessed are they," says Luther, "who die not only for the Lord, as martyrs, not only in the Lord, as all believers, but likewise with the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, 'Into thine hand I commit my spirit.'" *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 5.—"Into thine hand I commit my spirit." These words, as they stand in the *Vulgate*, were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used in all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf. In forms of prayer for sick and dying persons, these words were frequently inserted in Latin, though all the rest of the prayer was English; for it was supposed there was something sovereign in the *language* itself. But let not the abuse of such words hinder their usefulness. For an ejaculation nothing can be better; and when the pious or the tempted with confidence use them, nothing can exceed their effect.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 5.—"Into thine hand I commit my spirit," etc. For what are the saints to commit their spirits into the hands of God by Jesus Christ?

1. That they may be safe; *i.e.*, preserved in their passage to heaven, from all the enemies and dangers that may stand in the way. When saints die, the powers of darkness would, doubtless, if possible, hinder the ascending of their souls to God. As they are cast out of heaven, they are filled with rage to see any out of our world going thither. One thing, therefore, which the saint means in committing his spirit into the hands of God, is, that the precious *depositum* may be kept from all that wish or would attempt its ruin. And they are sure that almighty power belongs to God: and if this is engaged for their preservation, none can pluck them out of his hand. The Redeemer hath spoiled principalities and powers, and proved it by his triumphant ascension to glory; and hath all his and the believer's enemies in a chain, so that they shall be more than conquerors in and through him. Angels, for order's sake, are sent forth to minister to them and be their guard, who will faithfully attend them their charge, till they are brought to the presence of the common Lord of both. "I know," saith the apostle, "whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2. They commit their soul into the hands of God, that they may be admitted to dwell with him, even in that presence of his where there is fulness of joy, and

where there are pleasures for evermore : where all evil is excluded, and all good present, to fill their desires, and find them matter of praise to all eternity.

3. They commit their departing spirits into the hands of God, that their bodies may be at length raised and reunited to them, and that so they may enter at last into the blessedness prepared for them that love him. . . .

The grounds on which they may do this with comfort, *i.e.*, with lively hopes of being happy for ever, are many. To mention only two :—

1. God's interest in them, and upon the most endearing foundation, that of redemption. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit: for thou hast redeemed me.*"

Redeemed me from hell and the wrath to come, by giving thy Son to die for me. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed creature, bought with a price, saith the saint.

Redeemed me from the power of my inward corruption, and from love to it, and delight in it ; and with my consent hast drawn me to be thine, and thine for ever. *Lord, I am thine*, save me unchangeably.

2. His known faithfulness. "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit, O Lord God of truth.*" Into thine hand I commit my spirit, who hast been a *God of truth*, in performing thy promises to all thy people that are gone before me out of this world ; and hast been so to me hitherto, and, I cannot doubt, wilt continue so to the end.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 5.—" *Into thine hand.*" When those hands fail me, then am I indeed abandoned and miserable ! When they sustain and keep me, then am I safe, exalted, strong, and filled with good.

Receive me, then, O Eternal Father, for the sake of our Lord's merits and words ; for he, by his obedience and his death, hath now merited from thee everything which I do not merit of myself. Into thy hands, my Father and my God, I commend my spirit, my soul, my body, my powers, my desires. I offer up to thy hands, all ; to them I commit all that I have hitherto been, that thou mayest forgive and restore all ; my wounds, that thou mayest heal them ; my blindness, that thou mayest enlighten it ; my coldness, that thou mayest inflame it ; my wicked and erring ways, that thou mayest set me forth in the right path ; and all my evils, that thou mayest uproot them all from my soul. I commend and offer up into thy most sacred hands, O my God, what I am, which thou knowest far better than I can know, weak, wretched, wounded, fickle, blind, deaf, dumb, poor, bare of every good, nothing, yea, less than nothing, on account of my many sins, and more miserable than I can either know or express. Do thou, Lord God, receive me and make me to become what he, the divine Lamb, would have me to be. I commend, I offer up, I deliver over into thy divine hands, all my affairs, my cares, my affections, my success, my comforts, my labours, and everything which thou knowest to be coming upon me. Direct all to thy honour and glory ; teach me in all to do thy will, and in all to recognise the work of thy divine hands ; to seek nothing else, and with this reflection alone to find rest and comfort in everything.

O hands of the Eternal God, who made and still preserve the heavens and earth for my sake, and who made me for yourselves, suffer me not ever to stray from you. In those hands I possess my Lamb, and all I love ; in them therefore must I be also, together with him. Together with him, in these loving hands I shall sleep and rest in peace, since he in dying left me hope in them and in their infinite mercies, placed me within them, as my only and my special refuge. Since by these hands I live and am what I am, make me continually to live through them, and in them to die ; in them to live in the love of our Lord, and from them only to desire and look for every good ; that from them I may at last, together with the Lord, receive the crown.—*Fra Thomè de Jesu.*

Verse 5.—" *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" No shadowy form of a dark destiny stands before him at the end of his career, although he must die on the cross, the countenance of his Father shines before him. He does not behold his life melting away into the gloomy floods of mortality. He commends it into the hands of his Father. It is not alone in the general spirit of humanity, that he will continue to live. He will live on in the definite personality of his own spirit, embraced by the special protection and faithfulness of his Father. Thus he does not surrender his life despondingly to death for destruction, but with triumphant consciousness to the Father for resurrection. It was the very centre of his testament ; assurance of life ; surrender of his life into the hand of a living Father.

With loud voice he exclaimed it to the world, which will for ever and ever sink into the heathenish consciousness of death, of the fear of death, of despair of immortality and resurrection, because it for ever and ever allows the consciousness of the personality of God, and of personal union with him, to be obscured and shaken. With the heart of a lion, the dying Christ once more testified of life with an expression which was connected with the word of the Old Testament Psalm, and testified that the Spirit of eternal life was already operative, in prophetic anticipation, in the old covenant. Thus living as ever, he surrendered his life, through death, to the eternally living One. His death was the last and highest fact, the crown of his holy life.—*J. P. Lange, D.D., in "The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ," 1864.*

Verse 5.—"Into thine hand I commit my spirit." David committed his spirit to God that he might not die, but Christ and all Christians after him, commit their spirit to God, that they may live for ever by death, and after death. This Psalm is thus connected with the twenty-second Psalm. Both of these Psalms were used by Christ on the cross. From the twenty-second he derived those bitter words of anguish, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" From the present Psalm he derived those last words of love and trust which he uttered just before his death. The Psalter was the hymn-book and prayer-book of Christ.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—"I have hated." Holy men have strong passions, and are not so mincing and charitable towards evil doers as smooth-tongued latitudinarians would have them. He who does not hate evil does not love good. There is such a thing as a good hater.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"They that regard lying vanities." The Romanists feign miracles of the saints to make them, as they suppose, the more glorious. They say that the house wherein the Virgin Mary was when the angel Gabriel came unto her was, many hundred years after, translated, first, out of Galilee into Dalmatia, above 2,000 miles, and thence over the sea into Italy, where also it removed from one place to another, till at length it found a place where to abide, and many most miraculous cures, they say, were wrought by it, and that the very trees when it came, did bow unto it. Infinite stories they have of this nature, especially in the Legend of Saints, which they call "The Golden Legend," a book so full of gross stuff that Ludovicus Vives, a Papist, but learned and ingenuous, with great indignation cried out, "What can be more abominable than that book?" and he wondered why they should call it "golden," when as he that wrote it was a man "of an iron mouth and of a leaden heart." And Melchior Canus, a Romish bishop, passed the same censure upon that book, and complains (as Vives also had done before him), that Laertius wrote the lives of philosophers, and Suetonius the lives of the Cæsars, more sincerely than some did the lives of the saints and martyrs.

They are most vain and superstitious in the honour which they give to the relics of the saints; as their dead bodies, or some parts of them; their bones, flesh, hair; yea, their clothes that they wore, or the like. "You may now, everywhere," saith Erasmus, "see held out for gain, Mary's milk, which they honour almost as much as Christ's consecrated body; prodigious oil; so many pieces of the cross, that if these were all gathered together a great ship would scarce carry them. Here Francis's hood set forth to view; there the innermost garment of the Virgin Mary; in one place, Anna's comb; in another place, Joseph's stocking; in another place, Thomas of Canterbury's shoe; in another place, Christ's foreskin, which, though it be a thing uncertain, they worship more religiously than Christ's whole person. Neither do they bring forth these things as things that may be tolerated, and to please the common people, but all religion almost is placed in them."*—*Christopher Cartwright.*

Verse 6.—The sense lies thus, that heathen men, when any danger or difficulty approacheth them, are solemnly wont to apply themselves to auguries and divinations, and so to false gods, to receive advice and direction from them: but doing so and observing their responses most superstitiously, they yet gain nothing at all by it. These David detests, and keeps close to God, hoping for no aid but from him.—*H. Hammond, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy."—In the midst of trouble faith will furnish matter of joy, and promise to itself gladness, especially from

* Erasmus, on Matthew xxiii. 5.

the memory of by-past experiences of God's mercy ; as here, "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*" . . . The ground of our gladness, when we have found a proof of God's kindness to us should not be in the benefit so much as in the fountain of the benefit ; for this giveth us hope to drink again of the like experience from the fountain which did send forth that benefit. Therefore David says, "*I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—" *Thou hast considered my trouble :*"

Man's plea to man, is, that he never more
Will beg, and that he never begg'd before :
Man's plea to God, is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and, therefore sues again.
How good a God we serve ; that when we sue,
Makes his old gifts the examples of his new !

Francis Quarles.

Verse 7.—" *Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" One day a person who, by the calamities of war, sickness, and other affliction, had been reduced from a state of affluence to penury, came to Gotthold in great distress. He complained that he had just met one of his former acquaintances, who was even not distantly related to him, but that he had not condescended to bow, far less to speak to him, and had turned his eyes away, and passed him as if he had been a stranger. O sir, he exclaimed with a sigh, how it pained me ! I felt as if a dagger had pierced my heart ! Gotthold replied, Don't think it strange at all. It is the way of the world to look high, and to pass unnoticed that which is humble and lowly. I know, however, of *One* who, though he dwelleth on high, humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6), and of whom the royal prophet testifies : "*Thou hast known my soul in adversities.*" Yes ; though we have lost our rich attire, and come to him in rags ; though our forms be wasted because of grief, and waxed old (Ps. vi. 7, Luth. Ver.) ; though sickness and sorrow have consumed our beauty like a moth (Ps. xxxix. 11) ; though blushes, and tears, and dust, overspread our face (Ps. lxxix. 7), he still recognises, and is not ashamed to own us. Comfort yourself with this, for what harm will it do you at last, though men disown, if God the Lord have not forgotten you ?—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 8.—He openeth and no man shutteth. Let us bless the Lord for an open door which neither men nor devils can close. We are not in man's hands yet, because we are in the hands of God : else had our feet been in the stocks and not in the large room of liberty. Our enemies, if they were as able as they are willing, would long ago have treated us as fowlers do the little birds when they enclose them in their hand.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 9.—" *Mine eye is consumed with grief.*" This expression seems to suggest that the eye really suffers under the influence of grief. There was an old idea, which still prevails amongst the uninstructed, that the eye, under extreme grief, and with a constant profuse flow of tears, might sink away and perish under the ordeal. There is no solid foundation for this idea, but there is a very serious form of disease of the eyes, well known to oculists by the title of Glaucoma, which seems to be very much influenced by mental emotions of a depressing nature. I have known many striking instances of cases in which there has been a constitutional proneness to Glaucoma, and in which some sudden grief has brought on a violent access of the disease and induced blindness of an incurable nature. In such instances the explanation seems to be somewhat as follows. It is essential to the healthy performance of the functions of the eye, that it should possess a given amount of elasticity, which again results from an exact balance between the amount of fluid within the eye, and the external fibrous case or bag that contains or encloses it. If this is disturbed, if the fluid increases unduly in quantity, and the eye becomes too hard, pain and inflammation may be suddenly induced in the interior of the eye, and sight may become rapidly extinguished. There are a special set of nerves that preside over this peculiar physical condition, and keep the eye in a proper state of elasticity ; and it is a remarkable fact, that through a long life, as a rule, we find that the eye preserves this elastic state. If, however, the function of these nerves is impaired, as it may readily be under the influence of extreme grief, or any depressing agent, the eye may become suddenly hard. Until a comparatively recent date, acute Glaucoma, or sudden hardening of the eye, attended with intense

pain and inflammation, caused complete and hopeless blindness ; but in the present day it is capable of relief by means of an operation. The effect of grief in causing this form of blindness seems to be an explanation of the text, "*Mine eye is consumed with grief.*"*

Verses 9, 10 :—

If thou wouldst learn, not knowing how to pray,
Add but a faith, and say as beggars say :
*Master, I'm poor, and blind, in great distress,
Hungry, and lame, and cold, and comfortless ;
O succour him that's gravell'd on the shelf
Of pain, and want, and cannot help himself ;
Cast down thine eye upon a wretch, and take
Some pity on me, for sweet Jesus' sake :*
But hold ! take heed this clause be not put in,
I never begged before, nor will again.

Francis Quarles.

Verse 10.—"*Mine iniquity :*" Italian version, "*my pains ;*" because that death and all miseries are come into the world by reason of sin, the Scripture doth often confound the names of the cause and of the effects.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 10.—I find that when the saints are under trial and well humbled, little sins raise great cries in the conscience ; but in prosperity, conscience is a pope that gives dispensations and great latitude to our hearts. The cross is therefore as needful as the crown is glorious.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 11.—"*I was a reproach among all mine enemies.*" If anyone strives after patience and humility, he is a hypocrite. If he allows himself in the pleasures of this world, he is a glutton. If he seeks justice, he is impatient ; if he seeks it not, he is a fool. If he would be prudent, he is stingy ; if he would make others happy, he is dissolute. If he gives himself up to prayer, he is vainglorious. And this is the great loss of the church, that by means like these many are held back from goodness ! which the Psalmist lamenting says, "*I became a reproof among all mine enemies.*"—*Chrysostom, quoted by J. M. Neale.*

Verse 11.—"*They that did see me without fled from me.*" I once heard the following relation from an old man of the world, and it occurs to me, as illustrative of what we are now considering. He was at a public assembly, and saw there an individual withdrawing herself from the crowd, and going into a corner of the room. He went up to her, she was an old and intimate friend of his ; he addressed himself to her—she, with a sigh, said, "Oh, I have seen many days of trouble since we last met." What does the man of the world do ? Immediately he withdrew himself from his sorrow-stricken friend and hid himself in the crowd. Such is the sympathy of the world with Christ or his servants.—*Hamilton Verschoyle.*

Verse 12.—"*I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.*" A striking instance of how the greatest princes are forgotten in death is found in the deathbed of Louis XIV. "The Louis that was, lies forsaken, a mass of abhorred clay ; abandoned 'to some poor persons, and priests of the *Chapelle Ardente,*' who make haste to put him 'in two lead coffins, pouring in abundant spirits of wine.' The new Louis with his court is rolling towards Choisy, through the summer afternoon : the royal tears still flow ; but a word mispronounced by Monseigneur d'Artois sets them all laughing, and they weep no more."—*Thomas Carlyle in "The French Revolution."*

Verse 12.—"*I am forgotten,*" etc. As a dying man with curtains drawn, whom friends have no hope of, and therefore look off from ; or rather like a dead man laid aside out of sight and out of mind altogether, and buried more in oblivion than in his grave ; when the news is, "she is dead, trouble not the Master." Luke viii. 49.—*Anthony Tuckney, D.D., 1599—1670.*

Verse 12.—"*I am like a broken vessel.*" As a vessel, how profitable soever it hath been to the owner, and how necessary for his turn, yet, when it is broken is thrown away, and regarded no longer : even so such is the state of a man forsaken

* On application for information to the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, as to the effect of grief upon the eye, we received the above, with much other valuable information, from GEORGE CRITCHETT, ESQ., the senior medical officer. The courtesy of this gentleman, and of the secretary of that noble institution, deserves especial mention.

of those whose friend he hath been so long as he was able to stand them in stead, to be of advantage to them.—*Robert Cawdray*,

Verses 12—15 :—

Forgot as those who in the grave abide,
And as a broken vessel past repair,
Slandered by many, fear on every side,
Who counsel take and would my life ensnare

But, Lord, my hopes on thee are fixed : I said,
Thou art my God, my days are in thy hand ;
Against my furious foes oppose thy aid.
And those who persecute my soul withstand.

George Sandys.

Verse 13.—“ *I have heard the slander of many.*” From my very childhood, when I was first sensible of the concerns of men’s souls, I was possessed with some admiration to find that everywhere the religious, godly sort of people, who did but exercise a serious care of their own and other men’s salvation, were made the wonder and obloquy of the world, especially of the most vicious and flagitious men ; so that they that professed the same articles of faith, the same commandments of God to be their law, and the same petitions of the Lord’s prayer to be their desire, and so professed the same religion, did everywhere revile those that endeavoured to live in good earnest in what they said. I thought this was impudent hypocrisy in the ungodly, worldly sort of men—to take those for the most intolerable persons in the land who are but serious in their own religion, and do but endeavour to perform what all their enemies also vow and promise. If religion be bad, and our faith be not true, why do these men profess it ? If it be true and good, why do they hate and revile them that would live in the serious practice of it, if they will not practise it themselves ? But we must not expect reason when sin and sensuality have made men unreasonable.

But I must profess that since I observed the course of the world, and the concord of the word and providence of God, I took it for a notable proof of man’s fall, and of the truth of the Scripture, and of the supernatural original of true sanctification, to find such a universal enmity between the holy and the serpentine seed, and to find Cain and Abel’s case so ordinarily exemplified, and he that is born after the flesh persecuting him that is born after the Spirit. And methinks to this day it is a great and visible help for the confirmation of our Christian faith.—*Richard Baxter.*

Verse 13.—“ *Slander.*” Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.—*William Shakespeare.*

Verse 13.—“ *They took counsel together against me,*” etc. While they mangled his reputation, they did it in such a manner as that they covered their wickedness under the appearance of grave and considerate procedure, in consulting among themselves to destroy him as a man who no longer ought to be tolerated on the earth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that his mind was wounded by so many and so sharp temptations.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—“ *But I trusted in thee, O Lord.*” The rendering properly is, *And I have trusted in thee*, but the Hebrew copulative particle *vau*, and, is used here instead of the adversitive particle *yet*, or *nevertheless*. David, setting the steadfastness of his faith in opposition to the assaults of the temptations of which he has made mention, denies that he had ever fainted, but rather maintains, on the contrary, that he stood firm in his hope of deliverance from God. Nor does this imply that he boasted of being so magnanimous and courageous that he could not be overthrown through the infirmity of the flesh. However contrary to one another they appear, yet these things are often joined together, as they ought to be, in the same person, namely, that while he pines away with grief, and is deprived of all strength, he is nevertheless supported by so strong a hope that he ceases not to call upon God. David, therefore, was not so overwhelmed in deep sorrow, and other direful sufferings, as that the hidden light of faith could not shine inwardly in his heart ; nor did he groan so much under the weighty load of his temptations, as to be prevented from arousing himself to call upon God. He struggled through many obstacles to be able to make the confession which he here makes. He next

defines the manner of his faith, namely, that he reflected with himself thus—that God would never fail him nor forsake him. Let us mark his manner of speech: *I have said, Thou art my God.* In these words he intimates that he was so entirely persuaded of this truth, that God was his God, that he would not admit even a suggestion to the contrary. And until this persuasion prevails so as to take possession of our minds, we shall always waver in uncertainty. It is, however, to be observed, that this declaration is not only inward and secret—made rather in the heart than with the tongue—but that it is directed to God himself, as to him who is the alone witness of it. Nothing is more difficult, when we see our faith derided by the whole world, than to direct our speech to God only, and to rest satisfied with this testimony which our conscience gives us, *that he is our God.* And certainly it is an undoubted proof of genuine faith, when, however fierce the waves are which beat against us, and however sore the assaults by which we are shaken, we hold fast this as a fixed principle, that we are constantly under the protection of God, and can say to him freely, *Thou art our God.*—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—“*Thou art my God.*” How much it is more worth than ten thousand mines of gold, to be able to say, God is mine! God’s servant is apprehensive of it, and he seeth no defect, but this may be complete happiness to him, and therefore he delights in it, and comforts himself with it. As he did sometime who was a great courtier in King Cyrus’s court, and one in favour with him; he was to bestow his daughter in marriage to a very great man, and of himself he had no great means; and therefore one said to him, O Sir, where will you have means to bestow a dowry upon your daughter proportionable to her degree? Where are your riches? He answered, What need I care, *επου Κυρος μοι φιλος*, Cyrus is my friend. But may not we say much more, *επου Κυριος μοι φιλος*, where the Lord is our friend, that hath those excellent and glorious attributes that cannot come short in any wants, or to make us happy, especially we being capable of it, and made proportionable.—*John Stoughton’s “Righteous Man’s Plea to True Happiness,”* 1640.

Verse 15.—“*My times are in thy hand.*” It is observable that when, of late years, men grew weary of the long and tedious compass in their voyages to the East Indies, and would needs try a more compendious way by the North-West passage, it ever proved unsuccessful. Thus it is that we must not use any compendious way; we may not neglect our body, nor shipwreck our health, nor anything to hasten death, because we shall gain by it. He that maketh haste (even this way) to be rich shall not be innocent; for our times are in God’s hands, and therefore to his holy providence we must leave them. We have a great deal of work to do, and must not, therefore, be so greedy of our Sabbath-day, our rest, as not to be contented with our working-day, our labour. Hence it is that a composed frame of heart, like that of the apostle’s (Phil. i. 21), wherein either to stay and work, or to go and rest, is the best temper of all.—*Edward Reynolds, in J. Spencer’s “Things New and Old.”*

Verse 15.—“*My times.*” He does not use the plural number, in my opinion, without reason; but rather to mark the variety of casualties by which the life of man is usually harassed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 15.—“*In thy hand.*” The watch hangs ticking against the wall, when every tick of the watch is a sigh, and a consciousness, alas! Poor watch! I called once to see a friend, the physician and the secretary of one of the most noble and admirable of the asylums for the insane in this country. A poor creature, with a clear, bright intelligence, only that some of its chords had become unstrung, who had usually occupied itself innocently by making or unmaking watches, had just before I called, exhibited some new, alarming symptoms, dashing one and then another upon the stone floor, and shivering them. Removed into a more safe room, I visited him with the secretary. “How came you to destroy your favourite watches, so much as you loved them, and so quiet as you are?” said my friend; and the poor patient replied, in a tone of piercing agony, “I could not bear the tick, tick, ticking, and so I dashed it on the pavement.” But when the watch is able to surrender itself to the maker, to the hand holding the watch, and measuring out the moments, it becomes a sight affecting indeed, but very beautiful, very sublime. We transfer our thought from the watch to the *hand* that holds the watch. “*My times,*” “*Thy hand;*” the watch and the hour have a purpose, and are not in vain. God gives man permission to behold two things. Man can see the whole work, the plan’s completeness, also the minutest work, the first step

towards the plan's completeness. Nothing is more certain, nothing are men more indisposed to perceive than this. We have to

"Wait for some transcendent life,
Reserved by God to follow this."*

To this end God's real way is made up of all the ways of our life. His hand holds all our times. "*My times*;" "*Thy hand*." Some lives greatly differ from others. This we know; but see, some lives fulfil life's course, gain life's crown—life in their degree. This, on the contrary, others quite miss. Yet, for even human strength there must be a love meted out to rule it. It is said, there is a moon to control the tides of every sea; is there not a master power for souls? It may not always be so, apparently, in the more earthly lives, but it is so in the heavenly: not more surely does the moon sway tides than God sways souls. It does seem sometimes as if man found no adequate external power, and stands forth ordained to be a law to his own sphere; but even then his times are in the hands of God, as the pathway of a star is in the limitations of its system—as the movements of a satellite are in the forces of its planet. But while I would not pause on morbid words or views of life, so neither do I desire you to receive or charge me with giving only a moody, morbid view of the world, and an imperfect theology; but far other. "*My times are in thy hand*"—*the hand of my Saviour*.

"I report as a man may of God's work—all's love, but all's law.
In the Godhead I seek and I find it, and so it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee, a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever, a hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee: *See the Christ stand!*"*

And now he is "the restorer of paths to dwell in." The hand of Jesus is the hand which rules our times. He regulates our life-clock. Christ for and Christ in us. *My times in his hand*. My life can be no more in vain than was my Saviour's life in vain.—*E. Paxton Hood*, in "*Dark Sayings on a Harp*," 1865.

Verse 15.—When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time* in which God will deliver thee. 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 16.—"*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*." When the cloud of trouble hideth the Lord's favour, faith knoweth it may shine again, and therefore prayeth through the cloud for the dissolving of it. "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*."—*David Dickson*.

Verse 18.—"*Lying lips . . . which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous*." The primitive persecutors slighted the Christians for a company of bad, illiterate fellows, and therefore they used to paint the God of the Christians with an ass's head and a book in his hand, saith Tertullian; to signify, that though they pretended learning, yet they were silly and ignorant people. Bishop Jewel, in his sermon upon Luke xi. 15, cites this out of Tertullian and applies it to his times. Do not our adversaries the like, saith he, against all that profess the gospel? Oh! say they, who are those that favour this way? None but shoemakers, tailors, weavers, and such as never were at the University. These are the bishop's own words. Bishop White said in open court, that the Puritans were all a company of blockheads.—*Charles Bradbury*.

Verse 18.—"*Lying lips . . . which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous*." In that venerable and original monument of the Vaudois Church, entitled "*The Golden Lesson*," of the date 1100, we meet with a verse, which has been thus translated:—

"If there be any one who loves and fears Jesus Christ,
Who will not curse, nor swear, nor lie,
Nor be unchaste, nor kill, nor take what is another's,
Nor take vengeance on his enemies;
They say that he is a Vaudès, and worthy of punishment."

Antoine Monastier, in "*A History of Vaudois Church*," 1859.

* Robert Browning.

Verse 19.—"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee." As a provident man will regulate his liberality towards all men in such a manner as not to defraud his children or family, nor impoverish his own house, by spending his substance prodigally on others; so God, in like manner, in exercising his beneficence to aliens from his family, knows well how to reserve for his own children that which belongs to them, as it were by hereditary right; that is to say, because of their adoption.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 19.—"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."—Mark the phrase, "Laid up for them;" his mercy and goodness it is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, "This is a portion for such a child." But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This indeed is greatly to be heeded; it is faith that gives him a good title to all this. That which maketh him a child, makes him an heir. Now, faith makes him a child of God. John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." As therefore, if you would not call your birthright into question, and bring your interest in Christ and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your soul, look to your faith.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 19.—"How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee." When I reflect upon the words of thy prophet, it seems to me that he means to depict God as a father who, no doubt, keeps his children under discipline, and subjects them to the rod; but who, with all his labour and pains, still aims at nothing but to lay up for them a store which may contribute to their comfort when they have grown to maturity, and learned the prudent use of it. My Father, in this world thou hidest from thy children thy great goodness, as if it did not pertain to them. But being thy children, we may be well assured that the celestial treasure will be bestowed upon none else. For this reason, I will bear my lot with patience. But, oh! from time to time, waft to me a breath of air from the heavenly land, to refresh my sorrowful heart; I will then wait more calmly for its full fruition.—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 19.—"Oh how great is thy goodness." Let me, to set the crown on the head of the duty of meditation, add one thing over and above—let meditation be carried up to admiration: not only should we be affected, but transported, rapt up and ravished with the beauties and transcendencies of heavenly things; act meditation to admiration, endeavour the highest pitch, coming the nearest to the highest patterns, the patterns of saints and angels in heaven, whose actings are the purest, highest ecstasies and admirations. Thus were these so excellent artists in meditation, David, an high actor of admiration in meditation, as often we see it in the Psalms; so in Psalm viii. 1, 9; Psalm xxxi. 19; "Oh how great is thy goodness," etc.; Psalm civ. 24; "O Lord, how manifold are thy works," etc.; and in other places David's meditation and admiration were as his harp, well tuned, and excellently played on, in rarest airs and highest strains; as the precious gold, and the curious burnishing; or the richest stone, and the exquisitest polishing and setting of it. So blessed Paul, who was a great artist in musing, acted high in admiration, his soul was very warm and flaming up in it: it was as a bird with a strong and long wing that soars and towers up aloft, and gets out of sight.—*Nathaniel Ranew.*

Verse 19.—"Before the sons of men," i.e., openly. The Psalmist here perhaps refers to temporal blessings conferred on the pious, and evident to all. Some, however, have supposed the reference to be to the reward of the righteous, bestowed with the utmost publicity on the day of judgment; which better agrees with our interpretation of the former part of the verse.—*Daniel Cresswell, D.D., F.R.S. (1776-1844), in loc.*

Verse 19.—Believe it, Sirs, you cannot conceive what a friend you shall have of God, would you but be persuaded to enter into covenant with him, to be his, wholly his. I tell you, many that sometimes thought and did as you do now, that is, set light by Christ and hate God, and see no loveliness in him, are now quite of another mind; they would not for ten thousand worlds quit their interest in him. Oh, who dare say that he is a hard Master? Who that knows him will say that he is an unkind friend? Oh, what do poor creatures all, that they do entertain such harsh, sour thoughts of God? What, do they think that there is nothing in that scripture, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them

that fear thee!" Doth the Psalmist speak too largely? Doth he say more than he and others could prove? Ask him, and he will tell you in verse 21, that he blesseth God. These were things he could speak to, from his own personal experience; and many thousands as well as he, to whom the Lord had showed his marvellous kindness, and therefore he doth very passionately plead with the people of God to love him, and more highly to express their sense of his goodness, that the world might be encouraged also to have good thoughts of him.—*James Janeway.*

Verse 19.—Very observable is that expression of the Psalmist, "*Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought before the sons of men for them that trust in thee.*" In the former clause, God's goodness is said to be *laid up*; in the latter, to be *wrought*. Goodness is laid up in the promise, wrought in the performance; and that goodness which is laid up is wrought for them that trust in God; and thus, as God's faithfulness engageth us to believe, so our faith, as it were, engageth God's faithfulness to perform the promise.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 20.—"*Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*" This our beloved God does secretly, so that no human eyes may or can see, and the ungodly do not know that a believer is, in God, and in the presence of God, so well protected, that no reproach or contempt, and no quarrelsome tongues can do him harm.—*Arndt, quoted by W. Wilson, D.D.*

Verse 22.—"*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*" Who would have thought those prayers should ever have had any prevalency in God's ears which were mixed with so much infidelity in the petitioner's heart!—*William Secker.*

Verse 22.—"*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.*"—No, no, Christian; a prayer sent up in faith, according to the will of God, cannot be lost, though it be delayed. We may say of it, as David said of Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, that they never return empty. So David adds, "*Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.*"—*John Flavel.*

Verse 22.—"*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes,*" etc. Let us with whom it was once night, improve that morning joy that now shines upon us. Let us be continual admirers of God's grace and mercy to us. He has prevented us with his goodness, when he saw nothing in us but impatience and unbelief, when we were like Jonas in the belly of hell, his bowels yearned over us, and his power brought us safe to land. What did we to hasten his deliverance, or to obtain his mercy? If he had never come to our relief till he saw something in us to invite him, we had not yet been relieved. No more did we contribute to our restoration than we do to the rising of the sun, or the approach of day. We were like dry bones without motion, and without strength. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—11. And we also said, that 'we were cut off for our parts, and our hope was gone, and he caused breath to enter into us, and we live.' Who is a God like to our God that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin? that retains not his anger for ever? that is slow to wrath and delights in mercy? that has been displeased with us for a moment, but gives us hope of his everlasting kindness? Oh! what love is due from us to Christ, that has pleaded for us when we ourselves had nothing to say! That has brought us out of a den of lions, and from the jaws of the roaring lion! To say, as Mrs. Sarah Wright did, "I have obtained mercy, that thought my time of mercy past for ever; I have hope of heaven, that thought I was already damned by unbelief; I said many a time, there is no hope in mine end, and I thought I saw it; I was so desperate, I cared not what became of me. Oft was I at the very brink of death and hell, even at the very gates of both, and then Christ shut them. I was as Daniel in the lion's den, and he stopped the mouth of those lions, and delivered me. The goodness of God is unsearchable; how great is the excellency of his majesty, that yet he would look upon such a one as I; that he has given me peace that was full of terror, and walked continually, as amidst fire and brimstone."—*Timothy Rogers.*

Verse 22.—"*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:*"—i.e., Thou has quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul, and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). This he said in his

flight (so some read it), which notes the distress of his affairs: Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *in his haste* (so we read it), which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, it is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 22.—"I said in my haste."—Sometimes a sudden passion arises, and out it goes in angry and froward words, setting all in an uproar and combustion: by-and-by our hearts recur upon us, and then we wish, "O that I had bit my tongue, and not given it such an unbridled liberty." Sometimes we break out into rash censures of those that it may be are better than ourselves, whereupon when we reflect, we are ashamed that the fools' bolt was so soon shot, and wish we had been judging ourselves when we were censuring our brethren.—*Richard Alleine*.

Verse 22.—"Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee." As if he had said, when I prayed with so little faith, that I, as it were, unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect; and what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every saint's hope in a time of need? "*Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*"—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 22.—He confesseth the great distress he was in, and how weak his faith was under the temptation; this he doth to his own shame acknowledge also, that he may give the greater glory to God. Whence learn, 1.—The faith of the godly may be slackened, and the strongest faith may sometimes show its infirmity. "*I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.*" 2.—Though faith be shaken, yet it is fixed in the root, as a tree beaten by the wind keeping strong grips of good ground. Though faith seem to yield, yet it faileth not, and even when it is at the weakest, it is uttering itself in some act, as a wrestler, for here the expression of David's infirmity in faith, is directed to God, and his earnest prayer joined with it, "*I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*" 3.—Praying faith, how weak soever, shall not be misregarded of God; for "*nevertheless,*" saith he, "*thou heardest the voice of my supplications.*" 4.—There may be in a soul at one time, both grief oppressing, and hope upholding; both darkness of trouble, and the light of faith; both desperately doubting, and strong gripping of God's truth and goodness; both a fainting and a fighting; a seeming yielding in the fight, and yet a striving of faith against all opposition; both a foolish haste, and a settled stayedness of faith; as here, "*I said in my haste,*" etc.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 22.—David vents his astonishment at the Lord's condescension in hearing his prayer. How do we wonder at the goodness of a petty man in granting our desires! How much more should we at the humility and goodness of the most sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth!—*Stephen Charnock*.

Verse 23.—"O love the Lord, all ye his saints." The holy Psalmist in the words does, with all the warmth of an affectionate zeal, incite us to the love of God, which is the incomparably noblest passion of a reasonable mind, its brightest glory and most exquisite felicity; and it is, as appears evident from the nature of the thing, and the whole train of divine revelation, the comprehensive sum of that duty which we owe to our Maker, and the very soul which animates a religious life, that we "love the Lord with all our heart, and strength, and mind."—*William Dunlop, A.M., 1692—1720*.

Verse 23.—"O love the Lord, all ye his saints," etc. Some few words are to be attended in the clearing of the sense. "*Saints*" here in the text is or may be read, *ye that feel mercies*. "*Faithful,*" the word is sometimes taken for *persons*, sometimes *things*; and so the Lord is said to preserve true men, and truths, faithful men, and faithfulneses. "*He plenteously rewardeth the proud doer;*" or, the Lord rewardeth plenteously; *the Lord*, who doth wonderful things. *Plenteously* is either *in cumulum, abunde*, or *in nepotes*, as some would have it; but I would rather commend, than go about to amend translations: though I could wish some of my learned brethren's quarrelling hours were spent rather upon clearing the originals, and so conveying over pure Scripture to posterity, than in scratching others with their sharpened pens, and making cock-pits of pulpits.—*Hugh*

Peters' "Sermon preached before both Houses of Parliament, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, and the Assembly of Divines, at the last Thanksgiving Day, April 2. For the recovering of the West, and disbanding 5,000 of the King's Horse, etc., 1645."

23. "And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." The next query is, *how God rewardeth the proud doer?* in which, though the Lord's proceedings be diverse, and many times his paths in the clouds, and his judgments in the deep, and the uttermost farthing shall be paid the proud doer at the great day; yet so much of his mind he hath left unto us, that even in this life he given out something to the proud which he calls "the day of recompense," which he commonly manifests in these particulars:—1. By way of *retaliation*—for *Adoni-bezek* that would be cutting off thumbs, had his thumbs cut off. Judges i. 7. So the poor Jews that cried so loud, "Crucify him, crucify him," were so many of them crucified, that if you believe Josephus, there was not wood enough to make crosses, nor in the usual place room enough to set up the crosses when they were made. Snares are made and pits are digged by the proud for *themselves* commonly, to which the Scripture throughout gives abundant testimony. 2. By shameful *disappointments*, seldom reaping what they sow, nor eating what they catch in hunting, which is most clear in the Jewish State when Christ was amongst them. *Judas* betrays him to get money, and hardly lived long enough to spend it. *Pilate*, to please *Cæsar*, withstands all counsels against it, and gives way to that murder, by which he ruined both himself and *Cæsar*. The Jewish priests, to maintain that domination and honour (which they thought the son of Joseph and Mary stole from them) cried aloud for his death, which proved a sepulchre to them and their glory. And the poor people that crucified him (through fear of the *Romans* taking their city) by his death had their gates opened to the *Romans*—yea, *Cæsar* himself, fearing a great change in his government by Christ living near him (which to-day sets all the kingcraft in the world to work) met such a change that shortly he had neither crown nor sceptre to boast of, if you read the story of Titus and Vespasian, all which dealings of God with the proud is most elegantly set forth unto us by the Psalmist. "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.—*Hugh Peters*."

24. "*Be of good courage.*" Christian courage may thus be described. It is the undaunted audacity of a sanctified heart in adventuring upon difficulties and undergoing hardships for a good cause upon the call of God. The *genus*, the common nature of it is an undaunted audacity. This animosity, as some phrase it, is common both unto men and to some brutes. The lion is said to be the strongest among beasts, that turneth not away from any. Prov. xxx. 30. And there is an elegant description of the war horse in regard of boldness. Job xxxix. 19, etc. And this boldness that is in brutes is spoken of as a piece of this same *courage* that God is pleased to give to men. Ezek. iii. 9. This is the Lord's promise—"As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead." The word "harder" is the same in the Hebrew that is here in my text—*fortiorem petra*—the rock that is not afraid of any weather, summer or winter, sun and showers, heat and cold, frost and snow; it bluseth not, shrinketh not, it changeth not its complexion, it is still the same. Such a like thing is *courage*, in the common nature of it. Secondly, consider the subject, it is *the heart*, the castle where courage commands and exerciseth military discipline; (shall I so say) it's within the bosom, it is the soul of a valiant soldier. Some conceive our English word *courage* to be derived from *cordis actio*, the very acting of the heart. A valiant man is described (2 Sam. xvii. 10) for to be a man whose heart is as the heart of a lion. And sometimes the original translated *courageous*, as Amos ii. 16, may most properly be rendered a *man of heart*. Beloved, valour doth not consist in a piercing eye, in a terrible look, in big words; but it consists in the mettle, the vigour that is within the bosom. Sometimes a coward may dwell at the sign of a roaring voice and of a stern countenance; whereas true fortitude may be found within his breast whose outward deportment promises little or nothing in that kind. Thirdly, note the qualification of this same subject; I said a sanctified heart; for I am not now speaking of fortitude as a moral virtue, whereof heathens that have not God are capable, and for which many among them that are not Christians, have been worthily commended. But I am now discoursing of courage as a virtue theological, as a gracious qualification, put upon the people of God by special covenant. And

there are three things that do characterise it, and which do distinguish it from the moral virtue of fortitude. (1) The *root*, whence it ariseth; (2) the *rule*, whereby it is directed; (3) the *end*, to which it is referred. The *root*, whence it ariseth, is *love to God*: all the saints of God that love the Lord be of good courage. The love of Christ constraineth me to make these bold and brave adventures, saith the apostle. 2 Cor. v. 14. The *rule*, whereby it is directed, is the *word of God*—what the Lord hath pleased to leave on record for a Christian's guidance in holy pages. 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13. "Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage: dread not, nor be dismayed." Be a man of mettle, but let thy mettle be according to my mind, according to this rule. And the *end*, to which it refers, is *God*. For every sanctified man being a self-denying and a God-advancing man, his God is his centre, wherein his aclinings, his undertakings rest; and his soul is not, yea, it cannot be satisfied but in God.—*Simeon Ash's "Sermon preached before the Commanders of the Military Forces of the renowned Citie of London, 1642."*

Verse 24. "Be of good courage."—Shall I hint some of the weighty services that are charged upon all our consciences? The work of mortification, to pick out our eyes, to chop off our hands, to cut off our feet; do you think that a milksop, a man that is not a man of a stout spirit, will do this? Now to massacre fleshly lusts, is (as it were) for a man to mangle and dismember his own body; it is a work painful and grievous, as for a man to cut off his own feet, to chop off his own hands, and to pick out his own eyes, as Christ and the apostle Paul do express it. Besides this, there are in Christians' bosoms strongholds to be battered, fortifications to be demolished; there are high hills and mountains that must be levelled with the ground; there are trenches to be made, valleys to be filled. O beloved, I may not mention the hills that lie before us in heaven way, which we must climb up, and craggy rocks that we must get over; and without courage certainly the work put upon our hands will not be discharged. There are also the walls of Jerusalem to be repaired, and the temple to be re-edified. If Nehemiah had not been a man of a brave spirit he would never have gone through stitch with that church work, those weighty services which he did undertake. How this is applicable to us for the present time, the time of our begun reformation, I speak not, but rather do refer it to your considerations. I beseech you to read Neh. iv. 17, 18, "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded, and he that sounded the trumpet was by me." While they were at work, they were all ready for war.—*Simeon Ash.*

Verse 24.—"And he shall strengthen thy heart." Put thou thyself forth in a way of bold adventure for him, and his providence shall be sweetly exercised for thy good. A worthy commander, how careful is he of a brave blade, a man that will fight at a cannon's mouth! Doth he hear from him that a bone is broken? Send for the bone-setter. Is he like to bleed to death? Call for the surgeon; let him post away to prevent that peril. Doth he grow weaker and weaker? Is there anything in the camp that may restore his spirit? withhold nothing; nothing is too good, too costly; would he eat gold he should have it. Thus it is with God. Oh, what letters of commendation doth he give in manifestation of his own love to them in Pergamos upon this very ground. "Thou, saith the Lord, thou hast held forth my name, and not denied it, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth!" thou didst fight for Christ in the cave where the devil commanded; thou didst stand and appear for him when other men did lose heart and courage. Here is a man that God will own; such a one shall have God's heart and hand to do him honour, to yield him comfort. And therefore I appeal to your consciences, is not this courage worth the having? worth the seeking?—*Simeon Ash.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Faith expressed, confusion deprecated, deliverance sought.

Verse 1 (first clause).—*Open avowal of faith.* 1. Duties which precede it, self-examination, etc. 2. Modes of making the confession. 3. Conduct incumbent on those who have made the profession.

Verse 1 (last clause).—How far the righteousness of God is involved in the salvation of a believer.

Verse 2 (first clause).—God's hearing prayer a great condescension.

Verse 2 (second clause).—How far we may be urgent with God as to time.

Verses 2, 3 (last and first clauses).—That which we have we may yet seek for.

Verse 3.—Work out the metaphor of God as a rocky fastness of the soul.

Verse 3 (last clause).—1. A blessing needed, "*lead me.*" 2. A blessing obtainable.

3. An argument for its being granted, "*for thy name's sake.*"

Verse 4.—*The rescue of the ensnared.* 1. The fowlers. 2. The laying of the net. 3. The capture of the bird. 4. The cry of the captive. 5. The rescue.

Verse 4 (last clause).—The weak one girt with omnipotence.

Verses 5.—I. Dying, in a saint's account, is a difficult work. II. The children of God, when considering themselves as dying, are chiefly concerned for their departing immortal spirits. III. Such having chosen God for their God, have abundant encouragement when dying, to commit their departing spirits into his hand, with hopes of their being safe and happy for ever with him.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 5.—The believer's requiem.

Redemption the foundation of our repose in God.

I. What we do—*commit ourselves to God.* II. What God has done—*redeemed us.*

Verse 6.—Holy detestation, as a virtue discriminated from bigotry: or, the good hater.

Verse 7.—I. An endearing attribute rejoiced in. II. An interesting experience related. III. A directly personal favour from God delighted in.

Verse 7 (centre clause).—*Consider* the measure, the effects, the time, the tempering, the ending, and the recompense.

Verse 7 (last clause).—The Lord's familiarity with his afflicted.

Verse 8.—Christian liberty, a theme for gladness.

Verse 9.—The mourner's lament.

Verse 9 (last clauses).—Excessive sorrow, its injurious effects on the body, the understanding, and the spiritual nature. Sin of it, cure of it.

Verses 9, 10.—The sick man's moan, a reminder to those who enjoy good health.

Verse 10.—*My strength faileth because of mine iniquity.* The weakening influence of sin.

Verse 11.—The good man evil spoken of.

Verse 12.—The world's treatment of its best friends.

Verse 14.—Faith peculiarly glorious in seasons of great trial.

The casting forth of the sheet anchor in the storm.

Verse 15.—The believer the peculiar care of providence.

Verse 15 (first clause).—I. The character of the earthly experience of the saints, "*My times,*" that is, the changes I shall pass through, etc. II. The advantage of this variety. 1. Changes reveal the various aspects of the Christian character. 2. Changes strengthen the Christian character. 3. Changes lead us to admire an unchanging God. III. Comfort for all seasons. 1. This implies that changes of life are subject to the divine control. 2. That God will support his people under them. 3. And, consequently, they shall result in our being abundantly profited. IV. The deportment which should characterise us. Courageous devotion to God in times of persecution; resignation and contentment in times of poverty and suffering; zeal and hope in times of labour.—*From Stems and Twigs, or Sermon Framework.*

Verse 16.—A sense of divine favour. 1. Its value. 2. How to lose it. 3. How to obtain a renewal of it. 4. How to retain it.

The heavenly servant's best reward.

Verse 16 (last clause).—A prayer for saints in all stages. Note its object, "*save me;*" and its plea, "*thy mercies' sake.*" Suitable to the penitent, the sick, the doubting, the tried, the advanced believer, the dying saint.

Verse 17.—The shame and silence of the wicked in eternity.
The silence of the grave, its grave eloquence.

Verse 19.—See “Spurgeon’s Sermons,” No. 773. “David’s Holy Wonder at the Lord’s Great Goodness.”

Verse 20.—The believer preserved from the sneers of arrogance by a sense of the divine presence, and kept from the bitterness of slander by the glory of the King whom he serves.

Verse 21.—*Marvellous kindness.* Marvellous that it should come to me in such a way, at such a time, in such a measure, for so long.

Verse 21.—Memorable events in life to be observed, recorded, meditated on, repeated, made the subject of gratitude, and the ground of confidence.

Verse 22.—Unbelief confessed and faithfulness adored.

The mischief of hasty speeches.

Verse 23.—An exhortation to love the Lord. 1. The matter of it, “*love the Lord.*” 2. To whom addressed, “*all ye his saints.*” 3. By whom spoken. 4. With what arguments supported, “*for the Lord preserveth,*” etc.

Verse 24.—Holy courage. Its excellences, difficulties, encouragements, and triumphs.
