

PSALM XXXIII.

TITLE.—*This song of praise bears no title or indication of authorship ; to teach us, says Dickson, " to look upon holy Scripture as altogether inspired of God, and not put price upon it for the writers thereof."*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*The praise of Jehovah is the subject of this sacred song. The righteous are exhorted to praise him, verses 1—3 ; because of the excellency of his character, 4, 5 ; and his majesty in creation, 6, 7. Men are bidden to fear before Jehovah because his purposes are accomplished in providence, 8—11. His people are proclaimed blessed, 12. The omniscience and omnipotence of God, and his care of his people are celebrated, in opposition to the weakness of an arm of flesh, 13—19 ; and the Psalm concludes with a fervent expression of confidence, 20, 21, and an earnest prayer, 22.*

EXPOSITION.

REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous : *for* praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp : sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.

3 Sing unto him a new song ; play skilfully with a loud noise.

1. "*Rejoice in the Lord.*" Joy is the soul of praise. To delight ourselves in God is most truly to extol him, even if we let no notes of song proceed from our lips. That God is, and that he is such a God, and our God, ours for ever and ever, should wake within us an unceasing and overflowing joy. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly. He who would have a double heaven must begin below to rejoice like those above. "*O ye righteous.*" This is peculiarly your duty, your obligations are greater, and your spiritual nature more adapted to the work, be ye then first in the glad service. Even the righteous are not always glad, and have need to be stirred up to enjoy their privileges. "*For praise is comely for the upright.*" God has an eye to things which are becoming. When saints wear their choral robes, they look fair in the Lord's sight. A harp suits a blood-washed hand. No jewel more ornamental to a holy face than sacred praise. Praise is not comely from unpardoned professional singers ; it is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. Crooked hearts make crooked music, but the upright are the Lord's delight. Praise is the dress of saints in heaven, it is meet that they should fit it on below.

2. "*Praise the Lord with harp.*" Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn ; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well-tuned instruments, who shall gainsay their right ? We do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise, but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty ? "*Sing unto him.*" This is the sweetest and best of music. No instrument like the human voice. As a help to singing the instrument is alone to be tolerated, for keys and strings do not praise the Lord. "*With the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.*" The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess.

3. "*Sing unto him a new song.*" All songs of praise should be "*unto him.*" Singing for singing's sake is nothing worth ; we must carry our tribute to the King, and not cast it to the winds. Do most worshippers mind this ? Our faculties should be exercised when we are magnifying the Lord, so as not to run in an old groove without thought ; we ought to make every hymn of praise a new song. To keep up the freshness of worship is a great thing, and in private it is indispensable.

Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord. "*Play skilfully.*" It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have. Every Christian should endeavour to sing according to the rules of the art, so that he may keep time and tune with the congregation. The sweetest tunes and the sweetest voices, with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God; let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices. "*With a loud noise.*" Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well-bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannahs to the Son of David?

4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

4. "*For the word of the Lord is right.*" His ordinances both natural, moral, and spiritual, are right, and especially his incarnate Word, who is the Lord our righteousness. Whatever God has ordained must be good, and just, and excellent. There are no anomalies in God's universe, except what sin has made; his word of command made all things good. When we look at his word of promise, and remember its faithfulness, what reasons have we for joy and thankfulness! "*And all his works are done in truth.*" His work is the outflow of his word, and it is true to it. He neither doth nor saith anything ill; in deed and speech he agrees with himself and the purest truth. There is no lie in God's word, and no sham in his works; in creation, providence, and revelation, unalloyed truth abounds. To act truth as well as to utter it is divine, let not children of God ever yield their principles in practice any more than in heart. What a God we serve! The more we know of him, the more our better natures approve his surpassing excellence; even his afflicting works are according to his truthful word.

"Why should I complain of want or distress,
Affliction or pain? he told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, acts with a hand which never fails. Bless his name.

5. "*He loveth righteousness and judgment.*" The theory and the practice of right he intensely loves. He doth not only approve the true and the just, but his inmost soul delights therein. The character of God is a sea, every drop of which should become a wellhead of praise for his people. The righteousness of Jesus is peculiarly dear to the Father, and for its sake he takes pleasure in those to whom it is imputed. Sin, on the other hand, is infinitely abhorrent to the Lord, and woe unto those who die in it; if he sees no righteousness in them, he will deal righteously with them, and judgment stern and final will be the result. "*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*" Come hither, astronomers, geologists, naturalists, botanists, chemists, miners, yea, all of you who study the works of God, for all your truthful stories confirm this declaration. From the midge in the sunbeam to leviathan in the ocean all creatures own the bounty of the Creator. Even the pathless desert blazes with some undiscovered mercy, and the caverns of ocean conceal the treasures of love. Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness. He who cannot see it, and yet lives in it as the fish lives in the water, deserves to die. If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams?

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

6. "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*" The angelic heavens, the sidereal heavens, and the firmament or terrestrial heavens, were all made to start

into existence by a word ; what if we say by *the Word*, " For without him was not anything made that is made." It is interesting to note the mention of the Spirit in the next clause, "*and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth ;*" the word "*breath*" is the same as is elsewhere rendered Spirit. Thus the three persons of the Godhead unite in creating all things. How easy for the Lord to make the most ponderous orbs, and the most glorious angels ! A word, a breath could do it. It is as easy for God to create the universe as for a man to breathe, nay, far easier, for man breathes not independently, but borrows the breath in his nostrils from his Maker. It may be gathered from this verse that the constitution of all things is from the infinite wisdom, for his word may mean his appointment and determination. A wise and merciful Word has arranged, and a living Spirit sustains all the creation of Jehovah.

7. "*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap.*" The waters were once scattered like corn strewn upon a threshing floor : they are now collected in one spot as an heap. Who else could have gathered them into one channel but their great Lord, at whose bidding the waters fled away ? The miracle of the Red Sea is repeated in nature day by day, for the sea which now invades the shore under the impulse of sun and moon, would soon devour the land if bounds were not maintained by the divine decree. "*He layeth up the depth in storehouses.*" The depths of the main are God's great cellars and store-rooms for the tempestuous element. Vast reservoirs of water are secreted in the bowels of the earth, from which issue our springs and wells of water. What a merciful provision for a pressing need ? May not the text also refer to the clouds, and the magazines of hail, and snow, and rain. *These* treasuries of merciful wealth for the fields of earth ? These aqueous masses are not piled away as in lumber rooms, but in storehouses for future beneficial use. Abundant tenderness is seen in the foresight of our heavenly Joseph, whose granaries are already filled against earth's time of need. These stores might have been, as once they were, the ammunition of vengeance, they are now a part of the commissariat of mercy.

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord : let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was *done* ; he commanded, and it stood fast.

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

8. "*Let all the earth fear the Lord.*" Not only Jews, but Gentiles. The Psalmist was not a man blinded by national prejudice, he did not desire to restrict the worship of Jehovah to the seed of Abraham. He looks for homage even to far-off nations. If they are not well enough instructed to be able to praise at least let them fear. There is an inferior kind of worship in the trembling which involuntarily admits the boundless power of the thundering God. A defiant blasphemer is out of place in a world covered with tokens of the divine power and Godhead : the whole earth cannot afford a spot congenial for the erection of a synagogue of Atheism, nor a man in whom it is becoming to profane the name of God. "*Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.*" Let them forsake their idols, and reverently regard the only living God. What is here placed as a wish may also be read as a prophecy : the adoration of God will yet be universal.

9. "*For he spake, and it was done.*" Creation was the fruit of a word. Jehovah said, " Light be," and light was. The Lord's acts are sublime in their ease and instantaneousness. " What a word is this ? " This was the wondering enquiry of old, and it may be ours to this day. "*He commanded, and it stood fast.*" Out of nothing creation stood forth, and was confirmed in existence. The same power which first uplifted, now makes the universe to abide ; although we may not observe it, there is as great a display of sublime power in confirming as in creating. Happy is the man who has learned to lean his all upon the sure word of him who built the skies !

10. "*The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.*" While his own will is done, he takes care to anticipate the wilfulness of his enemies. Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council-chamber ; and when, well armed

with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in nothing. Not only the folly of the heathen, but their wisdom too, shall yield to the power of the cross of Jesus: what a comfort is this to those who have to labour where sophistry, and philosophy, falsely so called, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus. "*He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.*" Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puff-balls flung against a granite wall—they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power.

11. "*The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.*" He changes not his purpose, his decree is not frustrated, his designs are accomplished. God has a predestination according to the counsel of his will, and none of the devices of his foes can thwart his decree for a moment. Men's purposes are blown to and fro like the thread of the gossamer or the down of the thistle, but the eternal purposes are firmer than the earth. "*The thoughts of his heart to all generations.*" Men come and go, sons follow their sires to the grave, but the undisturbed mind of God moves on in unbroken serenity, producing ordained results with unerring certainty. No man can expect his will or plan to be carried out from age to age; the wisdom of one period is the folly of another, but the Lord's wisdom is always wise, and his designs run on from century to century. His power to fulfil his purposes is by no means diminished by the lapse of years. He who was absolute over Pharaoh in Egypt is not one whit the less to-day the King of kings and Lord of lords; still do his chariot wheels roll onward in imperial grandeur, none being for a moment able to resist his eternal will.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

12. "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.*" Israel was happy in the worship of the only true God. It was the blessedness of the chosen nation to have received a revelation from Jehovah. While others grovelled before their idols, the chosen people were elevated by a spiritual religion which introduced them to the invisible God, and led them to trust in him. All who confide in the Lord are blessed in the largest and deepest sense, and none can reverse the blessing. "*And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*" Election is at the bottom of it all. The divine choice rules the day; none take Jehovah to be their God till he takes them to be his people. What an ennobling choice this is! We are selected to no mean estate, and for no ignoble purpose: we are made the peculiar domain and delight of the Lord our God. Being so blessed, let us rejoice in our portion, and show the world by our lives that we serve a glorious Master.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17 An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

13. "*The Lord looketh from heaven.*" The Lord is represented as dwelling above and looking down below; seeing all things, but peculiarly observing and caring for those who trust in him. It is one of our choicest privileges to be always under our Father's eye, to be never out of sight of our best Friend. "*He beholdeth all the sons of men.*" All Adam's sons are as well watched as was Adam himself, their lone progenitor in the garden. Ranging from the frozen pole to the scorching equator, dwelling in hills and valleys, in huts and palaces, alike doth the divine eye regard all the members of the family of man.

14. *From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.*" Here the sentiment is repeated: it is worth repeating, and it needs repeating, for man is most prone to forget it. As great men sit at their windows and watch the crowd below, so doth the Lord; he gazeth intently upon his responsible creatures, and forgets nothing of what he sees.

15. *"He fashioneth their hearts alike."* By which is meant that all hearts are equally fashioned by the Lord, kings' hearts as well as the hearts of beggars. The text does not mean that all hearts are created originally alike by God, such a statement would scarcely be true, since there is the utmost variety in the constitutions and dispositions of men. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator, and have therefore no reason to boast themselves. What reason has the vessel to glorify itself in presence of the potter? *"He considereth all their works."* Not in vain doth God see men's acts: he ponders and judges them. He reads the secret design in the outward behaviour, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements. This consideration foretokens a judgment when the results of the divine thoughts will be meted out in measures of happiness or woe. Consider thy ways, O man, for God considers them!

16. *"There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."* Mortal power is a fiction, and those who trust in it are dupes. Serried ranks of armed men have failed to maintain an empire, or even to save their monarch's life when a decree from the court of heaven has gone forth for the empire's overthrow. The all-seeing God preserves the poorest of his people when they are alone and friendless, but ten thousand armed men cannot ensure safety to him whom God leaves to destruction. *"A mighty man is not delivered by much strength."* So far from guarding others, the valiant veteran is not able to deliver himself. When his time comes to die, neither the force of his arms nor the speed of his legs can save him. The weakest believer dwells safely under the shadow of Jehovah's throne, while the most mighty sinner is in peril every hour. Why do we talk so much of our armies and our heroes? the Lord alone has strength, and let him alone have praise.

17. *"An horse is a vain thing for safety."* Military strength among the Orientals lay much in horses and scythed chariots, but the Psalmist calls them a lie, a deceitful confidence. Surely the knight upon his gallant steed may be safe, either by valour or by flight? Not so, his horse shall bear him into danger or crush him with its fall. *"Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength."* Thus the strongest defences are less than nothing when most needed. God only is to be trusted and adored. Sennacherib with all his cavalry is not a match for one angel of the Lord, Pharaoh's horses and chariots found it vain to pursue the Lord's anointed, and so shall all the leaguered might of earth and hell find themselves utterly defeated when they rise against the Lord and his chosen.

18. *"Behold."* For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields. *"The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him."* That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defence. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them. *"Upon them that hope in his mercy."* This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one. Humble hope shall have its share as well as courageous faith. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infants' food.

19. *"To deliver their soul from death."* The Lord's hand goes with his eye; he sovereignly preserves those whom he graciously observes. Rescues and restorations hedge about the lives of the saints; death cannot touch them till the King signs his warrant and gives him leave, and even then his touch is not so much mortal as immortal; he doth not so much kill us as kill our mortality. *"And to keep them alive in famine."* Gaunt famine knows its master. God has meal and oil for his Elijahs somewhere. *"Verily thou shalt be fed"* is a divine provision for the man of faith. The Preserver of men will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. Power in human hands is outmatched by famine, but God is good at a pinch, and proves his bounty under the most straitened circumstances. Believer, wait upon thy God in temporals. His eye is upon thee, and his hand will not long delay.

20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

20. "*Our soul waiteth for the Lord.*" Here the godly avow their reliance upon him whom the Psalm extols. To wait is a great lesson. To be quiet in expectation, patient in hope, single in confidence, is one of the bright attainments of a Christian. Our soul, our life, must hang upon God; we are not to trust him with a few gewgaws, but with all we have and are. "*He is our help and our shield.*" Our help in labour, our shield in danger. The Lord answereth all things to his people. He is their all in all. Note the three "*ours*" in the text. These holdfast words are precious. Personal possession makes the Christian man; all else is mere talk.

21. "*For our hearts shall rejoice in him.*" The duty commended and commanded in the first verse is here presented to the Lord. We, who trust, cannot but be of a glad heart, our inmost nature must triumph in our faithful God. "*Because we have trusted in his holy name.*" The root of faith in due time bears the flower of rejoicing. Doubts breed sorrow, confidence creates joy.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Here is a large and comprehensive prayer to close with. It is an appeal for "*mercy,*" which even joyful believers need; and it is sought for in a proportion which the Lord has sanctioned. "*According to your faith be it unto you,*" is the Master's word, and he will not fall short of the scale which he has himself selected. Yet, Master, do more than this when hope is faint, and bless us far above what we ask or even think.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—A thanksgiving of the church triumphant in the latter ages, for her final deliverance, by the overthrow of Antichrist and his armies.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—Let us follow the holy man a moment in his meditation. His Psalm is not composed in scholastic form, in which the author confines himself to fixed rules; and, scrupulously following a philosophical method, lays down principles, and infers consequences. However, he establishes principles, the most proper to give us sublime ideas of the Creator; and he speaks with more precision of the works and attributes of God than the greatest philosophers have spoken of them.

How absurdly have the philosophers treated of *the origin of the world!* How few of them have reasoned conclusively on this important subject! Our prophet solves the important question by one single principle; and, what is more remarkable, this principle, which is nobly expressed, carries the clearest evidence with it. The principle is this: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth," verse 6. This is the most rational account that was ever given of the creation of the world. The world is the work of a self-efficient will, and it is this principle alone that can account for its creation. The most simple appearances in nature are sufficient to lead us to this principle. Either my will is self-efficient, or there is some other being whose will is self-efficient. What I say of myself, I say of my parents; and what I affirm of my parents I affirm of my more remote ancestors, and of all the finite creatures from whom they derived their existence. Most certainly, either finite beings have a self-efficient will, which it is impossible to suppose, for a finite creature with a self-efficient will is a contradiction: either, I say, a finite creature has a self-efficient will, or there is a First Cause who has a self-efficient will; and that there is such a Being is the principle of the Psalmist; "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

If philosophers have reasoned inconclusively on the origin of the world, they have spoken of *its government* with equal uncertainty. The Psalmist determined this question with great facility, by a single principle, which results from the

former, and which, like the former, carries its evidence with it. "The Lord looketh from heaven; he considereth all the works of all the inhabitants of the earth," verses 13, 14. This is the doctrine of providence. And on what is the doctrine of providence founded? On this principle: God "fashioneth their hearts alike," verse 15. Attend a moment to the evidence of this reasoning, my brethren. The doctrine of providence expressed in these words, "God considereth the works of the inhabitants of the earth," is a necessary consequence of his principle, "God fashioneth their hearts alike;" and this principle is a necessary consequence of that which the Psalmist had before laid down to account for the origin of the world. Yes, from the doctrine of God the Creator of men, follows that of God the inspector, the director, rewarder, and the punisher of their actions. One of the most specious objections that has ever been opposed to the doctrine of providence, is a contrast between the grandeur of God and the meanness of men. How can such an insignificant creature as man be the object of the care and attention of such a magnificent being as God? No objection can be more specious, or, in appearance, more invincible. The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the motions of ants, or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish, or to reward them, seems to demonstrate, that God would degrade himself were he to observe, to direct, to punish, to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to him. But one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection: that is, that God has created mankind. Does God degrade himself more by governing than by creating mankind? Who can persuade himself that a wise Being has given to intelligent creatures faculties capable of obtaining knowledge and virtue, without willing that they should endeavour to acquire knowledge and virtue? Or who can imagine, that a wise Being, who wills that his intelligent creatures should acquire knowledge and virtue, will not punish them if they neglect those acquisitions; and will not show by the distribution of his benefits that he approves their endeavours to obtain them?

Unenlightened philosophers have treated of *the attributes of God* with as much abstruseness as they have written of his works. The moral attributes of God, as they are called in the schools, were mysteries which they could not unfold. These may be reduced to two classes; attributes of *goodness*, and attributes of *justice*. Philosophers, who have admitted these, have usually taken that for granted which they ought to have proved. They collected together in their minds all perfections; they reduced them all to one object which they denominated *a perfect being*: and supposing, without proving, that a perfect being existed, they attributed to him, without proof, everything that they considered as a perfection. The Psalmist shows by a surer way that there is a God supremely just and supremely good. It is necessary, in order to convince a rational being of the justice and goodness of God, to follow such a method as that which we follow to prove his existence. When we would prove the existence of God, we say, there are creatures, therefore there is a Creator. In like manner, when we would prove that a Creator is a just and a good being, we say, there are qualities of goodness and justice in creatures, therefore he, from whom these creatures derive their existence, is a being just and good. Now, this is the reasoning of the Psalmist in this Psalm: "The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (verse 5); that is to say, it is impossible to consider the works of the Creator, without receiving evidence of his goodness. And the works of nature which demonstrate the goodness of God, prove his justice also; for God has created us with such dispositions, that we cannot enjoy the gifts of his goodness without obeying the laws of his righteousness. The happiness of an individual who procures a pleasure by disobeying the laws of equity, is a violent happiness, which cannot be of long duration; and the prosperity of public bodies, when it is founded in iniquity, is an edifice which, with its basis, will be presently sunk and gone.

But what we would particularly remark is, that *the excellent principles of the Psalmist, concerning God, are not mere speculations*; but truths from which he derives practical inferences; and he aims to extend their influence beyond private persons, even to legislators and conquerors. One would think, considering the conduct of mankind, that the consequences, which are drawn from the doctrines of which we have been speaking, belong to none but to the dregs of the people; that lawgivers and conquerors have a plan of morality peculiar to themselves, and are

above the rules to which other men must submit. Our prophet had other notions. What are his maxims of policy? They are all included in these words: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," verse 12. What are his military maxims? They are all included in these words: "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength," verses 16, 17. Who proposes these maxims? A hermit, who never appeared on the theatre of the world? or a man destitute of the talents necessary to shine there? No: one of the wisest of kings; one of the most bold and able generals: a man whom God has self-elected to govern his chosen people, and to command those armies which fought the most obstinate battles, and gained the most complete victories. Were I to proceed in explaining the system of the Psalmist, I might prove, that as he had a right to infer the doctrine of providence from the works of nature, and that of the moral attributes of God from the works of creation; so from the doctrines of the moral attributes of God, of providence, and of the works of creation, he had a right to conclude, that no conquerors or lawgivers could be truly happy but those who acted agreeably to the laws of the just and good Supreme.—*James Saurin*.

Verse 1.—"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." *Exult, ye righteous, in Jehovah!* The Hebrew verb, according to the etymologists, originally means to dance for joy, and is therefore a very strong expression for the liveliest exultation.—*J. A. Alexander*.

Verse 1.—"Rejoice, O ye righteous:" not in yourselves, for that is not safe, but "in the Lord."—*Augustine*.

Verse 1.—"Praise is comely for the upright." Praise is not comely for any but the godly. A profane man stuck with God's praise is like a dunghill stuck with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool: how uncomely is it for him to praise God, whose whole life is a dishonouring of God? It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, who goes on in sinful practices, as it is for an usurer to talk of living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture. The godly are only fit to be choristers in God's praise; it is called, "the garment of praise." Isaiah lxi. 3. The garment sits handsome only on a saint's back.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 1.—This Psalm is coupled with the foregoing one by the *catchword* with which it opens, which is a repetition of the exhortation with which the preceding ends, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;" "Shout for joy, all ye upright."—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 1.—He pleaseth God whom God pleaseth.—*Augustine*.

Verse 2.—"Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings." Here we have the first mention of musical instruments in the Psalms. It is to be observed that the early fathers almost with one accord protest against their use in churches; as they are forbidden in the Eastern church to this day, where yet, by the consent of all the singing is infinitely superior to anything that can be heard in the West.—*J. M. Neale*.

Verse 2.—"Harp;" "Psaltery," etc. Our church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize.—*Thomas Aquinas*. It was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols: but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal.—*Chrysostom*. The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song.—*Justin Martyr*.

Verse 2 (last clause).—It is said that David praised God upon "an instrument of ten strings;" and he would never have told how many strings there were, but that without all doubt he made use of them all. God hath given all of us bodies, as it were, instruments of many strings; and can we think it music good enough to strike but one string, to call upon him with our tongues only? No, no; when the still sound of the heart by holy thoughts, and the shrill sound of the tongue by holy words, and the loud sound of the hands by pious works, do all join together, that is God's concert, and the only music wherewith he is affected.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 3.—“*Sing unto him.*” I. Singing is the music of *nature*. The Scriptures tell us the mountains sing (Isa. lv. 12); the valleys sing (Ps. lxxv. 13); the trees of the wood sing (1 Chron. xvi. 33); nay, the air is the bird’s music room, they chant their musical notes. II. Singing is the music of *ordinances*. Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing the ninety-first Psalm, he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbins tell us that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang the hundred-and-eleventh and five following Psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles sang a hymn immediately after the blessed Supper. Matt. xxvi. 30. III. Singing is the music of *saints*. 1. They have performed this duty in their greatest *numbers*. Ps. cxlix. 1, 2. 2. In their greatest *straits*. Isa. xxvi. 19. 3. In their greatest *flight*. Isa. xlii. 10, 11. 4. In their greatest *deliverances*. 5. In their greatest *plenties*. Isa. lxxv. 14. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty: every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune. IV. Singing is the music of *angels*. Job tells us, “the morning stars sang together,” chap. xxxviii. 7. Now these “morning stars,” as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, an host of angels. Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they deliver their message in this raised way of duty. Luke ii. 13. They were *alvoivres*, delivering their messages in a laudatory singing, the whole company of angels making a musical quire. Nay, in heaven there is the angels’ joyous music; they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne. Rev. v. 11. V. Singing is the music of *heaven*; the glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber. The saints who were tuning here their Psalms, are now singing their hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction; here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebration.—*John Wells*, in “*Morning Exercises.*”

Verse 3.—“*A new song.*” That is to say, a *new* and recent composition on account of recent benefits; or constantly new songs, song succeeding song as daily new material for divine praise offers itself to the attentive student of the works of God. Or *new*, that is, always fresh and full of life, and renewed as new occasions offer themselves: as Job says, “My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.” Or *new*, *i.e.*, not common but rare and exquisite; as the new name in Rev. ii. 17; the new commandment, John xiii. 34. Or this respects the gospel state, wherein is a new covenant (Heb. viii. 8), a new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2), a new man (Eph. ii. 15), and all things new. 2 Cor. v. 17. *New*, on account of its matter being unknown of men: as in Rev. xiv. 3, “They sung a new song, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. *New* may be used in opposition to old. The song of Moses is old, and of the Lamb is new.—*Martin Geier* (1614—1681), in “*Poli Synopsis Criticorum.*”

Verse 3.—“*Sing unto him a new song.*” Put off oldness: ye know the new song. A new man, a New Testament, a new song. A new song belongeth not to men that are old; none learn that but new men, renewed through grace from oldness, and belonging now to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—“*A new song;*” namely, sung with such fervency of affections as novelties usually bring with them; or, always new, seeing God’s graces never wax old; or, sung by the motion of this new spirit of grace, which doth not so much look after the old benefits of the creation as after the new benefit of the redemption in Christ, which reneweth all things. Ps. xl. 3, and xvi. 1; Rev. v. 9, and xiv. 3.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 3.—“*Sing unto him a new song.*” It is a melancholy proof of the decline of the church, when the exhortation to sing a new song is no longer attended to: in such a case, there is need of the greatest care to prevent the old ones falling into oblivion.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 3.—“*Play skilfully.*” It is not an easy matter to praise God aright; it must be done *corde, ore, opere*, with the very best of the best.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—“*The word of the Lord is right.*” His word of promise given to the church. The divine revelation to all setting forth what is to be believed, hoped for, and done. The decrees of God and his penal judgments. The whole counsel and determination of God in the creation and government of the world. “*Is right,*” without defect or error. The word *right* is opposed to *tortuous*; it means true or certain.—*John de Pineda* (1577–1637); *D. H. Mollerus* (1639), and others, in *Synopsis.*

Verse 4.—“*All his works are done in truth.*”

Truth is in each flower
As well as in the solemnest things of God:
Truth is the voice of nature and of time—
Truth is the startling monitor within us—
Nought is without it, it comes from the stars,
The golden sun, and every breeze that blows—
Truth, it is God! and God is everywhere!

William Thomas Bacon.

Verse 5.—“*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*” If we reflect on the prodigious number of human beings who constantly receive their food, raiment, and every pleasure they enjoy, from their mother earth, we shall be convinced of the great liberality with which nature dispenses her gifts; and not only human beings, but an innumerable quantity of living creatures besides—inhabitants of the air, the waters, and the earth—are daily indebted to nature for their support. Those animals which are under our care are still indebted to the earth for their subsistence; for the grass, which nature spontaneously produces, is their chief food. The whole race of fishes, except those which men feed for their amusement, subsist without any of their aid. The species of birds which is perhaps the most despised and most numerous, is the sparrow. What they require for their support is incredible, but nature takes care to feed them; they are however but the smallest part of her children. So great is the quantity of insects, that ages may pass before even their species and classes can be known. How many and how diversified the sorts of flies that play in the air! The blood taken from us by the gnat is very accidental food for them; and we may suppose that where there is one gnat that lives upon it, there are millions that have never tasted human blood, or that of any other animal. On what can all these creatures subsist? Perhaps every handful of earth contains living insects; they are discovered in every drop of water; their multiplying and means of support are incomprehensible. While nature is thus prolific in children, she is also fruitful in means for their subsistence; or, rather, it is the God of nature who has poured into her bosom this inexhaustible store of riches. He provides each creature with its food and dwelling. For them he causes the grass and other herbs to grow, leaving each to select its proper food. And, however mean many creatures may appear to us, he feeds and assists them all.

O Almighty God, how manifest is thy greatness! Thou dost what the united efforts of all mankind would fail to accomplish. Thou hast given life, and breath, and being to all creatures that live in the air, the waters, or the earth. Surely thou wilt do for thy believing people what thou dost for animals and insects! When we are filled with doubts and fears, let us consider the ravens whom the Lord feeds when they cry. Let them and all creatures beside, which man takes no care of, teach us the art of contentment. The great Author of nature knows all our wants. Let us cast our every care on him, for he careth for us; and may we come boldly to the throne of grace in faith and sincerity that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need.—*Christopher Christian Sturm.*

Verse 5.—“*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*” To hear its worthless inhabitants complain, one would think that God dispensed *evil*, not *good*. To examine the operation of his hand, everything is marked with mercy, and there is no place where his goodness does not appear. The *overflowing kindness* of God fills the earth. Even the iniquities of men are rarely a bar to his goodness: he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the *just* and the *unjust*.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—“*The goodness of the Lord.*” In discoursing on the glorious perfections of God, his *goodness* must by no means be omitted; for though all his perfections

are his glory, yet this is particularly so called, for when Moses, the man of God, earnestly desired to behold a grand display of the glory of Jehovah, the Lord said, in answer to his petition, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee;" thus intimating that he himself accounted his goodness to be his glory (Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 7); and it includes that mercy, grace, longsuffering, and truth, which are afterwards mentioned. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*; when it bestows favours on the worthless, it is *grace*; when it bears with provoking rebels, it is *longsuffering*; when it confers promised blessings, it is *truth*; when it supplies indigent beings, it is *bounty*. *The goodness of God* is a very comprehensive term; it includes all the forms of his kindness shown to men; whether considered as creatures, as sinners, or as believers.—*George Burder*, 1838.

Verse 5.—"*The goodness of the Lord.*" He might, if he had pleased, have made everything we tasted bitter, everything we saw loathsome, everything we touched a sting, every smell a stench, every sound a discord.—*William Paley, D.D.*, 1743—1805.

Verse 6.—"*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*" That the רִי is not *spirit*, but *breath*, is evident from the words "*of his mouth*" (compare Isaiah xi. 4), and from the parallelism with "*word.*" Simple *word* is simple *breath*; both together, they stand in contrast to that exercise of strength, that labour, that use of means and instruments without which feeble man can bring nothing to perfection. Then there are the parallel passages, "All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils." Job xxvii. 3. "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." Job. xxxiii. 4. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust, thou sendest forth thy *breath*, they are created." Psalm civ. 29, 30. On the other hand, however, the exposition which would interpret רִי רִי, without reference to the *Spirit of God*, cannot be a correct one. In the history of the creation, to which the verse before us, as well as verses seven and nine, generally refer, the creation is described as the work of the Spirit of God, and his Word. First, the *Spirit of God* moved upon the face of waters, then God *said*. We may also suppose that the Spirit and the power of God are here represented by the *figure of breath*, because that in man is the first sign of life.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 6.—"*By the word of the Lord.*" May be understood of the hypostatic Word, as John teaches us. John i. 1. (*John Cocceius*, 1603—1669). This is an illustration of the old saying, that while Grotius finds Christ nowhere, Cocceius finds Christ everywhere.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—Let any make a world, and he shall be a God, saith Augustine; hence is it that the church maketh it the very first article of her Creed to believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.—*John Weemse*.

Verses 6, 9.—It is all one with God to do as to say, to perform as to promise; it is as easy, he is as willing, as able, to do the one as the other. There is no such distance betwixt God's saying and doing, as amongst men. His saying is doing. "*He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*" "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*" "The worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. xi. 3. There is omnipotency in his word, both of command and promise; therefore called, "The word of his power." Heb. i. 3. One word of his can do more in an instant than the united powers of heaven and earth can do to eternity. This consideration removes at once the chief discouragements that hinder the lively actings of faith; for what is it that weakens our confidence of the promises' performance, but because we look upon the accomplishment as uncertain or difficult, or future and afar off! Now from hence faith may conclude the performance is certain, easy, and present.—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 7.—"*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap,*" etc. "God called the gathering together of the waters, seas." Gen. i. 10. This unstable element must, like all other elements, be put under law, and confined within bounds, that there might be a habitable earth for man and all the creatures around him. Thus the Psalmist sings, "*He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; he layeth up the depth in storehouses.*" The boundary was such as to cause his servants to wonder. They looked from the shore, as we do, and under the influence of a well-known law, the billows in their heaving swells, seemed as if they would,

as if they did, touch the sky itself; and as if they were so much higher than the shore, that they were in danger of leaving their basin and stretching over the land. Just such an impression, we, with all our science, popularly hold. The prophets thus looked as we do, and under the same kind of feeling. How wonderful, they thought, is all this! A low barrier of sand is made Jehovah's agent for bounding the deep. "The Lord hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it." Jer. v. 22.—*John Duns, D.D., in "Science and Christian Thought," 1868.*

Verse 7.—"*The waters of the sea.*" Of all objects that I have ever seen, there is none which affects my imagination so much as the sea or ocean. I cannot see the heavings of this prodigious bulk of waters, even in a calm, without a very pleasing astonishment; but when it is worked up in a tempest, so that the horizon on every side is nothing but foaming billows and floating mountains, it is impossible to describe the agreeable horror that rises from such a prospect. A troubled ocean, to a man who sails upon it, is, I think, the biggest object that he can see in motion, and consequently gives his imagination one of the highest kinds of pleasure that can arise from greatness. I must confess it is impossible for me to survey this world of fluid matter without thinking on the hand that first poured it out, and made a proper channel for its reception. Such an object naturally raises in my thoughts the idea of an Almighty Being, and convinces me of his existence as much as a metaphysical demonstration. The imagination prompts the understanding, and by the greatness of the sensible object, produces in it the idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by time nor space.—*Spectator.*

Verse 7.—"*As a heap.*" Dealing with fluids as if they were solids, with an obvious allusion to Ex. xv. 8. "*Depths,*" masses of water. The main point of the description is God's handling these vast liquid masses, as men handle solid substances of moderate dimensions, heaping the waves up, and storing them away, as men might do with stones or wheat.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 7.—The vast mass of waters which had hitherto covered the entire surface of the globe, was on the third day of creation brought within narrower compass, and large tracts of the submerged earth reclaimed and rendered habitable ground. . . . The waters were, for the most part, congregated together in one vast body, instead of being universally diffused over the face of the earth. This is the state of things which we now contemplate; the various great seas and oceans constituting in fact but one body of water called in different regions by different names, as the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Southern, etc., oceans.—*George Bush, on Gen. i. 9.*

Verse 8.—"*Let all the earth.*" For who can doubt that God can do as he wills upon earth, since he so tamed the unconquerable nature of the sea?—*Hugo Grotius, 1583—1645.*

Verse 8.—"*Let all the earth fear the Lord,*" etc. Let them not fear another instead of him. Doth a wild beast rage? Fear God. Doth a serpent lie in wait? Fear God. Doth man hate thee? Fear God. Doth the devil fight against thee? Fear God. For the whole creation is under him whom thou art commanded to fear.—*Augustine.*

Verse 9.—"*He spake and it was done.*" As we say in Latin, *Dictum factum*, SAID DONE, no delay having interposed.—*Hugo Grotius.*

Verse 9.—"*He spake, and it was done;*" so that the creatures were not emanations from the divine nature, but effects of the divine will, the fruits of intelligence, and design, and counsel.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Verse 10.—"*The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought,*" etc. The more the Pharisees of old, and their successors the prelates of late, opposed the truth, the more it prevailed. The Reformation in Germany was much furthered by the Papists' opposition; yea, when two kings (amongst many others), wrote against Luther, namely Henry VIII. of England, and Ludovicus of Hungary, this kingly title being entered into the controversy (making men more curious to examine the matter), stirred up a general inclination towards Luther's opinions.—*Richard Younge's Christian Library, 1655.*

Verse 11.—"*The counsel of the Lord.*" Note the contrast between the counsel of the heathen in the last verse, and the counsel of the Lord in this.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—" *The thoughts.*" The same word as *devices* in the preceding verse.—*William de Burgh, D.D., in loc.*

Verse 11.—The wheels in a watch or a clock move contrary one to another, some one way, some another, yet all serve the intent of the workman, to show the time, or to make the clock to strike. So in the world, the providence of God may seem to run cross to his promises; one man takes this way, another runs that way; good men go one way, wicked men another, yet all in conclusion accomplish the will, and centre in the purpose of God the great Creator of all things.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 11 (last clause).—Think not, brethren, because he said, "*The thoughts of his heart,*" that God as it were sitteth down and thinketh what he should do, and taketh counsel to do anything, or not to do anything. To thee, O man, belongs such tardiness.—*Augustine.*

Verse 12.—" *Blessed—whom he hath chosen.*" A man may have his name set down in the chronicles, yet lost; wrought in durable marble, yet perish; set upon a monument equal to a Colossus, yet be ignominious; inscribed on the hospital gates, yet go to hell; written in the front of his own house, yet another come to possess it; all these are but writings in the dust, or upon the waters, where the characters perish so soon as they are made; they no more prove a man happy than the fool could prove Pontius Pilate because his name was written in the Creed. But the true comfort is this, when a man by assurance can conclude with his own soul that his name is written in those eternal leaves of heaven, in the book of God's election, which shall never be wrapped up in the cloudy sheets of darkness, but remain legible to all eternity.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12.—" *The people whom he hath chosen.*" Some read it, The people which hath chosen him for their inheritance. It cometh all to one. See Deut. xxvi. 17—19.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 12.—It is an happiness to have an interest in one greater than ourselves; an interest in a beggar is of no worth, because he is of no power; but interest in a prince all men seek, therefore it is said, "*Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.*"—*Joseph Symonds.*

Verse 12.—Lest it should be thought that men obtain so great a good by their own efforts and industry, David teaches us expressly that it proceeds from the fountain of God's gracious, electing love that we are accounted the people of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—I have sometimes compared the *great* men of the world, and the *good* men of the world to the *consonants* and *vowels* in the alphabet. The *consonants* are the most and the biggest letters; they take up most room, and carry the greatest bulk; but, believe it, the *vowels* though they are the fewest and least of all the letters, yet they are most useful; they give the greatest sound of all; there is no pronunciation without vowels. O beloved, though the *great* men of the world take up room, and make a show above others, yet they are but *consonants*, a company of mute and dumb *consonants* for the most part; the *good men* they are the *vowels* that are of the greatest use and most concernment at every turn: a *good man* to help with his prayers; a *good man* to advise with his counsels; a *good man* to interpose with his authority; this is the loss we lament, we have lost a *good man*; death has blotted out a *vowel*; and I fear me there will be much silence where he is lacking; silence in the bed, and silence in the house, and silence in the shop, and silence in the church, and silence in the parish; for he was everywhere a *vowel*, a *good man* in every respect.—*John Kitchin, M.A., in a Funeral Sermon, 1660.*

Verse 15.—" *He fashioneth their hearts alike.*" As an illustration of the passage as it stands in our version, we append the following:—"Every circumstance concurs in proving that mankind are not composed of species essentially different from each other; that, on the contrary, there was originally but one species, which, after multiplying and spreading over the whole surface of the earth, has undergone various changes from the influence of climate, food, mode of living, diseases, and mixture of dissimilar individuals; that at first these changes were not so conspicuous, and produced only individual varieties; that these varieties became afterwards more specific, because they were rendered more general, more strongly marked, and more permanent, by the continual action of the same causes; and that they are transmitted from generation to generation."—*G. L. Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, 1707—1788.*

Verse 15.—The Creator of all things “*fashioneth their hearts alike* ;” the word *together*, which signifies together at once, intimating that the hearts of all men though separated from one another by never so vast a gulf of time or place, are as exactly alike in respect of their original inclinations, as if they had been all moulded at the same time. The worship of a God and then some kind of religion, is necessary to us, we cannot shift it off.—*William Pinke*, 1631.

Verse 15 (*last clause*).—Two men give to the poor, one seeketh his reward in heaven, the other the praise of men. Thou in two seest one thing, God understandeth two. For he understandeth what is within, and knoweth what is within ; their ends he seeth, their base intentions he seeth. “*He understandeth all their works.*”—*Augustine*.

Verse 16.—“*There is no king saved by the multitude of an host.*” At the battle of Arbela, the Persian hosts numbered between five hundred thousand and a million men, but they were utterly put to the rout by Alexander’s band of fifty thousand ; and the once mighty Darius was soon vanquished. Napoleon led more than half-a-million of men into Russia—

“ Not such the numbers, nor the host so dread,
By northern Bren, or Scythian Timour led.”

But the terrible winter left the army a mere wreck, and their leader was soon a prisoner on the lone rock of St. Helena. All along the line of history this verse has been verified. The strongest battalions melt like snowflakes when God is against them.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 16.—“*A mighty man* ;” or, a *giant* ; Goliath for instance. As the most skilful swimmers are often drowned, so here.—*John Trapp*.

Verses 16, 17 :—

Not the chief his serried lances,
Not his strength secures the brave :
All in vain the war-horse prances,
Weak his force his lord to save.

Richard Mant.

Verses 16, 17.—The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however great, as before of all human *intellect*.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verses 16, 17.—As a passenger in a storm, that for shelter against the weather, steppeth out of the way, betaketh him to a fair spread oak, standeth under the boughs, with his back close to the body of it, and findeth good relief thereby for the space of some time ; till at length cometh a sudden gust of wind, that teareth down a main arm of it, which falling upon the poor passenger, either maimeth or mischieveth him that resorted to it for succour. Thus falleth it out with not a few, meeting in the world with many troubles, and with manifold vexations, they step aside out of their own way, and too, too often out of God’s, to get under the wing of some great one, and gain, it may be, some aid and shelter thereby for a season ; but after awhile, that great one himself coming down headlong, and falling from his former height of favour, or honour, they are also called in question, and to fall together with him, that might otherwise have stood long enough on their own legs, if they had not trusted to such an arm of flesh, such a broken staff that deceived them.—*Thomas Gataker*.

Verse 17.—“*An horse.*” If the strength of horses be of God, or be his gift (Job xxxix. 19), then trust not in the strength of horses : use the strength of horses, but do not trust the strength of horses. If you trust that strength which God hath given to horses, you make them your god. How often doth God forbid trusting in the strength of horses, as knowing that we are apt to trust in anything that is strong, though but a beast. “*An horse is a vain thing for safety : neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.*” As if God had said, you think a horse can save you, but know he is a vain thing. And when the Psalmist saith, “*A horse is a vain thing,*” he doth not mean it of a weak horse, but of a horse of the greatest strength imaginable ; such a horse is a vain thing to save a man, neither can he deliver any by his strength ; and therefore the Lord, when he promised great deliverances to his people, lest they should expect it by the strength of horses, saith (Hos. i. 7), “*I will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them*

by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen;" as if he had told them, do not look after creature strength to be saved by; a horse will be a vain thing to save you, and I can save you effectually without horses, and I will.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 17—20.—Man is sensible of his want of earthly blessings, and will never cease, with excessive care, diligence, and vexation, to hunt after them, till he come to know that God will provide for him. When one hath great friends which they are known to lean upon, we say of them, such need take no care, they know such-and-such will see to them. On the contrary, come to one who knows no end of toiling and caring, ask him, Why will you thus tire yourself out? He will answer, I must needs do it, I have none but myself to trust to. So Christ followeth his disciples' carefulness to this door, their unbelief, which did not let them consider our heavenly Father cared for them. No present estate, though never so great, can free the heart from distraction, because it is subject to decay and vanishing: we shall never cast the burden of care off our own shoulders, till we learn by faith to cast it upon the Lord, whose eye is over us for good. He will never renounce carnal supports who makes not God the stay of his soul for outward things. He will trust in the abundance of his riches, wisdom, friends, or strength, that makes not God his strength. The heart of man, being aware of his inability to sustain himself if he be not underset, will seek out some prop, true or false, sound or rotten, to lean unto. They will go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, who look not to the Holy One of Israel, and seek not the Lord.—*John Ball.*

Verse 18.—"Behold," etc. Hitherto he hath given a proof of God's providence towards *all men*, but now he descends to a particular proof of it, by his care over his *church*, which he wonderfully guides, defends, and protects in all dangers and assaults and that notice may be taken of it, he begins with, "*Behold!*"—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 18.—"The eye of the Lord is upon." Look upon the sun, how it casts light and heat upon the whole world in its general course, how it shineth upon the good and the bad with an equal influence; but let its beams be but concentrated in a burning-glass, then it sets fire on the object only, and passeth by all others: and thus God in the creation looketh upon all his works with a general love, *erant omnia valde bona*, they pleased him very well. Oh! but when he is pleased to cast the beams of his love, and cause them to shine upon his elect through Christ, then it is that their hearts burn within them, then it is that their affections are inflamed; whereas others are but as it were a little warmed, have a little shine of common graces cast upon them.—*Richard Holdsworth, 1651.*

Verse 18.—"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." This is a very encouraging character. They who cannot claim the higher distinctions of religion, may surely know that they "fear God, and hope in his mercy." Some may wonder at the combination; and suppose that the qualities are incompatible with each other. But the first Christians "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." They may think that the fear will injure the hope, or the hope the fear. But these are even mutually helpful; and they are, not only never so beautiful, but never so influential as when they are blended. The fear promotes hope by the evidence it affords; and by keeping us from loose and careless walking, which must always affect our peace and pleasure. And hope no less befriends this fear. For never is God seen so glorious, so worthy of all our devotedness to him as when we hope in his mercy; and even the more assured we are of his regard, the more we shall enquire, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The more we shall tremble at the thought of offending and grieving him, the more we shall continue upon our knees, praying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, *my Strength and my Redeemer.*" It is called "a lively hope:" and Christians know, by experience, that upon all their principles and duties it has the same influence as Spring has upon the fields and the gardens.—*William Jay.*

Verse 18.—"Who hope in his mercy." When thou canst not get assurance, make as much improvement of the grounds upon which thou mayst build *hopes* of salvation. The probable grounds thou hast, thou wouldst not part with for all the world. If thy heart is not full of joy through sense of God's love, yet thine eyes are full of tears, and thy soul full of sorrow, through the sense of thy sin:

wouldst thou change thy condition with any hypocrite whatsoever, with the richest man that hath no grace? I would not have thee rest satisfied with a probability, but yet bless God for a probability of salvation. Is it nothing that one that hath deserved hell most certainly, should have a probability that he should escape it? Would not this be a little ease to the torments of the damned, if they had but a strong probability that they should be saved? but *no hope* makes it heavy. When thou art sick, thou enquirest of the physician. Sir, what do you think of me? Shall I live, or shall I die? If he reply it is not certain, but there is *good hopes*, it is probable you will live and do well; this is some support unto thee in thy sickness.—*Thomas Doolittle, M.A. (1630—1707), in "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 18.—The weakest believer, the least of saints, hath ground to hope. The gospel is so ordered, the covenant so methodised, God hath made such ample provision, that every one may "have good hope through grace" (1 Thess. ii. 16); and all that bear this character are allowed, encouraged, nay, commanded to hope: their hoping is as mighty a pleasure to God, as it is a comfort to themselves.—*Samuel Doolittle's "Righteous Man's Hope in Death," 1693.*

Verses 18, 19.—During the siege of Rochelle, which was endured with unexampled bravery for nearly fifteen months, the inhabitants were reduced by famine to the misery of being obliged to have recourse to the flesh of horses, asses, mules, dogs, cats, rats, and mice; and a single peck of corn is said to have been sold for a sum equivalent to about twenty-five pounds sterling of our money in the present day. There were numerous examples of great and liberal generosity among the inhabitants. Some dispensed their charity so secretly that their names were never discovered. Among the rest, the following example is narrated:—"The Sieur de la Goute, an honorary king's advocate, had a sister, the widow of a merchant named Prosni, who, being a very religious and benevolent woman, at the time when the famine became more severe than it had before been, freely assisted the poor with her present surplus. Her sister-in-law, the wife of her brother, De la Goute, being differently inclined, reproved her for her conduct, asking her in anger, 'What she would do when her all should be expended?' Her reply was, 'My sister, *the Lord will provide for me.*' The siege was continued, and the famine increased its fearful ravages; and poor widow Prosni, who had four children, found herself in a great strait—all her store of provisions being exhausted. She applied to her sister for relief, who, in the stead of comforting, reproached her for her improvidence; tauntingly adding that, as she had done mighty well to be so reduced under all her great faith and fine words, that '*the Lord would provide for her,*' so in good time he might provide for her.

"Wounded to the heart by these words, poor widow Prosni returned to her house in sad distress; resolving, nevertheless, to meet death patiently. On reaching her home, her children met her with gladdened hearts and joyous faces, and told her that a man, to them an entire stranger, had knocked at the door, it being late; and, on its being opened, he threw in a sack of about two bushels of wheat; and then, without saying a word, suddenly departed.

"The widow Prosni, scarcely able to believe her own eyes, with an overflowing, grateful heart towards her gracious benefactor, immediately ran to her sister-in-law as quickly as her famished condition would allow; and, upon seeing her, exclaimed aloud, '*My sister, the Lord hath provided for me;*' and, saying no more, returned home again.

"By means of this unexpected relief, conveyed to her so opportunely, she was enabled to support herself and family until the end of the siege, and she never knew to whom she was instrumentally indebted for this timely and merciful assistance."—*The Biblical Treasury, Vol. IX.*

Verse 20.—"Our soul waiteth for the Lord." There is an emphasis on the word *soul* which should be attended to; for although this is a common mode of speech among the Hebrews, yet it expresses earnest affections; as if believers should say, We sincerely rely upon God with our whole heart, accounting him our shield and help.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 20.—"Our soul." Not our souls, but "*our soul,*" as if they all had only one. And what is the language of God by the prophet? "I will give them one heart and one way." And thus the two disciples going to Emmaus exclaimed, upon their discovery and surprise, "Did not our heart burn within us?" And thus in the beginning of the gospel it was said, "The multitude of them that believed

were of one heart, and of one soul." We have seen several drops of water on the table, by being brought to touch, running into one. If Christians were better acquainted with each other, they would easily unite.—*William Jay.*

Verse 20.—"He is our help." Antigonus, king of Syria, being ready to give battle near the Isle of Andreos, sent out a squadron to watch the motions of his enemies, and to descry their strength: return was made that they had more ships, and better manned than he was. "How?" says Antigonus, "that cannot be; *quam multis meipsum opponis* (for how many dost thou reckon me?)" intimating that the dignity of a general weighed down many others, especially when poised with valour and experience. And where is valour, where is experience to be found, if not in God? He is the Lord of Hosts; with him alone is strength and power to deliver Israel out of all her troubles. He may do it, he can do it, he will do it; he is wise in heart and mighty in strength; besides him there is no Saviour, no deliverer; he is a shield to the righteous, strength to the weak, a refuge to the oppressed. He is *instar omnium* (all in all), and who is like unto him in all the world?—*John Spencer.*

Verse 20.—There is an excellent story of a young man, that was at sea in a mighty raging tempest; and when all the passengers were at their wits' end for fear, he only was merry; and when he was asked the reason of his mirth, he answered, "That the pilot of the ship was his father, and he knew his father would have a care of him." The great and wise God, who is our Father, hath from all eternity decreed what shall be the issue of all wars, what the event of all troubles; he is our pilot, he sits at the stern; and though the ship of the church or state be in a sinking condition, yet be of good comfort, our Pilot will have a care of us. There is nothing done in the lower house of Parliament on earth, but what is first decreed in the higher house in heaven. All the lesser wheels are ordered and over-ruled by the upper. Are not five sparrows, saith Christ, sold for a farthing? One sparrow is not worth half a farthing. And there's no man shall have half a farthing's worth of harm more than God hath decreed from all eternity.—*Edmund Calamy.*

Verse 22.—"According as we hope in thee;" not according to any merits of theirs, but according to the measure of grace, of the grace of hope which God had bestowed on them, and encouraged them to exercise on him, in expectation of finding grace and mercy with him.—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is *eucharistic*: the contents are:—I. An *exhortation to praise God* (1, 2, 3). II. The *arguments* to enforce the duty (4—19). III. The *confidence* of God's people in his name, their happiness, and petition. (20—22).—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—Rejoicing—the soul of praise; the Lord—a well-spring of joy. Character—indispensable to true enjoyment.

Verse 1 (last clause).—*Praise comely.* *What?* Vocal, meditative, habitual praise. *Why?* It is comely as wings to an angel, we mount with it; as flowers to a tree, it is our fruit; as a robe to a priest, it is our office; as long hair to a woman, it our beauty; as a crown to a king, it is our highest honour. *When?* Evermore, but chiefly amid blasphemy, persecution, sickness, poverty, death. *Whom?* Not from the ungodly, hypocritical, or thoughtless. To be without praise is to miss our comeliest adornment.

Verse 2.—Instrumental music. Is it lawful? Is it expedient? If so, its uses, limits, and laws. A sermon to improve congregational music.

Verse 3 (first clause).—The duty of maintaining the freshness of our devotions. Freshness, skill, and heartiness, to be combined in our congregational psalmody.

Verse 4.—God's word and works, their rightness, and agreement, and our view of both.

Verse 4 (first clause).—The word doctrinal, preceptive, historical, prophetic, promissory, and experimental, always right, *i.e.*, free from error or evil.

Verse 4 (second clause).—God's work of creation, providence, and grace, always in conformity with truth. His hatred of everything like a sham.

Verses 4, 5.—A fourfold argument for praise, from the *truth*, the *faithfulness*, the *justice*, and *goodness* of God: I. "For the word of the Lord is right." II. "All his works are done in truth." III. "He loveth righteousness and judgment." IV. "The earth is full of his goodness."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—Justice and goodness equally conspicuous in the divine action.

Verse 5 (last clause).—A matchless theme for an observant eye and an eloquent tongue.

Verse 6.—The power of the Word and the Spirit in the old and new creations.

Verse 7.—God's control of destructive and re-constructive agencies.

Verse 7.—The storehouses of the Great Husbandman.

Verse 8.—Reasons for universal worship, obstacles to it, future prospects of it, our duty in relation to it.

Verse 8 (last clause).—Awe—the soul of worship.

Verse 9.—*The irresistible word of Jehovah* in creation, in calling his people, in their comfort and deliverance, in their entrance to glory.

Verse 10.—Educated and philosophical heathen within the reach of missions.

Verses 10, 11.—The opposing counsels.

Verse 11.—The eternity, immutability, efficiency, and wisdom of the divine decrees. God's purposes, "the thoughts of his heart," hence their wisdom, and yet more their love.

Verse 12.—Two elections made by a blessed people and a gracious God, and their happy result.

The happiness of the church of God.

God's delight in his people, and their delight in him.

Verse 13.—Omniscience and its lessons.

Verses 13, 14, 15.—The doctrine of providence.

Verse 15.—God's acquaintance with men's hearts, and his estimate of their actions.

The similarity of human nature.

Verse 16, 17, 18.—The fallacy of human trust, and the security of faith in God.

Verse 18.—Hoping in the mercy of God—false and true forms distinguished.

Verses 18.—I. The eyes of God's *knowledge* are upon them. II. The eyes of his *affection* are upon them. III. The eyes of his *providence* are upon them.—*William Jay.*

Verse 19.—Life in famine, natural and spiritual, specially a famine of inward hope and legal satisfaction.

Verse 20.—"Waiting for the Lord," includes: I. *Conviction*—a persuasion that the Lord is the supreme good. II. *Desire*—it is expressed by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc. III. *Hope.* IV. *Patience.*—God is never slack concerning his promise.—*William Jay.*

Verse 20 (first clause).—The believer's hourly position.

Verse 21.—Joy, the outflow of faith.

Verse 22.—A prayer for believers only.

Verse 22.—Measure for measure, or mercy proportioned to faith.