

PSALM XXXIV.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech ; who drove him away, and he departed. *Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in 1 Samuel xxi. Although the gratitude of the Psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vain-glorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the Psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memorials. God deserves our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of verse 10, when the Psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are A HYMN, and the last twelve A SERMON. For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus : In verses 1 to 3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others ; from 4 to 7 he relates his experience, and in 8, 9, 10, exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In verses 11—14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from verses 15 to the close.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL bless the LORD at all times : his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.

2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD : the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.

3 O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

1. "*I will bless the Lord at all times.*"—He is resolved and fixed, "*I will ;*" he is personally and for himself determined, let others do as they may ; he is intelligent in head and inflamed in heart—he knows to whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when. To Jehovah, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in his creatures' praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of his meed of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank him for it. "*At all times,*" in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear. He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough ; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings. Happy is he whose fingers are wedded to his harp. He who praises God for mercies shall never want a mercy for which to praise. To bless the Lord is never unseasonable. "*His praise shall continually be in my mouth,*" not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing ; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God. What a blessed mouthful is God's praise ! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming ! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours. If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be

swallowed up in joy. God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth—good thoughts in the closet, and good words in the world.

2. "*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.*" Boasting is a very natural propensity, and if it were used as in this case, the more it were indulged the better. The exultation of this verse is no mere tongue bragging, "*the soul*" is in it, the boasting is meant and felt before it is expressed. What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing. Truly he who writes these words of comment has nothing of his own to boast of, but much to lament over, and yet none shall stop him of his boast in God so long as he lives. "*The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*" They are usually grieved to hear boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord's goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.

3. "*O magnify the Lord with me.*" Is this request addressed to the humble? If so it is most fitting. Who can make God great but those who feel themselves to be little? He bids them help him to make the Lord's fame greater among the sons of men. Jehovah is infinite, and therefore cannot really be made greater, but his name grows in manifested glory as he is made known to his creatures, and thus he is said to be magnified. It is well when the soul feels its own inability adequately to glorify the Lord, and therefore stirs up others to the gracious work; this is good both for the man himself and for his companions. No praise can excel that which lays us prostrate under a sense of our own nothingness, while divine grace like some topeless Alp rises before our eyes, and sinks us lower and lower in holy awe. "*Let us exalt his name together.*" Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is likest heaven where it abounds.

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles.

7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

4. "*I sought the Lord, and he heard me.*" It must have been in a very confused manner that David prayed, and there must have been much of self-sufficiency in his prayer, or he would not have resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic; yet his poor limping prayer had an acceptance and brought him succour: the more reason for them celebrating the abounding mercy of the Lord. We may seek God even when we have sinned. If sin could blockade the mercy-seat it would be all over with us, but the mercy is that there are gifts even for the rebellious, and an advocate for men who sin. "*And delivered me from all my fears.*" God makes a perfect work of it. He clears away both our fears and their causes, all of them without exception. Glory be to his name, prayer sweeps the field, slays all the enemies and even buries their bones. Note the egoism of this verse and of those preceding it; we need not blush to speak of ourselves when in so doing we honestly aim at glorifying God, and not at exalting ourselves. Some are foolishly squeamish upon this point, but they should remember that when modesty robs God it is most immodest.

5. "*They looked unto him, and were lightened.*" The Psalmist avows that his case was not at all peculiar, it was matched in the lives of all the faithful; they too, each one of them on looking to their Lord were brightened up, their faces began to shine, their spirits were uplifted. What a means of blessing one look at the Lord may be! There is life, light, liberty, love, everything in fact, in a look at the crucified One. Never did a sore heart look in vain to the good Physician; never a dying soul turned its darkening eye to the brazen serpent to find its virtue

gone. "*And their faces were not ashamed.*" Their faces were covered with joy but not with blushes. He who trusts in God has no need to be ashamed of his confidence, time and eternity will both justify his reliance.

6. "*This poor man cried.*" Here he returns to his own case. He was poor indeed, and so utterly friendless that his life was in great jeopardy; but he cried in his heart to the protector of his people and found relief. His prayer was a cry, for brevity and bitterness, for earnestness and simplicity, for artlessness and grief; it was a poor man's cry, but it was none the less powerful with heaven, for "*the Lord heard him,*" and to be heard of God is to be delivered; and so it is added the Lord "*saved him out of all his troubles.*" At once and altogether David was clean rid of all his woes. The Lord sweeps our griefs away as men destroy a hive of hornets, or as the winds clear away the mists. Prayer can clear us of troubles as easily as the Lord made a riddance of the frogs and flies of Egypt when Moses entreated him. This verse is the Psalmist's own personal testimony: he being dead yet speaketh. Let the afflicted reader take heart and be of good courage.

7. "*The angel of the Lord.*" The covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. Like hosts entrenched so are the ministering spirits encamped around the Lord's chosen, to serve and succour, to defend and console them. "*Encampeth round about them that fear him.*" On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist. "*And delivereth them.*" We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

8. "*O taste and see.*" Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes. "*That the Lord is good.*" You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fallings; its fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them. "*Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*" Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed. The second clause of the verse, is the argument in support of the exhortation contained in the first sentence.

9. "*O fear the Lord, ye his saints.*" Pay to him humble childlike reverence, walk in his laws, have respect to his will, tremble to offend him, hasten to serve him. Fear not the wrath of men, neither be tempted to sin through the virulence of their threats; fear God and fear nothing else. "*For there is no want to them that fear him.*" Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not give luxuries, but the promise binds him to supply necessaries, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain ungratified, but real wants the Lord will supply. The fear of the Lord or true piety is not only the duty of those who avow themselves to be saints, that is, persons set apart and consecrated for holy duties, but it is also their path of safety and comfort. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is. If we were to die like dogs, and there were no hereafter, yet were it well for our own happiness' sake to fear the Lord. Men seek a patron and hope to prosper; he prospers surely who hath the Lord of Hosts to be his friend and defender.

10. "*The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.*" They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigour of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hunger, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple-minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practise.

"But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." No really good thing shall be denied to those whose first and main end in life is to seek the Lord. Men may call them fools, but the Lord will prove them wise. They shall win where the world's wisecrates lose their all, and God shall have the glory of it.

11 Come ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What man *is he that* desireth life, and loveth *many* days, that he may see good ?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good ; seek peace, and pursue it.

11. *"Come, ye children."* Though a warrior and a king, the Psalmist was not ashamed to teach children. Teachers of youth belong to the true peerage ; their work is honourable, and their reward shall be glorious. Perhaps the boys and girls of Gath had made sport of David in his seeming madness, and if so, he here aims by teaching the rising race to undo the mischief which he had done aforetime. Children are the most hopeful persons to teach—wise men who wish to propagate their principles take care to win the ear of the young. *"Hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord."* So far as they can be taught by word of mouth, or learned by the hearing of the ear, we are to communicate the faith and fear of God, inculcating upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety. This verse may be the address of every Sabbath School teacher to his class, of every parent to his children. It is not without instruction in the art of teaching. We should be winning and attractive to the youngsters, bidding them "come," and not repelling them with harsh terms. We must get them away, apart from toys and sports, and try to occupy their minds with better pursuits ; for we cannot well teach them while their minds are full of other things. We must drive at the main point always, and keep the fear of the Lord ever uppermost in our teachings, and in so doing we may discreetly cast our own personality into the scale by narrating our own experiences and convictions.

12. Life spent in happiness is the desire of all, and he who can give the young a receipt for leading a happy life deserves to be popular among them. Mere existence is not life ; the art of living, truly, really, and joyfully living, it is not given to all men to know. To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality. While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man.

13. *"Keep thy tongue from evil."* Guard with careful diligence that dangerous member, the tongue, lest it utter evil, for that evil will recoil upon thee, and mar the enjoyment of thy life. Men cannot spit forth poison without feeling some of the venom burning their own flesh. *"And thy lips from speaking guile."* Deceit must be very earnestly avoided by the man who desires happiness. A crafty schemer lives like a spy in the enemy's camp, in constant fear of exposure and execution. Clean and honest conversation, by keeping the conscience at ease, promotes happiness, but lying and wicked talk stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame. David had tried the tortuous policy, but he here denounces it, and begs others as they would live long and well to avoid with care the doubtful devices of guile.

14. *"Depart from evil."* Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest-house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation. *"And do good."* Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue ; he who does good is sure to avoid evil. *"Seek peace."* Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavour to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace ; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects. *"And pursue it."* Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you ; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit.

The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.

15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.

16 The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles,

18 The LORD *is nigh* unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

15. "*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.*" He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to him that he cannot take his eyes off them; he watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe. "*His ears are open unto their cry.*" His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards his saints; his whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by him. Their cry he hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and he is not slow to answer his children's voice.

16. "*The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*" God is not indifferent to the deeds of sinners, but he sets his face against them, as we say, being determined that they shall have no countenance and support, but shall be thwarted and defeated. He is determinately resolved that the ungodly shall not prosper; he sets himself with all his might to overthrow them. "*To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*" He will stamp out their fires, their honour shall be turned into shame, their names forgotten or accursed. Utter destruction shall be the lot of all the ungodly.

17. "*The righteous cry.*" Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care and grief. "*And the Lord heareth;*" he is like the night-watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm-bell than he flies to relieve those who need him. "*And delivereth them out of all their troubles.*" No net of trouble can so hold us that the Lord cannot free us. Our afflictions may be numerous and complicated, but prayer can set us free from them all, for the Lord will show himself strong on our behalf.

18. "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.*" Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when he is really most near to them; their eyes are holden so that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not. They run hither and thither, seeking peace in their own works, or in experiences, or in proposals and resolutions, whereas the Lord is nigh them, and the simple act of faith will reveal him. "*And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart! Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. If we chasten our own spirits the Lord will spare us. He never breaks with the rod of judgment those who are already sore with the rod of conviction. Salvation is linked with contrition.

19. "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous.*" Thus are they made like Jesus their covenant Head. Scripture does not flatter us like the story books with the idea that goodness will secure us from trouble; on the contrary, we are again and again warned to expect tribulation while we are in this body. Our afflictions come from all points of the compass, and are as many and as tormenting as the mosquitoes

of the tropics. It is the earthly portion of the elect to find thorns and briars growing in their pathway, yea, to lie down among them, finding their rest broken and disturbed by sorrow. But, blessed *but*, how it takes the sting out of the previous sentence! "*But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*" Through troops of ills Jehovah shall lead his redeemed scatheless and triumphant. There is an end to the believer's affliction, and a joyful end too. None of his trials can hurt so much as a hair of his head, neither can the furnace hold him for a moment after the Lord bids him come forth of it. Hard would be the lot of the righteous if this promise, like a bundle of camphire, were not bound up in it, but this sweetens all. The same Lord who sends the afflictions will also recall them when his design is accomplished, but he will never allow the fiercest of them to rend and devour his beloved.

20. "*He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*" David had come off with kicks and cuffs, but no broken bones. No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh-wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are for ever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt nor maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

21. "*Evil shall slay the wicked.*" Their adversities shall be killing; they are not medicine, but poison. Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment. Hell itself is but evil fully developed, torturing those in whom it dwells. Oh! happy they who have fled to Jesus to find refuge from their former sins, such, and such only will escape. "*And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.*" They hated the best of company, and they shall have none; they shall be forsaken, despoiled, wretched, despairing. God makes the viper poison itself. What desolation of heart do the damned feel, and how richly have they deserved it!

22. "*The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants.*"—with price and with power, with blood and with water. All providential helps are a part of the redemption by power, hence the Lord is said still to redeem. All thus ransomed belong to him who bought them—this is the law of justice and the verdict of gratitude. Joyfully will we serve him who so graciously purchases us with his blood, and delivers us by his power. "*And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*" Faith is the mark of the ransomed, and wherever it is seen, though in the least and meanest of the saints, it ensures eternal salvation. Believer, thou shalt never be deserted, forsaken, given up to ruin. God, even thy God is thy guardian and friend, and bliss is thine.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—*Abimelech* was king of Gath, the same with Achish, 1 Sam. xxi. 20: who either had two names, or this of Abimelech, as it should seem, was a common name to all the kings of the Philistines (see Gen. xx. 2; xxvi. 8); as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Cæsar to the Roman emperors: the name signifies a *father-king*, or *my father-king*, or a *royal father*; as kings should be the fathers of their country: before him *David changed his behaviour*, his taste, sense, or reason: he imitated a madman.—*John Gill.*

Whole Psalm.—(This Psalm is alphabetical). The Alphabetical Psalms, the *psalmi abcedarii*, as the Latin fathers called them, are nine in number; and I cannot help thinking it is a pity that, except in the single instance of the hundred and nineteenth, no hint of their existence should have been suffered to appear in our

authorised version. I will not take it upon me to affirm, with Ewald, that no version is faithful in which the acrostic is suppressed; but I do think that the existence of such a remarkable style of composition ought to be indicated in one way or another, and that some useful purposes are served by its being actually reproduced in the translation. No doubt there are difficulties in the way. The Hebrew Alphabet differs widely from any of those now employed in Europe. Besides differences of a more fundamental kind, the Hebrew has only twenty-two letters for our twenty-six; and of the twenty-two a considerable number have no fellows in ours. An exact reproduction of a Hebrew acrostic in an English version is therefore impossible.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

Whole Psalm.—Mr. Hapstone has endeavoured to imitate the alphabetical character of this Psalm in his metrical version. The letter answering to F is wanting, and the last stanza begins with the letter answering to R. One verse of his translation may suffice—

“At all times bless Jehovah’s name will I;
His praise shall in my mouth be constantly;
Boast in Jehovah shall my soul henceforth;
Hear it, ye meek ones, and exult with mirth.”

Verse 1.—“*I will bless the Lord at all times.*” Mr. Bradford, martyr, speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, said, If the queen be pleased to release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her, etc. So saith a believing soul: Let God do with me what he will, I will be thankful.—*Samuel Clarke’s “Mirrour.”*

Verse 1.—Should the whole frame of nature be uninged, and all outward friends and supporters prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed, and possessions torn from us, and the floods of sickness, poverty and disgrace overwhelm our soul with an impetuous tide of trouble; the sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affects his portion and the object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God his refuge and hiding place, and there feels his Saviour incomparably better, and more than equivalent to what the whole of the universe can ever offer, or rob him of; and his tender mercies, unexhausted fulness, and great faithfulness, yield him consolation and rest; and enable him, what time he is afraid, to put his trust in him. Thus we find the holy Psalmist expressing himself: “*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*”—*William Dunlop.*

Verse 1.—S. Basil tells us that the praise of God, once rightly impressed as a seal on the mind, though it may not always be carried out into action, yet in real truth causes us perpetually to praise God.—*J. M. Neale’s Commentary.*

Verse 2.—“*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.*” Not like the boasting of the Pharisee, so hateful in the eyes of God, so offensive in the ears of the humble; for *the humble can hear this boasting and be glad*, which they would never do if it were not conformable to the rules of humility. Can any boasting be greater than to say, “*I can do all things*”? Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, “*In him that strengtheneth me.*” For though God likes not of boasting, yet he likes of this boasting, which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to him.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verses 2—6.—There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses. “*My soul shall boast;*” “*The humble shall hear;*” “*I sought the Lord;*” “*They looked to him;*” “*This poor man cried.*” There is a force and elegance in the very unconnection of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it.—*Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

Verse 3.—Venema remarks that after the affair with Achish, we are told in 1 Samuel xxii. 1, “*His brethren, and all his father’s house went down to the cave Adullam unto him,*” and these, together with those who were in debt, and discontented with Saul’s government, formed a band of four hundred men. To

these his friends and comrades, he relates the story of his escape, and bids them with united hearts and voices extol the Lord.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—“*I sought the Lord, and he heard me.*” God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from him. If you restrain prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer’s studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar: when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 4.—“*He delivered me from all my fears.*” To have delivered me from all my troubles had been a great favour, but a far greater to deliver me from all my fears; for where that would but have freed me from present evil, this secures me from evil to come; that now I enjoy not only tranquility, but security, a privilege only of the godly. The wicked may be free from trouble, but can they be free from fear? No; God knows, though they be not in trouble like other men, yet they live in more fear than other men. Guiltiness of mind, or mind of the world, never suffers them to be secure: though they be free sometimes from the fit of an ague, yet they are never without a grudging; and (if I may use the expression of poets) though they feel not always the whip of Tysiphone, yet they feel always her terrors; and, seeing the Lord hath done this for me, hath delivered me from all my fears, have I not cause, just cause, to magnify him, and exalt his name?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—“*They looked unto him.*” The more we can think upon our Lord, and the less upon ourselves, the better. Looking to him, as he is seated upon the right hand of the throne of God, will keep our heads, and especially our hearts, steady when going through the deep waters of affliction. Often have I thought of this when crossing the water opposite the old place of Langholm. I found, when I looked down on the water, I got dizzy; I therefore fixed my eyes upon a steady object on the other side, and got comfortably through.—*David Smith, 1792—1867.*

Verse 6.—“*This poor man cried.*” The reasons of *crying* are, 1. Want cannot blush. The pinching necessity of the saints is not tied to the law of modesty. Hunger cannot be ashamed. “I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise,” saith David (Ps. lv. 2); and Hezekiah, “Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter. I did mourn as a dove” (Isa. xxxviii. 14). “I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation” (Job. xxx. 28). 2. Though God hear prayer, only as prayer offered in Christ, not because very fervent; yet fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer. An arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore, the prayers of the saints are expressed by *crying* in Scripture. “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not” (Ps. xxii. 2). “At noon, will I pray, and cry aloud” (Ps. lv. 17). “In my distress I cried to the Lord” (Ps. xviii. 6). “Unto thee have I cried, O Lord” (Ps. lxxxviii. 13). “Out of the depths have I cried” (Ps. cxxx. 1). “Out of the belly of hell cried I” (Jonah ii. 2). “Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock” (Ps. xxviii. 1). Yea, it goeth to somewhat more than *crying*: “I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard” (Job xix. 7). “Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer” (Lam. iii. 8). He who may teach us all to pray, sweet Jesus, “In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” (Heb. v. 7); he prayed with war shouts. 3. And these prayers are so prevalent, that God answereth them: “*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his fears*” (Ps. xxxiv. 6). “My cry came before him, even into his ears” (Ps. xviii. 6). The cry addeth wings to the prayer, as a speedy post sent to court upon life and death: “Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered” (Ps. xxii. 5). “*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*” (Ps. xxxiv. 17).—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 7.—“*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*” I will not rub the questions, whether these angels can contract themselves, and whether they can subsist in a point, and so stand together the better in so great a number, neither will I trouble myself to examine whether they are in such-and-such a place in their *substance*, or only in their *virtue* and *operation*. But this the godly man may assure himself of, that whensoever he shall want their

help, in spite of doors, and locks, and bars, he may have it in a moment's warning. For there is no impediment, either for want of power because they are spirits, or from want of good will, both because it is their duty, and because they bear an affection in him; not only rejoicing at his first conversion (Luke xv. 10), but, I dare confidently affirm, always disposed with abundance of cheerfulness to do anything for him. I cannot let pass some words I remember of Origen's to this purpose, as I have them from his interpreter. He brings in the angels speaking after this manner:—"If he (meaning the Son of God) went down, and went down into a body, and was clothed with flesh, and endured its infirmities and died for men, what do we stand still for? Come, let's all down from heaven together."—*Zachary Bogan*.

Verse 7.—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." This is the first time that, in the Psalter, we read of the ministrations of angels. But many fathers rather take this passage of the "Angel of the Great Counsel," and gloriously to him it applies.—*J. M. Neale*.

Verse 7.—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him," etc. By whom may be meant, either the uncreated Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God's presence, and of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people; and whose salvation is as walls and bulwarks about them, or as an army surrounding them; or a created angel may be intended even a single one, which is sufficient to guard a multitude of saints, since one could destroy at once such a vast number of enemies, as in 2 Kings xix. 35; or one may be put for more, since they are an innumerable company that are on the side of the Lord's people, and to whom they are joined; and these may be said to encamp about them, because they are an host or army (see Gen. xxxii. 1, 2; Luke ii. 13); and are the guardians of the saints, that stand up for them and protect them, as well as minister to them.—*John Gill*.

Verse 7.—"The angel of the Lord" is represented in his twofold character in this pair of Psalms, as an angel of mercy, and also as an angel of judgment. Psalm xxxv. 6. This pair of Psalms (the thirty fourth and thirty-fifth), may in this respect be compared with the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the angel of the Lord is displayed as encamping about St. Peter, and delivering him, and also as smiting the persecutor, Herod Agrippa.—*Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.*

Verse 7.—"Round about." In illustration of this it may be observed, that according to D'Arvieux, it is the practice of the Arabs to pitch their tents in a circular form; the prince being in the middle, and the Arabs about him, but so as to leave a respectful distance between them. And Thevenot, describing a Turkish encampment near Cairo, having particularly noticed the spaciousness, decorations, and conveniences of the Bashaw's tent, or pavilion, adds, "Round the pale of his tent, within a pistol shot, were above two hundred tents, pitched in such a manner that the doors of them all looked towards the Bashaw's tent; and it ever is so, that they may have their eye always upon their master's lodging, and be in readiness to assist him if he be attacked."—*Richard Mant*.

Verse 8.—"O taste and see that the Lord is good." Our senses help our understandings; we cannot by the most rational discourse perceive what the sweetness of honey is; *taste* it and you shall perceive it. "His fruit was sweet to my *taste*." Dwell in the light of the Lord, and let thy soul be always ravished with his love. Get out the marrow and the fatness that thy portion yields thee. Let fools learn by beholding thy face how dim their blazes are to the brightness of thy day.—*Richard Alleine, in "Heaven Opened," 1665.*

Verse 8.—"O taste and see," etc. It is not enough for thee to see it afar off, and not have it, as Dives did; or to have it in thee, and not to taste it, as Samson's lion had great store of honey in him, but tasted no sweetness of it; but thou must as well have it as see it, and as well taste it as have it. "O taste and see," says he, "how sweet the Lord is;" for so indeed Christ giveth his church not only a *sight* but also "a *taste*" of his sweetness. A *sight* is where he saith thus: "We will rise up early, and go into the vineyard, and see whether the vine have budded forth the small grapes, and whether the pomegranates flourish;" there is a *sight* of the vine. A *taste* is where he says thus, "I will bring thee into the wine cellar, and cause thee to drink spiced wine, and new wine of the pomegranates;" there is a *taste* of the wine. The church not only goes into the vineyard and *sees* the wine, but also goes into the wine cellar, and *tastes* the wine.—*Thomas Playfere*.

Verse 8.—"Taste and see." There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of being adequately embodied in words. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination. There are things that must be loved before we can know them to be worthy of our love; things to be believed before we can understand them to be worthy of belief. And even after this—after we are conscious of a distinct apprehension of some spiritual truth, we can only, perhaps, answer, if required to explain it, in the words of the philosopher to whom the question was put, "What is God?" "I know, if I am not asked."—*Thomas Binney's "Sermons,"* 1869.

Verse 8.—"Taste and see." Be unwilling that all the good gifts of God should be swallowed without taste or maliciously forgotten, but use your palate, know them, and consider them.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—Heaven and earth are replete with the goodness of God. We omit to open our mouths and eyes, on which account the Psalmist desires us to "taste" and "see."—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 8.—The "taste and see" invite, as it were, to a sumptuous feast, which has long been ready; to a rich sight openly exposed to view. The imperatives are in reality not hortatory but persuasive.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8.—All that the believer can attain of spiritual consolation in this life is but a taste.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8:—

O taste the Lord, and see how sweet He is,
The man that trusts in him lives still in bliss.

Sir John Davies, 1569—1626.

Verses 8, 9, 10.—All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitability, completeness, and all-sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of his people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuosity of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. The young lions may, and will lack, because nothing will supply their voracious appetites but that which is carnal.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 10.—"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger." The old lions will have it for them, if it be to be had. "But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." As they would feel no evil thing within, so they shall want no good thing without. He that freely opens the upper, will never wholly close the nether springs. There shall be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack, while Joseph has it to throw in. Grace is not such a beggarly visitant, as will not pay its own way. When the best of beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed.—*William Secker.*

Verse 10.—People are apt to fancy that a wild beast's life must be happy—in a brute's sense—and that the carnivorous and graminivorous creatures which have never come under the dominion of mankind are better off than the domesticated quadrupeds which buy their quieter and safer lives at the price of ministering to the luxuries or necessities of their human lords. But the contrary is the case: the career of a flesh-eating animal must be wretched, even from the tiger's or leopard's point of view. They must often suffer pangs of long-continued hunger, and when they find and kill food they frequently have to wage desperate war for the enjoyment of their victim. The cry of almost every wild beast is so melancholy and forlorn, that it impresses the traveller with sadness more even than with fear. If the opportunity occurs for watching them in the chase, they are seen to sneak and sniff about, far less like "kings of the forest," than poor, dejected, starving wretches, desperate upon the subject of their next meal. They suffer horribly from diseases induced by foul diet and long abstinence; and very few are found without scars in their hide—the tokens of terrible combats. If they live to old age their lot is piteous: their teeth are worn down, their claws are blunt, and in this state numbers of them perish by starvation. Not one half of the wild animals die a natural death; and their life, so far as it can be observed, is a series of stern privations, with desperate and bloody fights among themselves.—*Clipping from "Daily Telegraph."*

Verse 10.—"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." There shall be no want to such, and such shall want no good thing : so that he must be such an one to whom the promise is made ; and he must also be sure that it is *good* for him which is promised. But oftentimes it is not good for a man to abound with earthly blessings ; as strong drink is not good for weak brains. Yea, if anything be wanting to a good man, he may be sure it is not good for him ; and then better that he doth want it, than that he did enjoy it ; and what wise man will complain of the want of that, which if he had, would prove more hurtful than gainful to him ? As a sword to a madman, a knife to a child, drink to them that have a fever or the dropsy. "No good thing will God withhold," etc, and therefore, not wants themselves, which to many are also good, yea, very good things, as I could reckon up many. Want sanctified is a notable means to bring to repentance, to work in us amendment of life, it stirs up prayer, it weans from the love of the world, it keeps us always prepared for the spiritual combat, discovers whether we be true believers or hypocrites, prevents greater evils of sin and punishment to come ; it makes us humble, conformable to Christ our Head, increaseth our faith, our joy, and thankfulness, our spiritual wisdom, and likewise our patience, as I have largely shown in another treatise.—*Richard Young, in the "Poor's Advocate,"* 1653.

Verse 10.—I remember as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell : the bloody soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had. "We will leave thee nothing," said they, "either to put in thee, or on thee." "I care not," said she, "I will not want as long as God is in the heavens." That was a believer indeed.—*Alexander Peden's Sermon,* 1682.

Verse 10.—Take a survey of heaven and earth and all things therein, and whatsoever upon sure ground appears good, ask it confidently of Christ ; his love will not deny it. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 10 (last clause).—Part of his last afternoon was spent by Columba in transcribing the Psalms of David. Having come to that passage in the thirty-fourth Psalm, where it is said, "*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,*" he said, "I have come to the end of a page, and I will stop here, for the following verse, "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord,*" will better suit my successor to transcribe than me. I will leave it, therefore, to Baithen." As usual, the bell was rung at midnight for prayers. Columba was the first to hasten to church. On entering it soon after, Dermid found him on his knees in prayer, but evidently dying. Raising him up in his arms, he supported his head on his bosom. The brethren now entered. When they saw Columba in this dying condition they wept aloud. Columba heard them. He opened his eyes and attempted to speak, but his voice failed. He lifted up his hands as if to bless them, immediately after which he breathed out his spirit. His countenance retained in death the expression it wore in life, so that it seemed as if he had only fallen asleep.—"*Story of Columba and his Successors,*" in the *Christian Treasury* for 1848.

Verse 11.—"Come, ye children." Venema in substance remarks that David in addressing his friends in the cave, called them his sons or children, because he was about to be their teacher, and they his disciples ; and again, because they were young men in the flower of their age, and as sons, would be the builders up of his house ; and still more, because as their leader to whose discipline and command they were subject, he had a right to address them as his children.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 11.—"Come ye children," etc. You know your earthly parents, ay, but labour to know your heavenly. You know the fathers of your flesh, ay, but strive to know the Father of your spirits. You are expert in may be in Horace's Odes, Virgil's Eclogues, Cicero's Orations ; oh ! but strive to get understanding in David's Psalms, Solomon's Proverbs, and the other plain books of Holy Writ. Manna was to be gathered in the morning. The orient pearl is generated of the morning dew ; *aurora musis amica*, the morning is a friend to the muses. O "*remember thy Creator,*" know him in the morning of thy childhood. When God had created the heavens and the earth, the first thing he did was to adorn the world with light, and separate it from the darkness. Happy is that child on whom the light of saving knowledge begins to dawn early. God, in the law, required the first-born, and the

first-fruits, so he doth still our first days, to be offered to him. They are wisdom's words, "They that seek me early shall find me." Prov. viii. 17. Where a rabbin observeth a ρ is added to the verb more than usual, which in numbering goeth for fifty. With this note, that early seeking hath not only twenty, or thirty, but fifty, nay, indeed, an hundred fold recompense attending on it.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 11.—"Come, ye children." David in this latter part of the Psalm undertakes to teach children; though a man of war and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him: though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—Observe I. What he expects from them, "*Hearken unto me,*" leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. II. What he undertakes to teach them, "*The fear of the Lord,*" inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to his children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—"I will teach you the fear of the Lord." I shall introduce the translation and paraphrase from my old Psalter; and the rather because I believe there is a reference to that very improper and unholy method of teaching youth the system of heathen mythology before they are taught one sound lesson of true divinity, till at last their minds are imbued with *heathenism*, and the vicious conduct of gods, goddesses, and heroes (here very properly called tyrants), becomes the model of their own; and they are as heathenish *without* as they are heathenish *within*.

Trans. "Cummes sones lere me: dred of Lord I sal you lere.

Par. "Cummes, with trauth and luf: sones, qwam I gette in haly lere: heres me. With eres of hert. I sal lere pou, nocht the fabyls of poetes; na the storys of tyrauntz; bot the dred of oure Larde, that wyl bring you til the felaghschippe of aungels; and thar in is lyfe." I need not paraphrase this paraphrase, as it is plain enough.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 11.—"The fear of the Lord." The Master of Sentences dwells, from this verse, on the four kinds of fear: *mundane*, servile, initial, filial. *Mundane*, when we fear to commit sin, simply lest we should lose some worldly advantage or incur some worldly inconvenience. *Servile*, when we fear to commit sin, simply because of hell torments due to it. *Initial*, when we fear to commit it lest we should lose the happiness of heaven. *Filial*, when we fear, only and entirely because we dread to offend that God whom we love with all our hearts. "*I will teach.*" Whence notice, that this fear is not a thing to be learnt all at once; it needs careful study and a good master. S. Chrysostom compares the Psalmist's school here with the resort of heathen students to the academy; and S. Ephraem, referring to this passage, calls the fear of God itself the school of the mind. "As if he proclaimed," says S. Lawrence Justiniani, "I will teach you, not the courses of the stars, not the nature of things, not the secrets of the heavens, but the fear of the Lord. The knowledge of such matters, without fear, puffs up; but the fear of the Lord, without any such knowledge, can save." "Here," says Cassiodorus, "is not fear to be feared, but to be loved. Human fear is full of bitterness; divine fear of sweetness: the one drives to slavery, the other allures to liberty; the one dreads the prison of Gehenna, the other opens the kingdom of heaven."—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 11.—"The fear of the Lord." Let this, therefore, good children, be your principal care and study; for what shall it avail you to be cunning in Tully, Virgil, Homer, and other profane writers, if you be unskilful in God's book? to have learned Greek and Latin, if you learn not withal the language of Canaan? to have your speech agreeable to the rules of Priscian, of Lily, if your lives and courses be not consonant to the rules and laws of Christianity? to have knowledge of the creatures when you are ignorant of the Creator? to have learned that whereby you may live a while here, and neglect that whereby you may live eternally hereafter? Learn to fear God, to serve God, and then God will bless you; for "He will bless them that fear him, both small and great." Ps. cxv. 13.—*Thomas Gataker's "David's Instructor,"* 1637.

Verse 12.—It is no great matter to live long, or always, but to live happily. That loyal prayer, “Let the king live” (in every language) imports a prosperous state. When the Psalmist saith, “Who is the man that would see life?” he explaineth himself presently after by “good days.” *Vivere* among the Latins is sometimes as much as *valere*, to live is as much as to be well; and upon this account it is that as, on the one hand, the Scripture calls the state of the damned an eternal death, because their life is only a continuance in misery; so on the other hand the state of the blessed is an eternal life, because it is a perpetual abode in felicity.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 12.—The benefit of life is not in the length, but in the use of it. He sometimes lives the least that lives the longest.—*Seneca.*

Verse 13.—“*Keep thy tongue from evil,*” etc. Ficinus, after his tracts, *De sanitate tuenda*, of keeping good health; and another, of recovering health; and a third, of prolonging life; because all will not do, wisely addeth a fourth, of laying hold on eternal life; which cannot be done but by mortifying this earthly member, a loose and lewd tongue. “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,” saith the Judge himself. Matt. xii. 37. Compare Gen. xlix. 21 with Deut. xxxiii. 23, and it will appear that good words ingratiate with God and man.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—“*And thy lips from speaking guile.*” Perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—“*Depart from evil,*” etc. This denotes that evil is near to men; it keeps close to them, and should be declined and shunned: and it regards all sorts of evil; evil men and their evil company; evil things, evil words and works, and all appearance of evil; and the fear of the Lord shows itself in a hatred of it, and a departure from it. Prov. viii. 13; xvi. 6.—*John Gill.*

Verse 14.—“*Depart from evil.*” The other precepts are the duty of works, and they are four, where the precepts of words were but two; because we must be more in works than in words; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative; for so working should be no better than idleness: the two former are general, as general as good and evil: that if we meet with anything that is evil, our part is to *depart*, for there is no demuring upon evil.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 14.—“*Do good.*” Negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they do bless themselves. See how the Pharisee vapours (Luke xviii. 11), “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers,” etc. Alas! the not being scandalous will no more make a Christian than a cypher will make a sum. We are bid, not only to *cease from evil*, but to *do good*. It will be a poor plea at last—Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin: I did no hurt. But what good is there in thee? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees, or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? Where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss of salvation.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 14.—“*Seek peace, and pursue it.*” Yea, do well, and thou shalt not need to pursue it; peace will find thee without seeking. Augustine says, *Fiat justitia, et habebis pacem*—Live righteously, and live peaceably. Quietness shall find out righteousness wheresoever he lodgeth. But she abhorreth the house of evil. Peace will not dine where grace hath not first broken her fast. Let us embrace godliness, and “the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall preserve our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.” Phil. iv. 7.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 14.—“*Seek peace and pursue it.*” The most desirable things are not the easiest to be obtained. What is more lovely to the imagination than the tranquillity of peace? But this great blessing does not voluntarily present itself: it must be *sought*. Even when sought it often eludes the grasp: it flies away, and must be *pursued*. 1. The man of a peaceable carriage must be cautious not to

give offence when needless, or, when it may innocently be spared. 2. Another part of the peaceable man's character is, not to take offence; especially in small matters, which are hardly worth a wise man's notice. 3. If any needless offence has been either given or taken, we must endeavour to put a stop to it as soon as may be. If a difference is already begun, stifle it in the birth, and suffer it not to proceed farther.—*Condensed from Dr. Waterland's Sermon, in J. R. Pitman's Course of Sermons on the Psalms, 1846.*

Verse 15.—“*His ears are open unto their cry.*” The word “open” is not in the original, but the meaning is that the ear of God is propense, and in a leaning kind of posture, towards the cries of the righteous: the word may here be taken emphatically, as many times in Scripture it is, for some worthy, choice, and excellent strain of righteousness. Those who are worthy and righteous indeed, the ear of God, I say, is propense, and leans and hangs towards them and their prayers, according to that of Cant. ii. 14, “Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice.” There is a kind of naturalness and pleasantness between the ear of God and the prayers and petitions, and cries of such a righteous man. John xv. 7.—*John Goodwin.*

Verse 15.—“*His ears are open unto their cry.*” Hebrew, “*Are to their cry,*” or as St. Peter hath it, “*His ears are into their prayers*” (1 Peter iii. 12); to show that though their prayers are so faint and feeble that they cannot enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, yet that he will bow down and incline his ears *unto*, nay, *into* their prayers, their breathings. Lam. iii. 56.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 15—17.—“*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*” Strangers may howl, and we take little notice what they ail—it is a venture whether we relieve them or no; but if our children cry, being in great distress, we hasten to their help. Our relation to God may well strengthen our hope that our desires shall be heard. He that can cry, *Abba*, Father, may be confident of the success of his suit, and that God will deal with him as a son.—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 18.—“*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.*” God is *nigh unto them* (with reverence be it spoken), God takes so much complacency in the company of such, that he cannot endure to have them far from him; he must have them always nigh to him, always under his eyes; as for these “*broken*” ones, he will be sure not to leave them long, nor to go far from them, but will be ready at hand to set their bones, to bind up their wounds to keep them from festering. It may be he may put them to much pain before he brings the cure to perfection, but it is to prevent future aches. He is a foolish cruel surgeon, who, for fear of putting his patient to some pain, never searcheth the wound, but skins it over presently; and a wise man will not think him unmerciful that puts him to exquisite pain, so he make a thorough cure of it. Thus God doth by his patients sometimes, when the nature of their distemper calls for it. But, however, he will be sure not to be out of the way when they want him most. It is possible they may look upon themselves as forgotten by God, they may not know their Physician when he is by them, and they may take their Friend for an enemy; they may think God far off when he is near; but when their eyes are opened and their distemper is pretty well worn off, they will, with shame and thankfulness, acknowledge their error; nay, they do from their souls confess, that they do not deserve the least look of kindness from God, but to be counted strangers and enemies; but God will let them know that he loves to act like himself, that is, like a God of love, mercy, and goodness; and that they are the persons that he hath set his heart upon; he will have them in his bosom, never leave them nor forsake them; and though these contrite ones many times look upon themselves as lost, yet God will save them, and they shall sing a song of thankfulness amongst his delivered ones.—*James Janeway.*

Verse 18.—“*The Lord is nigh unto them,*” etc. Consider the ADVANTAGES of this broken heart; as I. A broken heart is acceptable and well pleasing to God, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm li. 17. II. It makes up many defects in your service and duties, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” Psalm li. 17. III. It makes the soul a fit receptacle for God to dwell in, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isaiah lvii. 15. IV. It brings God near to men, “*The Lord is nigh unto*

them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm xxxiv. 18. And V. It lays you open to Christ's sweet healing, "I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezek. xxxiv. 16. And, oh, who would not be broken that they may find Christ's soft hand healing them, and find the proof of that sweet word, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Jer. xxx. 17. Yea, VI. It puts you in the right road to heaven, where all your wounds and bruises will be cured; for there is a tree (Rev. xxii. 2) the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations; there is no complaining there of wounds or bruises, but all are perfectly healed.—*John Spalding, in "Synaxis, Sac a, or a Collection of Sermons, etc., 1703.*

Verse 18.—"The Lord is nigh unto them," etc. We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us: God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay which is "broken" into the smallest parts. *George Horne.*

Verse 18.—"Broken heart contrite spirit." Oh, this is the misery of all miseries which ministers have most cause to complain of, that men are not fitted enough for Jesus Christ, they are not lost enough in themselves for a Saviour. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea xiv. 3. Were we more hopeless, helpless, and fatherless, we should find more mercy from the hand of Jesus Christ. O that God would awaken and shake some sin-sleeping soul this day! O that this doctrine thus opened might be as a thunderbolt to let some of you see the inside of yourselves! O poor sinner, thou hast an unsupportable burden of sin and guilt lying on thy soul, ready to press thee down to hell, and yet thou feelest it not; thou hast the wrath of God hanging over thy head by the twined thread of a short life, which it may be thou mayest not be free from one year, nay, perhaps not one month, but thou seest it not; it thou didst but see it, then thou wouldest cry out as he did in Bosworth field, "A horse! a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So thou wouldest cry out. None but Christ! nothing but Christ! ten thousand worlds for Christ! *James Nallon, 1661.*

Verse 18.—"A contrite spirit." *דַּכְּקֵי רוּחַ, dakkeey ruach,* "the beaten-out spirit." In both words the hammer is necessarily implied; in breaking to pieces the ore first, and then plating out the metal when it has been separated from the ore. This will call to the reader's remembrance Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The breaking to shivers, and beating out are metaphorical expressions: so are the hammer and the rock. What the large hammer struck on a rock by a powerful hand would do, so does the word of the Lord when struck on the sinner's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The broken heart, and the contrite spirit, are two essential characteristics of true repentance.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 19.—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," etc. Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure; yet God's mercies are more numerous, his wisdom more wondrous, his power more miraculous; he will deliver us out of all.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," etc. When David did behold his trouble, like the host of the Aramites (2 Kings vi. 16), he looked back unto God like Elisha, and spied one with him stronger than all against him. Therefore, respecting his afflictions he crieth, "Many are the troubles of the righteous;" respecting the promise he sayeth, "The Lord delivereth him out of all." Thus, by his own foot, David measurcth the condition of the righteous, and saith, "Many are the troubles of the righteous;" and then, by his own cure, he showeth how they should be healed by saying, "The Lord will deliver him out of them all." The lawyer can deliver his client but from strife, the physician can deliver his patient but from sickness, the master can deliver his servant but from bondage, but the Lord delivereth us from all. As when Moses came to deliver the Israelites, the would not leave a hoof behind him, so when the Lord cometh to deliver the righteous he will not leave a trouble behind him. He who saith, "I put away all thine iniquities," will also say, "I put away all thine infirmities."—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 20.—"He keepeth all his bones," which were very many. Perhaps (saith Abenezra here), David had been scourged by the Philistines, but his bones were not broken, nor were our Saviour's. John xix. 36.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 20.—"All his bones." Muis observes, "It says not his body, for this he

permits to be afflicted ; but it signifies that the evils of the godly are light, and scarcely penetrate to the bone ;" but Geier observes, " This is too subtle, rather the bone reminds us of the essential parts of the body, by whose injury the whole frame is endangered. It is a proverbial form of speech like that in Matt. x. 30, ' The very hairs of your head are all numbered,' expressing the remarkable defence afforded to the righteous." Genebrard, says, " The bones are put by synecdoche for all the members."—*From Poli Synopsis.*

Verse 20.—The passover lamb, of which not a bone was broken, prefigured Jesus as one, " not a bone of whose body should be broken ;" and yet, at the same time it prefigured the complete keeping and safety of Christ's body, the church ; as it is written, " *He keepeth all his bones ; not one of them is broken.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar's Commentary on Leviticus.*

Verse 20.—Christ's bones were in themselves breakable, but could not actually be broken by all the violence in the world, because God had fore-decreed, *a bone of him shall not be broken.* So we confess God's children mortal ; but all the power of devil or man may not, must not, cannot, kill them before their conversion, according to God's election of them to life, which must be fully accomplished.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 20.—Observe as a point of resemblance between this and the following Psalm, the mention of the bones here and in Psalm xxxv. 10.—*C. Wordsworth.*

Verse 21.—" *Evil.*" Afflictions though in the plural, prove not ruinous to the righteous, for the Lord delivers him out of them all, whereas *evil* in the singular slays the wicked, to signify the difference of God's economy towards righteous and wicked men. The former is permitted to fall into many pressures, the latter is not so frequently exercised with them, yet the many that befall the one do no hurt, but work good for him, whereas the fewer that befall the wicked, or perhaps the *one singular affliction* of his life is the utter ruin of him.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 21 :—

Conscience' self the culprit tortures, gnawing him with pangs unknown ;
For that now amendment's season is for ever past and gone,
And that late repentance findeth pardon none for all her moan.

S. Peter Damiano, 988—1072.

Verse 21.—" *Shall be desolate.*" In the margin it is, *shall be guilty.* And this is the proper meaning of the original word, חַיִּי. They are guilty, and liable to punishment. Thus the word is frequently rendered in our version (see Levit. iv. 13, 22) ; and generally includes in it the idea of guilt, and the punishment incurred by it.—*Samuel Chandler. D.D.*

Verse 22.—The promises of God to his church, and his threatenings of sin superannuate them, or put them out of full force and virtue. What if good persons and good causes do suffer oppression ? The poet is a divine in that case—

*Informes hiemes reducit
Jupiter ; idem
Summovet. Non si male nunc, et olim
Sic erit.*

After foul weather comes fair ; though it be ill with us now, it will not be always. What if enemies of religion and moths of commonwealth do flourish and prosper, and have all things at will, let it not trouble David and Job ; both of them saw as fair a sunshine shut up in a dark cloud, and a world of foul weather following.—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 22.—Satan cannot tempt longer than God shall give him leave ; and he will never suffer thee to be tempted above measure, but will give a good issue unto the temptation. Thou art called to fight under the banner of Christ Jesus, and in the name of the Lord thou shalt be enabled to do valiantly and overcome. If Satan continue his assaults, " God's grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9. If thy strength be clean gone, God's power shall be magnified the more in thee, and he hath brought thee low that thou mayest not trust in thyself, but in the living Lord, and that the whole praise of the victory might be ascribed unto him. If thy strength did remain, it was not to be leaned unto ; and now it is decayed and gone, there is no cause of fear for the Lord will be thy stay. In the most difficult assaults

and tedious encounters, we are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Be of good courage, and God will grant thee an easy, a joyful victory. Satan's drift in tempting is to turmoil, dishearten, and perplex with fears, and drive into despair; and if thou take heart to rest quietly upon God's grace, and fly unto his name, thou shalt put him to flight, thou hast already got the day. Wait but awhile, and these dark mists and terrible storms shall be dispersed. By these temptations the Lord hath taught thee to see thy weakness, and the malice of Satan; to deny thine own wisdom and prize his favour, lightly to esteem all things here below, and highly to value mercy reaching to the pardon of sin, and heavenly communion, and fellowship with God. And if this bitter potion hath wrought so kindly for thy spiritual good, why shouldst thou be dismayed? Trust in the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thee. "*The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*"—*John Ball.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Firm resolution, serious difficulties in carrying it out, helps for its performance, excellent consequences of so doing.

Six questions.—*Who?* "I." *What?* "Will bless." *Whom?* "The Lord." *When?* "At all times." *How?* *Why?*

Verse 1.—Direction for making a heaven below.

Verse 2.—The commendable boaster and his gratified audience.

We may boast of the Lord, in himself, his manifestations of himself, his relationship to us, our interest in him, our expectations from him, etc.

The duty of believers to relate their experience for the benefit of others.

Verse 3.—Invitation to united praise.

Verse 3.—*Magnifying*—or making great the work of God, a noble exercise.

Verse 4.—*Confessions of a ransomed soul.* Simple, honouring to God, exclude merit, and encourage others to seek also.

Verse 4.—*Four stages,* "fears," "sought," "heard," "delivered."

Verse 5.—The power of a faith-look.

Verse 6.—I. The poor man's heritage, "troubles." II. The poor man's friend.

III. The poor man's cry. IV. The poor man's salvation.

Verse 6.—The poor man's wealth.

The position of prayer in the economy of grace, or the natural history of mercy in the soul.

Verse 7.—*Castra angelorum, salvatio bonorum.*

Verse 7.—The ministry of angels.

In what sense Jesus is "The angel of the Lord."

Verse 8.—Experience the only true test of religious truth.

Verse 8.—*Taste.* The sanctified palate, the *recherché* provision, the gratified verdict, the celestial host.

Verse 9.—The blest estate of a God-fearing man.

Verse 9.—Fear expelling fear. *Similia similibus curantur.*

Verse 10.—Lions lacking, but the children satisfied. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 65. I. Description of a true Christian, "seek the Lord." II. The promise set forth by a contrast. III. The promise fulfilled.

Verse 10.—What is a good thing?

Verse 11.—A royal teacher, his youthful disciples, his mode of instruction, "Come;" his choice subject.

Verse 11.—Sunday-school work.

Verses 12, 13, 14.—How to make the best of both worlds.

Verse 13.—Sins of the tongue—their mischief, their cause, and their cure.

Verse 14 (first clause).—The relation between the negative and positive virtues.

Verse 14 (second clause).—*The royal hunt.* The game, the difficulties of the chase, the hunters, their methods, and their rewards.

Verse 15.—Our observant God. Eyes and ears both set on us.

Verse 16.—The evil man checkmated in life, and forgotten in death.

Verse 17.—*Afflictions and their threefold blessing.* I. They make us pray.

II. They bring us the Lord's hearing ear. III. They afford room for joyful experience of deliverance.

Verse 18.—The nearness of God to broken hearts, and the certainty of their salvation.

Verse 19.—Black and white, or bane and antidote.

Special people, special trials, special deliverances, special faith as a duty.

Verse 20.—The real safety of a believer when in great perils. His soul, his spiritual life, his faith, hope, love, etc. ; his interest in Jesus, his adoption, justification, these all kept.

Verse 21.—Wickedness, its own executioner, illustrated by scriptural cases, by history, by the lost in hell. Lessons from the solemn fact.

The forlorn condition of a man of malicious spirit.

Verses 21, 22.—Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

Verse 22.—*Redemption* in its various meanings ; *faith* in its universal preservation ; *the Lord* in his unrivalled glory in the work of grace.

