

PSALM XXXVI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*He who had the leadership of the Temple services was charged with the use of this song in public worship. What is everybody's business is never done. It was well to have one person specially to attend to the service of song in the house of the Lord. Of David the servant of the Lord. This would seem to indicate that the Psalm peculiarly befits one who esteems it an honour to be called Jehovah's servant. It is THE SONG OF HAPPY SERVICE; such a one as all may join in who bear the easy yoke of Jesus. The wicked are contrasted with the righteous, and the great Lord of devout men is heartily extolled; thus obedience to so good a Master is indirectly insisted on, and rebellion against him is plainly condemned.*

DIVISIONS.—From 1 to 4 David describes the rebellious; in 5 to 9 he extols the various attributes of the Lord; in 10 and 11 he addresses the Lord in prayer, and in the last verse his faith sees in vision the overthrow of all the workers of iniquity.

EXPOSITION.

THE transgressions of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is no* fear of God before his eyes.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.

4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that* is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

1. "*The transgression of the wicked.*" His daring and wanton sin; his breaking the bounds of law and justice. "*Saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*" Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.

2. "*For.*" Here is the argument to prove the proposition laid down in the former verse. David here runs over the process of reasoning by which he had become convinced that wicked men have no proper idea of God or respect for him. God-fearing men see their sins and bewail them, where the reverse is the case we may be sure there is no fear of God. "*He flattereth himself in his own eyes.*" He counts himself a fine fellow, worthy of great respect. He quiets his conscience, and so deceives his own judgment as to reckon himself a pattern of excellence; if not for morality, yet for having sense enough not to be enslaved by rules which are bonds to others. He is the free-thinker, the man of strong mind, the hater of cant, the philosopher; and the servants of God are, in his esteem, mean-spirited and narrow-minded. Of all flatteries this is the most absurd and dangerous. Even the silliest bird will not set traps for itself; the most pettifogging attorney will not cheat himself. To smoothe over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own path to hell. The descent to eternal ruin is easy enough, without making a glissade of it, as self-flatterers do. "*Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.*" At length he is found out and detested, despite his self-conceit. Rottenness smells sooner or later too strong to be concealed. There is a time when the leprosy cannot be hidden. At last the old house can no

longer be propped up, and falls about the tenant's ears : so there is a limit to a man's self-gratulation ; he is found out amid general scorn, and can no longer keep up the farce which he played so well. If this happen not in this life, the hand of death will let light in upon the covered character, and expose the sinner to shame and contempt.

The self-flattering process plainly proves the atheism of sinners, since the bare reflection that God sees them would render such self-flatteries extremely difficult, if not impossible. Belief in God, like light reveals, and then our sin and evil are perceived ; but wicked men are in the dark, for they cannot see what is so clearly within them and around them that it stares them in the face.

3. "*The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit.*" This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will ; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery. When the heart is so corrupt as to flatter itself, the tongue follows suit. The open sepulchre of the throat reveals the foulness of the inner nature. God-fearing men make a conscience of their words, and if they sin through infirmity they do not invent excuses, or go about to boast of their wickedness ; but because wicked men think little of evil and artful speeches, we may be clear that God rules not in their souls. The original by declaring that the words of the wicked are falsehood and deceit is peculiarly strong ; as if they were not only false in quality, but actual falseness itself. "*He hath left off to be wise, and to do good.*" From the good way he has altogether gone aside. Men who fear God proceed from strength to strength in the right path, but godless men soon forsake what little good they once knew. How could men apostatise if they had respect unto the supreme Judge ? Is it not because they grow more and more forgetful of God, that in due season they relinquish even that hypocritical reverence of him which in former days they maintained in order to flatter their souls ?

4. "*He deviseth mischief upon his bed.*" His place of rest becomes the place for plotting. His bed is a hot-bed for poisonous weeds. God-fearing men meditate upon God and his service ; but when men turn all their thoughts and inventive faculties towards evil, their godlessness is proved to a demonstration. He hath the devil for his bed-fellow who lies abed and schemes how to sin. God is far from him. "*He setteth himself in a way that is not good.*" When he gets up he resolutely and persistently pursues the mischief which he planned. The worst of ways he prefers for his walking, for he has taught his heart to love filthiness, having accustomed himself to revel in it in imagination. "*He abhorreth not evil.*" So far from having a contempt and abhorrence for evil, he even rejoices in it, and patronises it. He never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practises it.

What a portrait of a graceless man these few verses afford us ! His jauntiness of conscience, his licentiousness of speech, his intentness upon wrong-doing, his deliberate and continued preference of iniquity, and withal his atheistical heart, are all photographed to the life. Lord, save us from being such.

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens ; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains ; thy judgments *are* a great deep : O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

7 How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God ! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house ; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life : in thy light shall we see light.

From the baseness of the wicked the Psalmist turns his contemplation to the glory of God. Contrasts are impressive.

5. "*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.*" Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression. Clear sky is evermore above, and mercy calmly smiles above the din and smoke of this poor world. Darkness and clouds are but of earth's lower atmosphere : the heavens are evermore serene,

and bright with innumerable stars. Divine mercy abides in its vastness of expanse, and matchless patience, all unaltered by the rebellions of man. When we can measure the heavens, then shall we bound the mercy of the Lord. Towards his own servants especially, in the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he has displayed grace higher than the heaven of heavens, and wider than the universe. O that the atheist could but see this, how earnestly would he long to become a servant of Jehovah! "*Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.*" Far, far above all comprehension is the truth and faithfulness of God. He never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits his word. Afflictions are like clouds, but the divine truthfulness is all around them. While we are under the cloud we are in the region of God's faithfulness; when we mount above it we shall not need such an assurance. To every word of threat, or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.

6. "*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.*" Firm and unmoved, lofty and sublime. As winds and hurricanes shake not an Alp, so the righteousness of God is never in any degree affected by circumstances; he is always just. Who can bribe the Judge of all the earth, or who can, by threatening, compel him to pervert judgment? Not even to save his elect would the Lord suffer his righteousness to be set aside. No awe inspired by mountain scenery can equal that which fills the soul when it beholds the Son of God slain as a victim to vindicate the justice of the inflexible Lawgiver. Right across the path of every unholy man who dreams of heaven stand the towering Andes of divine righteousness, which no unregenerate sinner can ever climb. Among great mountains lie slumbering avalanches, and there the young lightnings try their callow wings until the storm rushes down again from the awful peaks; so against the great day of the Lord's wrath the Lord has laid up in the mountains of his righteousness dreadful ammunition of war with which to overwhelm his adversaries. "*Thy judgments are a great deep.*" God's dealings with men are not to be fathomed by every boaster who demands to see a why for every wherefore. The Lord is not to be questioned by us as to why this and why that. He has reasons, but he does not choose to submit them to our foolish consideration. Far and wide, terrible and irresistible like the ocean are the providential dispensations of God: at one time they appear as peaceful as the unrippled sea of glass; at another tossed with tempest and whirlwind, but evermore most glorious and full of mystery. Who shall discover the springs of the sea? He who shall do this may hope to comprehend the providence of the Eternal.

"Undiscovered sea!

Into thy dark, unknown, mysterious caves,
And secret haunts unfathomably deep,
Beneath all visible retired, none went
And came again to tell the wonders there."

Yet as the deep mirrors the sky, so the mercy of the Lord is to be seen reflected in all the arrangements of his government on earth, and over the profound depth the covenant rainbow casts its arch of comfort, for the Lord is faithful in all that he doeth.

"O Lord, thou preservest man and beast." All the myriads of creatures, rational and irrational, are fed by Jehovah's hand. The countless beasts, the innumerable birds, the inconceivable abundance of fishes, the all but infinite armies of insects, all owe their continuance in life to the unceasing outgoings of the divine power. What a view of God this presents to us! What a debased creature must he be who sees no trace of such a God, and feels no awe of him!

7. "*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.*" Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated *excellent* may be rendered "precious;" no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. Kings' regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercy of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes *how excellent!* because he cannot tell us the half of it. "*Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*" The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure

is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.

8. "*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.*" Those who learn to put their trust in God shall be received into his house, and shall share in the provision laid up therein. The dwelling-place of the Lord is not confined to any place, and hence reside where we may, we may regard our dwelling, if we be believers, as one room in the Lord's great house; and we shall, both in providence and grace, find a soul-contenting store supplied to us as the result of living by faith in nearness to the Lord. If we regard the assembly of the saints as being peculiarly the house of God, believers shall, indeed, find in sacred worship the richest spiritual food. Happy is the soul that can drink in the sumptuous dainties of the gospel—nothing can so completely fill the soul. "*And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*" As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God's everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfil these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the antepast even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. "That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full."

9. "*For with thee is the fountain of life.*" This verse is made of simple words, but like the first chapter of John's Gospel, it is very deep. From the Lord, as from an independent self-sufficient spring, all creature life proceeds, by him it is sustained, through him alone can it be perfected. Life is in the creature, but the fountain of it is only in the Creator. Of spiritual life, this is true in the most emphatic sense; "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," "and we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." "*In thy light shall we see light.*" Light is the glory of life. Life in the dark is misery, and rather death than life. The Lord alone can give natural, intellectual, and spiritual life; he alone can make life bright and lustrous. In spiritual things the knowledge of God sheds a light on all other subjects. We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same lustre. We never see Jesus by the light of self, but self in the light of Jesus. No inward intelligence of ours leads us to receive the Spirit's light, but the rather, it often helps to quench the sacred beam; purely and only by his own illumination, the Holy Ghost lights up the dark recesses of our heart's ungodliness. Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendour of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy. Faith derives both light and life from God, and hence she neither dies nor darkens.

10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

10. "*O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee.*" We ask no more than a continuance of the past mercy. Lord, extend this grace of thine to all the days of all who have been taught to know thy faithful love, thy tenderness, thine immutability and omnipotence. As they have been taught of the Lord to know the Lord, so go on to instruct them and perfect them. This prayer is the heart of the believer asking precisely that which the heart of his God is prepared to grant. It is well when the petition is but the reflection of the promise. "*And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.*" As thou hast never failed the righteous, so abide thou in the same manner their defender and avenger. The worst thing to be feared by the man of God is to be forsaken of heaven, hence this prayer; but the fear is groundless, hence the peace which faith brings to us. Learn from

this verse, that although a continuance of mercy is guaranteed in the covenant, we are yet to make it a matter of prayer. For this good thing will the Lord be enquired of.

11. "*Let not the foot of pride come against me.*" The general prayer is here turned into a particular and personal one for himself. Pride is the devil's sin. Good men may well be afraid of proud men, for the serpent's seed will never cease to bite the heel of the godly. Faith would proud scoffers spurn the saints or trample them under foot: against their malice prayer lifts up her voice. No foot shall come upon us, no hand shall prevail against us, while Jehovah is on our side. "*Let not the hand of the wicked remove me.*" Suffer me not to be driven about as a fugitive, nor torn from my place like an uprooted tree. Violence with both hand and foot, with means fair and means foul, strove to overthrow the Psalmist, but he resorts to his great Patron, and sings a song of triumph in anticipation of the defeat of his foes.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

12. "*There are the workers of iniquity fallen.*" Faith sees them scattered on the plain. There! before our very eyes sin, death, and hell, lie prostrate. Behold the vanquished foes! "*They are cast down.*" Providence and grace have dashed them from their vantage ground. Jesus has already thrown all the foes of his people upon their faces, and in due time all sinners shall find it so. "*And shall not be able to rise.*" The defeat of the ungodly and of the powers of evil is final, total, irretrievable. Glory be to God, however high the powers of darkness may carry it at this present, the time hastens on when God shall defend the right, and give to evil such a fall as shall for ever crush the hopes of hell; while those who trust in the Lord shall eternally praise him and rejoice in his holy name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"To the Chief Musician," has given rise to many conjectures. In the Septuagint the Hebrew word is translated, *eis τὸ τέλος*, to the end; a meaning so utterly vague as to defy all reasonable conjecture. . . . The meaning of the term appears to be this: the Psalms in which it occurs were given in charge by their inspired authors to the Chief Musician overseeing some specific band of music, whether harps, psalteries, or wind instruments.—*John Jebb, A.M., in "A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms," 1846.*

Title.—"The servant of the Lord." David only uses this title here and in Psalm eighteen. In both he describes the dealings of God both with the righteous and the wicked, and it is most fit that at the very outset he should take his place with the servants of the Lord.—*C. H. S.*

Whole Psalm.—*First part.*—A character of a wicked man (verse 1). 1. He calls evil good (verse 2). 2. He continues in it. 3. He is an hypocrite (verse 3). 4. He is obstinate. 5. He is studious in wickedness (verse 4). *Second part.*—God's patience and mercy (verses 5, 6). 1. To all, even all creatures. 2. But particularly to his people, which he admires. Upon which the faithful (1) trust, (2) are satisfied (verses 7, 8). *The Third part.*—He prays that this effect may light, 1. On God's people (verse 10). 2. On himself (verse 11). 3. His acclamation upon it (verse 12). —*William Nicholson (Bishop), 1662.*

Verse 1.—In this Psalm we have a description of sin, especially as it appears in those who have openly broken God's bands. The introduction is very striking; "*The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*" How could the "*transgression of the wicked*" speak within the heart of him who in the inscription of the Psalm declares himself to be the servant of JEHOVAH? These words are generally understood as signifying that the outward conduct of the sinner, as often as he thought of it, naturally suggested this conclusion

to his mind, that he was destitute of all fear of God. But they may perhaps admit of another meaning, equally agreeable to the literal reading; *wickedness, saith of the wicked, within my heart*, etc. According to this view, the Psalmist meant that notwithstanding the external pretences of the wicked, and all their attempts to cover their iniquity, he was certain that they had no real sense of the presence of God, that they secretly renounced his authority. How was he assured of this? By a comparison of their conduct with the dictates of the heart. He could not indeed look into their hearts, but he could look into his own, and *there* he found corruption, so strong, that were it not for the fear of God that was implanted within him, he would be as bad as they.—*John Jamieson*.

Verse 1.—It is not the imperfection or shortcoming in the fear of God, but the being destitute of it altogether, that proveth a wicked man: “*There is no fear of God before his eyes.*”—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1 (last clause).—“*Not having the fear of God before his eyes,*” has become inwoven into proceedings in criminal courts. When a man has no fear of God, he is prepared for any crime.

Total depravity is not too strong a term to describe human wickedness. The sinner has “*no fear of God.*” Where that is wanting, how can there be any piety? And if there is no piety, there must be total want of right affections, and that is the very essence of depravity.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 1.—Durst any mock God with flourishes and formalities in religion, if they feared him? Durst any provoke God to his face by real and open wickednesses, if they feared him? Durst any sin with the judgments of God fresh bleeding before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his wrath? Durst they sin with heaps of precious mercy before their eyes, if they feared the Lord and his goodness? Durst any flatter either others or themselves with hopes of impunity in their sin, if they feared the Lord and his truth? Durst any slight their own promises, professions, protestations, oaths, or design the entangling of others by them, rather than the binding of themselves, did they fear the Lord and his faithfulness, even the Lord who keepeth covenant and promise for ever? All these and many more transgressions of the wicked (all these ways of transgression are found among the wicked, it were well if none of them were found among those who have a name of godliness; I say, all these transgressions of the wicked) say, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 1.—The *wicked* man has no regard to the oracles of God: he has one in his own heart, which dictates nothing but rebellion.—*Zachary Mudge*.

Verse 2.—“*For he flattereth himself in his own eyes.*” The matter which this self-flattery especially concerns is sin, as appears from the following clause. He deceives himself as to its nature and consequences, its evil and aggravations, and he continues to do so “*until his iniquity be found to be hateful;*” till it be fully discovered, and appear in its magnitude and atrocious circumstances both to himself and others, by some awful divine judgment, such as that mentioned in the last verse of the Psalm: “*There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.*” He adduces this self-deceit and continuance in it, as illustrating the truth of that judgment he had formed of the state of such a person: “*There is no fear of God before his eyes: for he flattereth himself in his own eyes.*” And surely the proof is incontrovertible. For a man under the bondage of sin would never *flatter himself in his own eyes*, were it not that God is not before them. The reason why he thinks so well of himself is, that *God is not in all his thoughts*. He hath cast off all fear about himself because he hath no fear of God.—*John Jamieson*.

Verse 2.—“*He flattereth himself.*” 1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as *another world*. 2. Some flatter themselves that *death* is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation. 3. Some flatter themselves that they lead *moral* and orderly lives and therefore think that they shall not be damned. 4. Some make the *advantages* under which they live an occasion of self-flattery. They flatter themselves that they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. 5. Some flatter themselves with their own *intentions*. They intend to give themselves liberty for a while longer, and *then* to reform. 6. There are some who flatter themselves that they *do*, and

have done, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain it; when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do even in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. 7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of *themselves*. They have a secret imagination that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. 8. Some sinners flatter themselves that they are *already* converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. iii. 17.—*Condensed from Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 2.—"In his own eyes." He had not God before his eyes in holy awe, therefore he puts himself there in unholy admiration. He who makes little of God makes much of himself. They who forget adoration fall into adulation. The eyes must see something, and if they admire not God they will flatter self.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 2.—"Until his iniquity be found to be hateful;" that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 2.—"Hateful." Odious to himself, to others, and to God.—*Gilbert Genebrard. 1537—1597.*

Verse 3.—"He hath left off." That little light he once had, he hath lost, and cast off such good practices as once in hypocrisy he performed; neither will he learn to do better.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3 (last clause).—Apostacy from God is really an undoing of all the good which we have done. 'Tis a wicked repentance quite contrary to the grace of repentance; as that is a repentance from dead works, so this is a repentance from works of a better sort: "He hath left off to be wise, and to do good." 'Tis a perversion to evil after a seeming conversion from it.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verses 3, 4:—

Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock
 Number the midnight watches, on his bed
 Devising mischief more; and early rose.
 And made most hellish meals of good men's names.
 From door to door you might have seen him speed,
 Or placed amid a group of gaping fools.
 Peace fled the neighbourhood in which he made
 His haunts; and, like a moral pestilence,
 Before his breath the healthy shoots and blooms
 Of social joy and happiness decayed.
 Fools only in his company were seen,
 And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
 Given up. The prudent shunned him and his house
 As one who had a deadly moral plague.

Robert Pollock, 1799—1827.

Verse 4.—"He deviseth mischief upon his bed." As the man that feareth God communeth with his heart upon his bed, that he may not sin, no, not in his heart; so the man that feareth not God, deviseth how he may plot and perform sin willingly.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"Upon his bed." Most diligently does Ayguan follow up the scriptural expressions concerning a bed and tell us that there are six different beds of wickedness—that of luxury, that of avarice, of ambition, of greediness, of torpor, and of cruelty, and he illustrates them all by examples from Scripture.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 4.—"He setteth himself in a way that is not good." To wait to sin is to sin deliberately, yea, to wait to sin resolvedly. That sin is exceedingly sinfully committed which we set and prepare ourselves to commit. David, describing a wicked man, saith, "He setteth himself in a way that is not good;" that is, in an evil way: he doth not only fall into sin (that may be the case of a good man), but he takes or chooseth an evil way, and then sets or settles himself in it, resolving

not to leave it, no, nor to be beaten out of it. Sin may be said to wait for a godly man, that is, Satan waits and watches his season to tempt him unto sin; but a godly man doth not wait nor watch to sin. It is bad enough to be overtaken with sin, or with a fault (as the apostle speaks, Gal. vi. 1); but to be taken with sin, and so to wait for a season to take our fill of it, is as bad as bad can be.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—"He setteth himself in a way that is not good." Proud sinners have strongest conceit that they go right, at least in the way of their choice. Satan blindeth them so, that they mistake both the end and the way: in their count they are running to heaven, when they are posting to hell: he serveth them kindly with fresh post-horses. Sometimes he mounteth them on drunkenness, and when they have run a stage on that beastliness, he can mount them on lechery. Again, he can refresh them with avarice; and if they be weary of that slow jade, he setteth them on lofty ambition, and to make them more spirity he can horse them on restless contention. Every one seeth not Satan's enquiry: there is no complexion or disposition, but he hath a fit horse for it, and that of itself. Every man's predominant is a beast of Satan's saddling and providing to carry men to hell. The way is one, the post-master is one, he is to be found at every stage, mounting his gallants, their horses are all of one kind though not of one colour. Happy is the man whom God dismounteth in that evil way, and more happy is he who taketh with that stay, and turneth his course to heaven.—*William Struther.*

Verse 4.—"He abhorreth not," i.e., is far enough from rejecting any instrument, however sinful, for attaining his purposes.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens." David considering the thoughts and deeds of impious men, and the mercy of God towards them, utters this exclamation. When men sin so impudently, who does not admire the divine longsuffering!—*Sebastian Munster, 1489—1552.*

Verses 5—7.—This Psalm doth fitly set forth unto us the estate and condition of these times, wherein wickedness increaseth: and so in the former part of the Psalm is a discovery of wickedness, verse 3. And what should we do when there is such wickedness in the earth? In the fifth verse, "*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.*" God is gathering up all goodness, mercy, and peace from man to himself; and though there is cruelty, mischief, and wickedness in the world, in the earth, yet there is mercy, truth, and faithfulness in the clouds; and it's good that wisdom, goodness, truth, and righteousness leave the world, and cleave to God, that so we may follow it; and that what goodness, mercy, truth, and faithfulness we formerly enjoyed in man, we may enjoy in God. And when wickedness increaseth, righteousness increaseth likewise: "*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains:*" when the world tears and breaks itself in pieces, then is the righteousness of God a great mountain. "*Thy judgments are a great deep;*" when the whole world is become one sea of confusion, then are the judgments of the Lord a great deep, where not only man, but beasts may rest safely. "*Thou preservest man and beast.*" And though this time is a time of growing and spreading wickedness in man, yet it is a time of sweetest admiration and love in God; and when men that sin do cry out, O woful man! they that enjoy God, cry out, O happy man! And though men that live in the earth cry out, O miserable! what times are here? men that live in heaven cry out, "*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!*" The Lord makes all things naked and bare, that we only may have him to be our safety.—*William Sedgwick (1609—1668), in "The Excellency of the love of God," a sermon in a vol., entitled "Some flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man," 1648.*

Verses 5—9:—

Thy mercie Lord doth to the HEAVENS extend,
Thy faithfullnes doth to the CLOUDES assend;
Thy justice stedfast as a MOUNTAINE is,
Thy JUDGEMENTS deepe as is the great Abisse;
Thy noble mercies saue all lueinge thinges,
The sonnes of men creepe underneath thy winges:
With thy great plenty they are fedd at will,
And of thy pleasure's streame they drinke their fill;
For euen the well of life remains with thee,
And in thy glorious light wee light shall see.

Sir John Davies.

Verse 6.—“*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.*” Lit. *mountains of God*, which men have not planted, and which men cannot move.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6.—“*Thy judgments are a great deep.*” Men’s sins are a great deep, and Satan’s ways are called a depth; but God’s judgments, his ways in the wheels, are the greatest deep of all, they are unsearchable.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 7.—“*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!*” etc. The expressions here which denote the abundance of divine blessings upon the righteous man seem to be taken from the temple, from whence they were to issue. Under the covert of the temple, the wings of the cherubim, they were to be sheltered. The richness of the sacrifices, the streams of oil, wine, odours, etc., and the light of the golden candlestick, are all plainly referred to.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 7.—“*Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*” The word signifies to fly, to betake one’s self to a place of safety: as the chickens in danger to be seized on, fly under the wings of the hen. “Under whose wings thou art come to trust.” Ruth ii. 12. The helpless bird pursued by the kite, in danger to be devoured, runs under the shadow of the dam. Thus it is with a sinner at the first working of faith, he apprehends himself pursued by wrath and judgment; he knows if they seize on him he must perish without remedy. Oh, the sad condition of such a soul! Oh, but he sees Christ spreading his wings ready to secure perishing sinners; he hears him inviting in the gospel to come under his shadow! Oh, how sweet is that voice to him (however, while senseless he rejected it)! He hears, obeys, and runs to Christ for shelter, and so he is safe. “*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*”—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 7.—“*Thy wings*” A common figure in the Psalms, taken more immediately, in my opinion, from the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat which covered the ark; but more remotely from birds, which defend their young from the solar rays by overshadowing them with their wings—*Francis Hare (Bishop), 1740.*

Verse 7 :—

In lonesome cell, guarded and strong I lie,
Bound by Christ’s love, his truth to testify,
Though walls be thick, the door no hand unclose,
God is my strength, my solace, and repose.

In a letter of *Jeroninus Segerson*, written in the prison at Antwerp to his wife, named *Lysken*, who likewise lay a prisoner there, 1551.

Verse 8.—“*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*” Mark, first, the excellency of the provision, “*fatness of thy house,*” the “*river of thy pleasures.*” The fattest is esteemed the fairest and the most excellent food; therefore the saint was enjoined to offer the fat in sacrifice under the law. As God expects the best from us, so he gives the best to us. This made David, when he had feasted so curiously, to sing so cheerfully. Fatness here is the top, the cream of all spiritual delicacies. “My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” Psalm lxxiii. 5. But, though God keeps so noble a house to satisfy his people’s hunger, what special care doth he take to quench their thirst! “*Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.*” Oh, he drinks to them, and they pledge him in his own cup! Hath the child, then, any cause, when his Father keeps so rare and costly a table, to leave such dainties and go a-begging up and down the country for scraps and fragments? Oh, how much do these disgrace their Parent’s provision, and their own discretion! But mark, reader, secondly, the plenty as well as the excellency of this provision. Here is fatness in the abstract, a “*river of pleasure;*” and so much as that they who enjoy it shall be *satisfied*, and *abundantly* satisfied. A river is overflowing and ever flowing; it communicates its water and yet is never empty. It is fed with springs and fountains, and therefore it is no wonder if it always be full. They that are at such a well need not complain of want; but here are not only rivers and fatness, but of God’s people it is said, “*they shall be abundantly satisfied.*” In the original it is *inebriated*. They shall have not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of spiritual delights. The vessels of their souls shall be filled to the brim out of that river whose streams make

glad the city of God. Surely, then, they who may have bread in such abundance, enough and to spare, in their Father's house, made of the kidneys of the wheat, of the finest flour, need not hanker after the world's homely fare. Our heavenly Father doth not keep so starveling a house that the world's scraps should go down with us.—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 8.—"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." I once heard a father tell, that when he removed his family to a new residence where the accommodation was much more ample, the substance much more rich and varied than that to which they had previously been accustomed, his youngest son, yet a lisping infant, ran round every room and scanned every article with ecstasy, calling out in childish wonder at every new sight, "Is this ours, father? and is this ours?" The child did not say "yours;" and I observed that the father while he told the story was not offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistening eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had, was an important element in his satisfaction.

Such, I suppose, will be the surprise, and joy, and appropriating confidence with which the child of our Father's family will count all his own when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite of things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance like a stranger saying, O God, these are thine. He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which those blessed mansions contain, exclaiming as he looks in the Father's face, Father, this and this is ours! The dear child is glad of all the Father's riches, and the Father is gladder of his dear child.—*William Arnot.*

Verse 8.—"The fatness of thy house." If there is an allusion to the temple, as Hupfield thinks, "*fatness*" would = "fat sacrifices," and men would be regarded as the priests in the house, after the analogy of Jer. xxxi. 14.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"The fatness of thy house." Fat was regarded among the Jews, as among all other nations of antiquity, as the richest part of animals, and therefore became synonymous with *the first, the best, the prime of anything.*—*Christian D. Ginsburg, LL.D., in Kitto's Cyclopaedia.*

Verse 8.—"Of thy house." This is emphatic, and means that which thou hast prepared for thine own household, thine own faithful domestics. Here is intended not the good things prepared for all men, but for the household retainers of God.—*John Piscator, 1516—1626, and D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 8.—"Pleasures." *Delights*, the same word as is translated "Eden" in Genesis, only it is here in the plural number.—*Dalman Hapstone, M.A.*

Verse 8.—And, saith one of the fathers, do you ask me what heaven is? Saith one, When I meet you there I will tell you. The world to come, say the Rabbins, is the world where all is well. I have read of one that would willingly swim through a sea of brimstone to get to heaven, for there, and only there, is perfection of happiness. What are the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir and the treasures of both Indies, to the glory of another world? Augustine tells us that one day, when he was about to write something upon the eighth verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm, "*Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,*" and being almost swallowed up with the contemplation of heavenly joys, one called unto him very loud by his name; and, enquiring who it was, he answered, I am Jerome, with whom in my lifetime thou hadst so much conference concerning doubts in Scripture, and am now best experienced to resolve thee of any doubts concerning the joys of heaven; but only let me first ask thee this question—Art thou able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea, into a little pot? Canst thou measure the waters in thy fist, and mete out heaven with thy span, or weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance? If not, no more is it possible that thy understanding should comprehend the least of the joys of heaven; and certainly the least of the joys of heaven are inconceivable and unexpressible.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 9.—"For with thee is the fountain of life."—These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of S. John.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9.—"In thy light shall we see light." The object and matter of our eternal happiness is called "*light.*" It will not be a dazzling and confounding light as

was the brightness of Moses' face at his coming down from the mount; the people could not behold him: it will not be an astonishing light, as that in the mount at our Lord's transfiguration; the disciples fell to the ground, their weak eyes could not behold those glimpses of glory that shined through the veil of flesh. But the light in our heaven of happiness will be a *strengthening and comforting light*; it will strengthen and confirm the eyes of our understanding to behold it. Then shall we be enabled as the young eagles, to behold the Sun of Righteousness in his brightness and glory. It was said by the Lord to Moses, "None can see my face and live." Exodus xxxiii. 20. That glorious sight which Daniel saw took strength from him. Dan. x. 8. The object being without him, drew out all his spirits to behold and admire it and so weakened him; but in heaven our God, whom we shall see and know, will be within us to strengthen us; then shall we live because we see his face. It will be also a *comforting light*, like the light of the morning to the wearied watchman, who longed after it in the night-time.—*William Colvill*.

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" 'Tis but a kind of dim twilight comparatively, which we enjoy here in this world. While we are hid in this prison-house we can see but little; but our Father's house above is full of light: "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,*" etc. Matt. xiii. 43. If the Day-star be risen in your hearts, live in the pleasant and cheerful expectation of perfect day. For we can ascend but a little way into the mysteries of the kingdom, as long as we are upon the footstool; and we shall know vastly and inconceivably more in the first moment after we come to heaven, than we are capable of attaining here throughout all our days.—*Timothy Cruso*.

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" The light of nature is like a spark, the light of the gospel a lamp, the light of grace a star, but the light of glory the sun itself. The higher our ascent the greater our light; God dwelleth "in the light which no man can approach unto." 1 Tim. vi. 16—no man, while he carries mortality and sin about him; but when those two corrupt and uncapable qualities shall be put off, then shall we be brought to that light. We are now glad of the sun and stars over our heads, to give us light: what light and delight shall that be when these are under our feet! That light must needs go as far beyond their light as they now go beyond us. But alas! they are only able to discourse of that light, that do enjoy it, to whom that eternal day is risen; not we that live in the humble shade of mortality and natural dimness. I leave it therefore to your meditations: it is a glorious light which we do well often to consider, considering to admire, admiring to love, loving to desire, desiring to seek, and finding to enjoy for ever.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 9.—"*In thy light shall we see light.*" There is a great boast of light in the world, and there is some ground for it in natural things; but, as of old the world by wisdom knew not God, so of late. If ever we know God, it must be through the medium of his word. This I take to be the meaning of the passage. The term *light* in the last clause means the true knowledge of God; and, in the first, the true medium of attaining it, namely, divine revelation. The sum seems to amount to this: the word of God is the grand medium by which we can attain a true and saving knowledge of God. What the sun and stars are to the regions of matter, that revelation is to the mental region. Gen. i. 13, 17. . . .

There are many things of which you may entertain no doubt, concerning which there may be no manner of dispute; yet, make a point of seeing them in God's light. Many content themselves with seeing them in the light in which great and good men have placed them; but, although angels, they are not the true light: they all view things partially. If what they say be true, yet, if we receive it merely on their representation, our faith will stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. 1 Cor. ii. 5. That knowledge or faith which has not God's word for its ground will not stand the day of trial.—*Andrew Fuller*.

Verse 9.—In this communion of God what can we want? Why, God shall be all and in all unto us; he shall be beauty for the eye, music for the ear, honey for the taste, the full content and satisfaction of our desires, and that immediately from himself. True it is God is all in all in this world, "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" but here he works by means of secondary causes; here he gives wine to make the heart glad, and oil, etc.; but there all intervening means between God and us is removed: "*with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light;*" not in the light of the sun, or the light of a candle; there is no

need of them (Rev. xxii. 5); but "in *thy* light," the light of God himself; yea, the whole life of glory, together with all the concomitants of it, flows from him as the sole and original fountain of it. Oh, how sweet must that happiness be that is so derived!—*Edmund Pinchbeck, B.D., in "The Fountain of Life:" a Funeral Sermon, 1652.*

Verse 9.—Whatsoever can be found in the creature, even when God blesseth the use thereof to his own children, is but a drop from the ocean, is but a little water out of the well, in comparison of what a believer will see and feel to be in God reconciled through Christ, for, "*with thee is the fountain of life.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10—"Continue thy lovingkindness." When God beginneth once to let out mercy to his servants, he stints not presently, but proceeds. When Rachel had her first son, she called his name Joseph, which signifieth adding, or increase; for she said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." Gen. xxx. 24. Now God hath begun to show kindness, he shall not only give me this, but he shall give me another son also. When the Lord hath bestowed one mercy on you, you may name it Joseph, increase, addition, for God will bestow another upon you. Abraham had many mercies from God, one after another; and Moses, a multitude of mercies; he converseth with God face to face; he heareth God speak; he hath God's presence to go along with him; yea, he seeth all God's goodness and glory to pass before him. When mercies come forth, God will not presently shut the door of mercy again. "Continue thy lovingkindness." The Hebrew is, draw forth, or draw out thy lovingkindness: a metaphor either taken from vessels of wine, which being set abroach once, yield not only one cup, but many cups: so when God setteth abroach the wine of his mercy, he will not fill your cup once, but twice and seven times; or, taken from a mother, who hath her breasts full of milk, draws them out for her child, not once, but often; the child shall have the breast many times in the day, and many times in the night, so when God beginneth to show mercy to you, he will draw out his breasts of consolation, and will bestow mercy after mercy upon you; or, from a line which is extended, for so God being in a way of mercy, will extend the line of mercy, and measure out mercy after mercy for you.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 10.—The true mark of a godly man standeth in the conjunction of faith in God with sincere study of obedience to him, for, *He is the man that knoweth God,* and is upright in heart.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"Foot" "Hand." Both foot and hand are named because both used in waging war.—*Simcon de Muis.*

Verse 12.—"There are the workers of iniquity fallen." This is said as if the Psalmist pointed, when he said it, to a particular place with his finger; and the same mode of expression occurs in Psalm xiv. 5; or, it may be rendered, *then (i.e., when the just are satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house, being rewarded for sincerely worshipping thee in it), shall they fall, all that work wickedness; they shall be cast down, and shall not be able to rise,* as is the case with persons who have been thrown with violence upon the hard ground.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—What is the fear of God? How does it operate? What is the effect of its absence? What should we learn from seeing such evil results?

Or the atheism underlying transgression.

Verse 2.—The arts, motives, assistances, results, and punishments of self-flattery, and the discovery which concludes it.

Verse 2.—Self-flatteries.—*Jonathan Edward's Sermon.*

Verse 2.—On the deceitfulness of the heart, with regard to the commission of sin.—*Two Sermons, in Jamieson's "Sermons on the Heart."*

Verse 3.—Bad words. Two out of many kinds.

Verse 3 (second clause).—The relation between true wisdom and practical goodness.

Verse 4.—Diligence in doing evil, a mark of deep depravity.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—The abuse of retirement to wicked purposes, a sure characteristic of an habitual sinner.—*N. Marshall.*

Verse 4.—The sinner on his bed, in his conduct, in his heart; add to this, in his death, and in his doom.

Verse 4 (second clause).—Ways which are not good.

Verse 4 (last clause).—Neutrality condemned.

Verses 5, 6.—Four glorious similes of the mercy, faithfulness, and providence of God. The preacher has here a wealth of poetic imagery never surpassed.

Verse 6.—God's word and works mysterious.—*C. Simeon.*

Verse 6 (second clause).—God's judgments are—1. Often unfathomable—we cannot discover the foundation or cause, and spring of them. II. They are safe sailing. Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. III. They conceal great treasure. IV. They work much good—the great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste, a salt and barren wilderness, is one of the greatest blessings to this round world. V. They become a highway of communion with God. The sea is to-day the great highway of the world.

Verse 6 (last clause).—Kindness of God to the lower animals, as well as man.

Verses 7, 8.—Admiration! Confidence! Expectation! Realisation!

Verse 7.—The object, reasons, nature, and experience of faith.

Verse 8 (first clause).—*The provisions of the Lord's house.* What they are, their excellence and abundance, and for whom provided.

Verse 8 (second clause).—*The heavenly Hiddekel*—Its source, its flood, the happy drinkers, how they came to drink.

Verse 9 (first clause).—*LIFE*, natural, mental, spiritual, proceeds from God, is sustained, restored, purified, and perfected by him. In him it dwells with permanency, from him it flows freely, with freshness, abundance, and purity; to him it should be consecrated.

Verse 9 (second clause).—*LIGHT*, what it is to see it. *Divine light*, what it is; how it is the medium by which we see other light. The experience here described, and the duty here hinted at.

Verse 10.—I. *The character of the righteous*—he knows God, and is upright in heart. II. *His privilege*—lovingkindness and righteousness. III. *His prayer*, continue, etc.

Verse 10.—The need of daily supplies of grace.

Verse 12.—A view of the overthrow of evil powers, principles, and men.