

## PSALM XXXVIII.

**TITLE.**—A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance. *David felt as if he had been forgotten of his God, and, therefore, he recounted his sorrows and cried mightily for help under them. The same title is given to Psalm lxx., where in like manner the Psalmist pours out his complaint before the Lord. It would be foolish to make a guess as to the point in David's history when this was written; it may be a commemoration of his own sickness and endurance of cruelty; it may, on the other hand, have been composed by him for the use of sick and stammered saints, without special reference to himself.*

**DIVISIONS.**—*The Psalm opens with a prayer, 1; continues in a long complaint, 2—8; pauses to dart an eye to heaven, 9; proceeds with a second tale of sorrow, 10—14; interjects another word of hopeful address to God, 15; a third time pours out a flood of griefs, 16—20; and then closes as it opened, with renewed petitioning, 21 and 22.*

### EXPOSITION.

**O** LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

1. “*O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.*” Rebuked I must be, for I am an erring child and thou a careful Father, but throw not too much anger into the tones of thy voice; deal gently although I have sinned grievously. The anger of others I can bear, but not thine. As thy love is most sweet to my heart, so thy displeasure is most cutting to my conscience. “*Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*” Chasten me if thou wilt, it is a Father's prerogative, and to endure it obediently is a child's duty; but, O turn not the rod into a sword, smite not so as to kill. True, my sins might well inflame thee, but let thy mercy and longsuffering quench the glowing coals of thy wrath. O let me not be treated as an enemy or dealt with as a rebel. Bring to remembrance thy covenant, thy fatherhood, and my feebleness, and spare thy servant.

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

3 *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease*: and *there is no soundness in my flesh.*

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

2. “*For thine arrows stick fast in me.*” By this he means both bodily and spiritual griefs, but we may suppose, especially the latter, for these are most piercing and stick the fastest. God's law applied by the Spirit to the conviction of the soul of sin, wounds deeply and rankles long; it is an arrow not lightly to be brushed out by careless mirthfulness, or to be extracted by the flattering hand of self-righteousness. The Lord knows how to shoot so that his bolts not only strike but stick. He can make convictions sink into the innermost spirit like arrows driven in up to the head. It seems strange that the Lord should shoot at his own beloved ones, but in truth he shoots at their sins rather than them, and those who feel his sin-killing shafts in this life, shall not be slain with his hot thunderbolts in the next world. “*And thy hand presseth me sore.*” The Lord had come to close dealings with him, and pressed him down with the weight of his hand, so that he

had no rest or strength left. By these two expressions we are taught that conviction of sin is a piercing and a pressing thing, sharp and sore, smarting and crushing. Those who know by experience "the terrors of the Lord," will be best able to vouch for the accuracy of such descriptions; they are true to the life.

3. "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger.*" Mental depression tells upon the bodily frame; it is enough to create and foster every disease, and is in itself the most painful of all diseases. Soul sickness tells upon the entire frame; it weakens the body, and then bodily weakness reacts upon the mind. One drop of divine anger sets the whole of our blood boiling with misery. "*Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*" Deeper still the malady penetrates, ill the bones, the more solid parts of the system, are affected. No soundness and no rest are two sad deficiencies; yet these are both consciously gone from every awakened conscience until Jesus gives relief. God's anger is a fire that dries up the very marrow; it searches the secret parts of the belly. A man who has pain in his bones tosses to and fro in search of rest, but he finds none; he becomes worn out with agony, and so in many cases a sense of sin creates in the conscience a horrible unrest which cannot be exceeded in anguish except by hell itself.

4. "*For mine iniquities are gone over mine head.*" Like waves of the deep sea; like black mire in which a man utterly sinks. Above my hopes, my strength, and my life itself, my sin rises in its terror. Unawakened sinners think their sins to be mere shallows, but when conscience is aroused they find out the depth of iniquity. "*As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*" It is well when sin is an intolerable load, and when the remembrance of our sins burdens us beyond endurance. This verse is the genuine cry of one who feels himself undone by his transgressions and as yet sees not the great sacrifice.

5. "*My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*" Apply this to the body, and it pictures a sad condition of disease; but read it of the soul, and it is to the life. Conscience lays on stripe after stripe till the swelling becomes a wound and suppurates, and the corruption within grows offensive. What a horrible creature man appears to be to his own consciousness when his depravity and vileness are fully opened up by the law of God, applied by the Holy Spirit! It is true there are diseases which are correctly described in this verse, when in the worst stage; but we prefer to receive the expressions as instructively figurative, since the words "because of my foolishness" point rather at a moral than a physical malady. Some of us know what it is to stink in our own nostrils so as to loathe ourselves. Even the most filthy diseases cannot be so foul as sin. No ulcers, cancers, or putrifying sores, can match the unutterable vileness and pollution of iniquity. Our own perceptions have made us feel this. We write what we do know, and testify what we have seen; and even now we shudder to think that so much of evil should lie festering deep within our nature.

6. "*I am troubled.*" I am wearied with distress, writhing with pain, in sore travail on account of sin revealed within me. "*I am bowed down greatly.*" I am brought very low, grievously weakened and frightfully depressed. Nothing so pulls a man down from all loftiness as a sense of sin and of divine wrath concerning it. "*I go mourning all the day long.*" The mourner's soul-sorrow knew no intermission, even when he went about such business as he was able to attend, he went forth like a mourner who goes to the tomb, and his words and manners were like the lamentations of those who follow the corpse. The whole verse may be the more clearly understood if we picture the Oriental mourner, covered with sackcloth and ashes, bowed as in a heap, sitting amid squalor and dirt, performing contortions and writhings expressive of his grief; such is the awakened sinner, not in outward guise, but in very deed.

7. "*For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease*"—a hot, dry, parching disorder, probably accompanied by loathsome ulcers. Spiritually, the fire burns within when the evil of the heart is laid bare. Note the emphatic words, the evil is *loathsome*, it is in the *loins*, its seat is deep and vital—the man is *filled* with it. Those who have passed through the time of conviction understand all this. "*And there is no soundness in my flesh.*" This he had said before, and thus the Holy Spirit brings humiliating truth again and again to our memories, tears away every ground of glorying, and makes us know that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

8. "*I am feeble.*" The original is "benumbed," or frozen, such strange incongruities and contradictions meet in a distracted mind and a sick body—it appears

to itself to be alternately parched with heat and pinched with cold. Like souls in the Popish fabled Purgatory, tossed from burning furnaces into thick ice, so tormented hearts rush from one extreme to the other, with equal torture in each. A heat of fear, a chill of horror, a flaming desire, a horrible insensibility—by these successive miseries a convinced sinner is brought to death's door. "*And sore broken.*" Crushed as in a mill, pounded as in a mortar. The body of the sick man appears to be all out of joint and smashed into a palpitating pulp, and the soul of the desponding is in an equally wretched case; as a victim crushed under the car of Juggernaut, such is a soul over whose conscience the wheels of divine wrath have forced their awful way. "*I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*" Deep and hoarse is the voice of sorrow, and often inarticulate and terrible. The heart learns groanings which cannot be uttered, and the voice fails to tone and tune itself to human speech. When our prayers appear to be rather animal than spiritual, they are none the less prevalent with the pitiful Father of mercy. He hears the murmur of the heart and the roaring of the soul because of sin, and in due time he comes to relieve his afflicted.

The more closely the preceding portrait of an awakened soul is studied in the light of experience, the more will its striking accuracy appear. It cannot be a description of merely outward disorder, graphic as it might then be; it has a depth and pathos in it which only the soul's mysterious and awful agony can fully match.

9 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

9. "*Lord, all my desire is before thee.*" If unuttered, yet perceived. Blessed be God, he reads the longings of our hearts; nothing can be hidden from him; what we cannot tell to him he perfectly understands. The Psalmist is conscious that he has not exaggerated, and therefore appeals to heaven for a confirmation of his words. The good Physician understands the symptoms of our disease and sees the hidden evil which they reveal, hence our case is safe in his hands. "*And my groaning is not hid from thee.*"

"He takes the meaning of our tears,  
The language of our groans."

Sorrow and anguish hide themselves from the observation of man, but God spieth them out. None more lonely than the broken-hearted sinner, yet hath he the Lord for his companion.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

13 But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.

14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.

10. "*My heart panteth.*" Here begins another tale of woe. He was so dreadfully pained by the unkindness of friends, that his heart was in a state of perpetual palpitation. Sharp and quick were the beatings of his heart; he was like a hunted roe, filled with distressing alarms, and ready to fly out of itself with fear. The soul seeks sympathy in sorrow, and if it finds none, its sorrowful heart-throbs are incessant. "*My strength faileth me.*" What with disease and distraction, he was weakened and ready to expire. A sense of sin, and a clear perception that none can help us in our distress, are enough to bring a man to death's door, especially if there be none to speak a gentle word, and point the broken spirit to the beloved Physician. "*As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.*" Sweet light departed from his bodily eye, and consolation vanished from his soul. Those who were the very light of his eyes forsook him. Hope, the last lamp of night,



was ready to go out. What a plight was the poor convict in ! Yet here we have some of us been ; and here should we have perished had not infinite mercy interposed. Now, as we remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, we see how good it was for us to find our own strength fail us, since it drove us to the strong for strength ; and how right it was that our light should all be quenched, that the Lord's light should be all in all to us.

11. "*My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore.*" Whatever affection they might pretend to, they kept out of his company, lest as a sinking vessel often draws down boats with it, they might be made to suffer through his calamities. It is very hard when those who should be the first to come to the rescue, are the first to desert us. In times of deep soul trouble even the most affectionate friends cannot enter into the sufferer's case ; let them be as anxious as they may, the sores of a tender conscience they cannot bind up. Oh, the loneliness of a soul passing under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost ! "*And my kinsmen stand afar off.*" As the women and others of our Lord's acquaintances from afar gazed on his cross, so a soul wounded for sin sees all mankind as distant spectators, and in the whole crowd finds none to aid. Often relatives hinder seekers after Jesus, oftener still they look on with unconcern, seldom enough to do they endeavour to lead the penitent to Jesus.

12. "*They also that seek after my life lay snares for me.*" Alas ! for us when in addition to inward griefs, we are beset by outward temptations. David's foes endeavoured basely to ensnare him. If fair means would not overthrow him, foul should be tried. This snaring business is a vile one, the devil's own poachers alone condescend to it ; but prayer to God will deliver us, for the craft of the entire college of tempters can be met and overcome by those who are led of the Spirit. "*They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things.*" Lies and slanders poured from them like water from the town-pump. Their tongue was for ever going, and their heart for ever inventing lies. "*And imagine deceits all the day long.*" They were never done, their forge was going from morning to night. When they could not act they talked, and when they could not talk they imagined, and schemed, and plotted. Restless is the activity of malice. Bad men never have enough of evil. They compass sea and land to injure a saint ; no labour is too severe, no cost too great if they may utterly destroy the innocent. Our comfort is, that our glorious Head knows the pertinacious malignity of our foes, and will in due season put an end to it, as he even now sets a bound about it.

13. "*But I, as a deaf man, heard not.*" Well and bravely was this done. A sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy. It is well to be as if we could not hear or see. Perhaps the Psalmist means that this deafness on his part was unavoidable because he had no power to answer the taunts of the cruel, but felt much of the truth of their ungenerous accusations. "*And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*" David was bravely silent, and herein was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus, whose marvellous silence before Pilate was far more eloquent than words. To abstain from self-defence is often most difficult, and frequently most wise.

14. "*Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*" He repeats the fact of his silence that we may note it, admire it, and imitate it. We have an advocate, and need not therefore plead our own cause. The Lord will rebuke our foes, for vengeance belongs to him ; we may therefore wait patiently and find it our strength to sit still.

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope : thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

15. David committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and so in patience was able to possess his soul. Hope in God's intervention, and belief in the power of prayer, are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity. Turning right away from the creature to the sovereign Lord of all, and to him as our own covenant God, we shall find the richest solace in waiting upon him. Reputation like a fair pearl may be cast into the mire, but in due time when the Lord makes up his jewels, the godly character shall shine with unclouded splendour. Rest then, O slandered one, and let not thy soul be tossed to and fro with anxiety.

16 For I said, *Hear me*, lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me : when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me.

17 For I *am* ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

19 But mine enemies *are* lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that good is*.

16. "*For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me.*" The good man was not insensible, he dreaded the sharp stings of taunting malice; he feared lest either by his conduct or his condition, he should give occasion to the wicked to triumph. This fear his earnest desires used as an argument in prayer as well as an incentive to prayer. "*When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.*" The least flaw in a saint is sure to be noticed; long before it comes to a fall the enemy begins to rail, the merest trip of the foot sets all the dogs of hell barking. How careful ought we to be, and how importunate in prayer for upholding grace! We do not wish, like blind Samson, to make sport for our enemies; let us then beware of the treacherous Delilah of sin, by whose means our eyes may soon be put out.

17. "*For I am ready to halt.*" Like one who limps, or a person with tottering footsteps, in danger of falling. How well this befits us all. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." How small a thing will lame a Christian, how insignificant a stumbling-block may cause him to fall! This passage refers to weakness caused by pain and sorrow; the sufferer was ready to give up in despair; he was so depressed in spirit that he stumbled at a straw. Some of us painfully know what it is to be like dry tinder for the sparks of sorrow; ready to halt, ready to mourn, and sigh and cry upon any occasion, and for any cause. "*And my sorrow is continually before me.*" He did not need to look out of window to find sorrow, he felt it within, and groaned under a body of sin which was an increasing plague to him. Deep conviction continues to irritate the conscience; it will not endure a patched-up peace; but cries war to the knife till the enmity is slain. Until the Holy Ghost applies the precious blood of Jesus, a truly awakened sinner is covered with raw wounds which cannot be healed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment.

18. "*For I will declare mine iniquity.*" The slander of his enemies he repudiates, but the accusations of his conscience he admits. Open confession is good for the soul. When sorrow leads to hearty and penitent acknowledgment of sin it is blessed sorrow, a thing to thank God for most devoutly. "*I will be sorry for my sin.*" My confession shall be salted with briny tears. It is well not so much to bewail our sorrows as to denounce the sins which lie at the root of them. To be sorry for sin is no atonement for it, but it is the right spirit in which to repair to Jesus, who is the reconciliation and the Saviour. A man is near to the end of his trouble when he comes to an end with his sins.

19. "*But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong.*" However weak and dying the righteous man may be, the evils which oppose him are sure to be lively enough. Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, are ever afflicted with debility or inertness; this trinity of evils labours with mighty unremitting energy to overthrow us. If the devil were sick, or our lusts feeble, or Madame Bubble infirm, we might slacken prayer; but with such lively and vigorous enemies we must not cease to cry mightily unto our God. "*And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.*" Here is another misery, that as we are no match for our enemies in strength, so also they outnumber us as a hundred to one. Wrong as the cause of evil is, it is a popular one. More and more the kingdom of darkness grows. Oh, misery of miseries, that we see the professed friends of Jesus forsaking him, and the enemies of his cross and his cause mustering in increasing bands!

20. "*They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries.*" Such would a wise man wish his enemies to be. Why should we seek to be beloved of such graceless souls? It is a fine plea against our enemies when we can without injustice declare them to be like the devil, whose nature it is to render evil for good. "*Because I follow the thing that good is.*" If men hate us for this reason we may rejoice to bear it: their wrath is the unconscious homage which vice renders to virtue. This verse is not inconsistent with the writer's previous confession; we may feel deeply guilty before God, and yet be entirely innocent of any wrong to

our fellow men. It is one thing to acknowledge the truth, quite another thing to submit to be belied. The Lord may smite me justly, and yet I may be able to say to my fellow man, "Why smitest thou me?"

21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.  
22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

21. "*Forsake me not, O Lord.*" Now is the time I need thee most. When sickness, slander, and sin, all beset a saint, he requires the especial aid of heaven, and he shall have it too. He is afraid of nothing while God is with him, and God is with him evermore. "*Be not far from me.*" Withhold not the light of thy near and dear love. Reveal thyself to me. Stand at my side. Let me feel that though friendless besides, I have a most gracious and all-sufficient friend in thee.

22. "*Make haste to help me.*" Delay would prove destruction. The poor pleader was far gone and ready to expire, only speedy help would serve his turn. See how sorrow quickens the impurity of prayer! Here is one of the sweet results of affliction, it gives new life to our pleading, and drives us with eagerness to our God. "*O Lord my salvation.*" Not my Saviour only, but my salvation. He who has the Lord on his side has salvation in present possession. Faith foresees the blessed issue of all her pleas, and in this verse begins to ascribe to God the glory of the expected mercy. We shall not be left of the Lord. His grace will succour us most opportunely, and in heaven we shall see that we had not one trial too many, or one pang too severe. A sense of sin shall melt into the joy of salvation; grief shall lead on to gratitude, and gratitude to joy unspeakable and full of glory.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—The first word, *Mizmor*, or Psalm, is the designation of forty-four sacred poems, thirty-two of which are ascribed to David. The English reader must observe, that this word is not the same in the original Hebrew as that which forms the general title of the book of Psalms; the latter expressing a Hymn of Praise. The word *Psalm*, however, as used both in the context and in the titles of the individual compositions, is uniformly *Mizmor* in the original; a term which accurately defines their poetical character. To explain its proper meaning I must have recourse to the beautiful and accurate definition of Bishop Lowth. "The word *Mizmor* signifies a composition, which in a peculiar manner is cut up into sentences, short, frequent, and measured by regular intervals." . . . He adds that *Zamar* means to cut or prune, as applied to the removing superfluous branches from trees; and, after mentioning the secondary sense of the word, "to sing with a voice or instrument," gives it as his opinion, that *Mizmor* may be more properly referred to the primary sense of the root, so as to mean a poem cut up into short sentences, and pruned from all superfluity of words, which is the peculiar characteristic of the Hebrew poetry.—*John Jebb.*

*Title.*—The title that David gives this Psalm is worth your notice, *A Psalm of David to bring to remembrance.* David was on his death-bed as he thought, and he said it shall be a Psalm of remembrance, to bring sin to remembrance, to confess to God my uncleanness with Bathsheba, to bring to my remembrance the evils of my life. Whenever God brings thee under affliction, thou art then in a fit plight to confess sin to God, and call to remembrance thy sin.—*Christopher Love.*

*Title.*—The Psalm is "*to bring to remembrance.*" This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace, and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. Among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were, (1), *his past trials and his past deliverances.* The great point, however, in David's Psalm is to bring to remembrance, (2), *the depravity of our nature.* There is, perhaps, no Psalm which more fully than this describes human nature as seen in the light which God the Holy Ghost casts upon it in the time when he convinces us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body.



It is very like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers. The fact is, it is a spiritual leprosy, it is an inward disease which is here described, and David paints it to the very life, and he would have us to recollect this. A third thing the Psalm brings to our remembrance is, (3), *our many enemies*. David says, that his enemies laid snares for him, and sought his hurt, and spoke mischievous things, and devised and imagined deceits all the day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or perhaps morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him, not because he was wicked, but as he says, in this very Psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good. The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere, but the first result is to cause strife. Further, the Psalm reminds us of, (4), *our gracious God*. Anything which drives us to God is a blessing, and anything which weans us from leaning on an arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a boon to us.—C. H. S.

*Whole Psalm.*—The most wonderful features in this Psalm, are the depth of misery into which the Psalmist gradually plunges in his complaints in the first part of it, the sudden grasp at the arm of mercy and omnipotence that is made in verse 8, and the extreme height of comfort and consolation that it reaches in the end.—*Benjamin Weiss*.

*Verse 1.*—"O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath." But is it not an absurd request, to require God not to rebuke me in his anger; as though I thought he would rebuke me if he were not angry? Is it not a senseless suit to pray to God not to chasten me in his displeasure, as though he would chasten me if he were not displeased? The frowardest natures that are, will yet be quiet as long as they be pleased: and shall I have such a thought of the great yet gracious God, that he should be pleased and yet not be quiet? But, O my soul, is it all one, to rebuke in his anger and to rebuke when he is angry? He may rebuke when he is angry, and yet restrain and bridle in his anger; but to rebuke in his anger is to let loose the reins to his anger; and what is it to give the reins to his anger, but to make it outrun his mercy? And then what a miserable case should I be in, to have his anger to assault me, and not his mercy ready to relieve me? To have his indignation fall upon me when his lovingkindness were not by to take it off! Oh, therefore, *rebuke me not in thine anger, O God*, but let thy rebuking stay for thy mercy; chasten me not in thy displeasure, but let thy lovingkindness have the keeping of thy rod.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

*Verse 1.*—"Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure," etc. Both these words, which we translate to *chasten*, and *hot displeasure*, are words of a heavy and of a vehement signification. They extend both to express the eternity of God's indignation, even to the binding of the soul and body in eternal chains of darkness. For the first *jasar*, signifies in the Scriptures, *vincire*, to bind, often with ropes, often with chains; to fetter, or manacle, or pinion men that are to be executed; so that it imports a slavery, a bondage all the way, and a destruction at last. And so the word is used by Rehoboam, "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." 1 Kings xii. 11. And then, the other word, *chamath*, doth not only signify "*hot displeasure*," but that effect of *God's hot displeasure* which is intended by the prophet Esay: "Therefore hath he poured forth his fierce wrath, and the strength of battle, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." These be the fearful conditions of God's hot displeasure, to be in a furnace, and not to feel it; to be in a habit of sin, and not know what leads us into temptation; to be burnt to ashes, and so not only without all moisture, all holy tears, but, as ashes, without any possibility that any good thing can grow in us. And yet this word, *chamath*, hath a heavier signification than this; for it signifies poison itself, destruction itself, for so it is twice taken in one verse: "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Psalm lviii. 4); so that this *hot displeasure* is that poison of the soul, obduration here, and that extension of that obduration, a final impenitence in this life, and an infinite impenitableness in the next, to die without any actual penitence here, and live without all possibility of future penitence for ever hereafter. David there-

fore foresees, that if God rebuke in anger, it will come to a chastening in hot displeasure. For what should stop him? For, "if a man sin against the Lord, who will plead for him?" says Eli. "Plead thou my cause," says David; it is only the Lord that can be of counsel with him, and plead for him; and that Lord is both the judge and angry too.—*John Donne.*

Verse 2.—"For thine arrows stick fast in me." First, we shall see in what respect he calls them "arrows:" and therein, first, that they are *alienæ*, they are shot from others, they are not in his own power; a man shoots not an arrow at himself; and then that they are *veloces*, swift in coming, he cannot give them their time; and again, they are *vix visibiles*, though they be not altogether invisible in their coming, yet there is required a quick eye, and an express diligence and watchfulness to avoid them; so they are arrows in the hand of another, not his own; and swift as they come, and invisible before they come. And secondly, they are many arrows: the victory lies not in escaping one or two. And thirdly, they "stick" in him: they find not David so good proof as to rebound back again, and imprint no sense: and they stick "fast:" though the blow be felt and the wound discerned, yet there is not a present cure, he cannot shake them off; *infixæ sunt*; and then, with all this, they stick fast in him; that is, in all him; in his body and soul; in him, in his thoughts and actions; in him, in his sins and in his good works too; *infixæ mihi*, there is no part of him, no faculty in him, in which they stick not; for (which may well be another consideration), that "hand," which shot them, presses him, follows the blow, and presses him "sore," that is, vehemently. But yet (which will be our conclusion), *sagittæ tuæ, thy arrows*, and *manus tua, thy hand*, these arrows that are shot, and this hand that presses him so sore, are the arrows, and the hand of God; and therefore, first, they must have their effect, they cannot be disappointed: but yet they bring their comfort with them, because they are his, because no arrows from him, no pressing with his hand, comes without that balsamum of mercy to heal as fast as he wounds.—*John Donne.*

Verse 2.—"Thine arrows stick fast." Though importunity be to God most pleasing always, yet to us it is then most necessary when the cheerful face of God is turned into frowns, and when there is a justly conceived fear of the continuance of his anger: and have I not just cause to fear it, having the arrows of his anger sticking so fast in me? If he had meant to make me but a butt, at which to shoot his arrows, he would quickly, I suppose, have taken them up again; but now that he leaves them sticking in me, what can I think, but that he means to make me his quiver; and then I may look long enough before he come to pluck them out. They are arrows, indeed, that are feathered with swiftness, and headed with sharpness; and to give them a force in flying, they are shot, I may say, out of his cross-bow, I am sure his bow of cross: for no arrows can fly so fast, none pierce so deep, as the crosses and afflictions with which he hath surprised me: I may truly say surprised me, seeing when I thought myself most safe, and said, "I shall never be moved," even then, these arrows of his anger lighted upon me, and stick so fast in my flesh, that no arm but his that shot them is ever able to draw them forth. Oh, then, as thou hast stretched forth thine arm of anger, O God, to shoot these arrows at me, so stretch forth thine arm of mercy to draw them forth, that I may rather sing hymns than dirges unto thee; and that thou mayest show thy power, as well in pardoning as thou hast done in condemning.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"Thine arrows." Arrows are (1) swift, (2) secret, (3) sharp, (4) killing, instruments. They are instruments drawing blood and drinking blood, even unto drunkenness (Deut. xxxii. 42); afflictions are like arrows in all these properties. 1. Afflictions often come very speedily, with a glance as an arrow, quick as a thought. 2. Afflictions come suddenly, unexpectedly; an arrow is upon a man afore he is aware, so are afflictions. Though Job saith, the thing he feared came upon him, he looked for this arrow before it came; yet usually afflictions are unlooked-for guests, they thrust in upon us when we dream not of them. 3. They come with little noise; an arrow is felt before, or, as soon as it is heard; an arrow flies silently and secretly, stealing upon and wounding a man, unobserved and unseen. Lastly, all afflictions are sharp, and in their own nature killing and deadly. That any have good from them, is from the grace of God, not from their nature.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2.—Let no one think these expressions of penitence (verses 1—4) overstrained or excessive. They are the words of the Holy Spirit of God, speaking



by the mouth of the man after God's own heart. If we were as repentant as David, we should bring home to ourselves his language; as it is, our affections are chilled, and therefore we do not enter into his words. . . . And let us observe how all the miseries are referred to their proper end. The sin is not bewailed merely on account of its ill effect on the guilty one, but on account of the despite done to God. The Psalmist's first thought is the "anger" of the Lord, and his "hot displeasure." It is not the "arrows" that afflict him so much as that they are God's. "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me." The reason why there is no health in his flesh is because of God's displeasure. Such is true contrition, "not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of."—*A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms. Chiefly from Ancient Sources [by A. P. F.], 1817.*

Verse 2.—"Thy hand presseth me sore." Not the hand of Egypt or Ashur; then were it hand for hand, a duel of some equality: hand to hand; here forces and stratagems might achieve the victory: but "Thy hand." The weight of a man's blow is but weak, according to the force and pulse of his arm; as the princes of Midian answered Gideon, when he bade his son try the dint of his sword upon them; "Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength." Judges viii. 21. But "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. x. 31. As Homer called the hands of Jupiter χεῖρες ἀεττοῖ, hands whose praise could not be sufficiently spoken; which some read χεῖρες ἀαπτοῖ, hands inaccessible, irresistible for strength: all the gods in heaven could not ward a blow of Jupiter's hand. This hand never strikes but for sin; and where sin is mighty his blow is heavy.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—"Thine anger . . . my sin." I, alas! am as an anvil under two hammers; one of thine anger, another of my sin; both of them beating incessantly upon me; the hammer of thine anger beating upon my flesh and making that unsound; the hammer of my sin beating upon my bones and making them unquiet; although indeed both beat upon both: but thine anger more upon my flesh, as being more sensible; my sin more upon my bones, as being more obdurate. God's anger and sin are the two efficient causes of all misery; but the procatartie\* cause indeed is sin: God's anger, like the house that Samson pulled upon his own head, falls not upon us but when we pull it upon ourselves by sin.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"My flesh . . . my bones." I know by the unsoundness of my flesh that God is angry with me; for if it were not for his anger my flesh would be sound: but what soundness can there be in it now, when God's angry hand lies beating upon it continually, and never ceaseth? I know by the unquietness of my bones that I have sin in my bosom; for if it were not for sin my bones would be quiet. But what quietness can be in them now, when sin lies gnawing upon them incessantly with the worm of remorse? One would think my bones were far enough removed and closely enough hidden from sins doing them any hurt: yet see the searching nature, the venomous poison of sin, which pierceth through my flesh, and makes unquietness in my very bones. I know my flesh is guilty of many faults, by which it justly deserves unsoundness; but what have my bones done? for they minister no fuel to the flames of my flesh's sensuality; and why then should they be troubled? But are not my bones supporters of my flesh, and are they not by this at least accessory to my flesh's faults? As accessories, then, they are subject to the same punishment the flesh itself is, which is the principal.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." A Christian in this life is like quicksilver, which hath a principle of motion in itself, but not of rest: we are never quiet, but as the ball upon the racket, or the slip upon the waves. As long as we have sin, this is like quicksilver: a child of God is full of motion and disquiet. . . . We are here in a perpetual hurry, in a constant fluctuation; our life is like the tide; sometimes ebbing, sometimes flowing; here is no rest; and the reason is because we are out of centre. Everything is in motion till it comes at the centre; Christ is the centre of the soul; the needle of the compass trembles till it comes to the North Pole.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—Learn here of beggars how to procure succour and relief. Lay open thy sores, make known thy need, discover all thy misery, make not thy case better

\* As applied to diseases, signifies the exciting cause.

than it is. Beggars by experience find that the more miserable they appear to be, the more they are pitied, the more succoured; and yet the mercies of the most merciful men are but as drops in comparison of the oceans of God's mercies; and among men there are many like the priest and Levite in the parable (Luke x. 30—32), that can pass by a naked, wounded man, left half dead, and not pity him nor succour him. But God, like the merciful Samaritan, hath always compassion on such as with sense of their misery are forced to cry out and crave help. Read how Job, chap. vi. and vii; David, Ps. xxxviii, 3, etc., Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 10, etc., and other like saints, poured out their complaints before the Lord, and withal observe what mercy was showed them of the Lord, and you may have in them both good patterns how to behave yourselves in like cases, and good encouragement so to do. This is it which God expecteth of us, and whereunto he desireth to bring us, that seeing our own emptiness and insufficiency, and the impotency and disability of others to help us, we should in all humility fly to his mercy.—*William Gouge*.

*Verse 4.*—"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." David proceeds to a reason why his prayer must be vehement, why these miseries of his are so violent, and why God's anger is permanent, and he finds all this to be, because in his sins, all these venomous qualities, vehemence, violence, and continuance, were complicated, and unwrapped: for he had sinned vehemently, in the rage of lust, and violently, in the effusion of blood, and permanently, in a long and senseless security. They are all contracted in this text into two kinds, which will be our two parts in handling these words: first, the *Supergrassæ super*, "*Mine iniquities are gone over my head*," there is the multiplicity, the number, the succession, and so the continuation of his sin; and then, the *Gravatæ super*, "*My sins are as a heavy burden, too heavy for me*," there is the greatness, the weight, the unsupportableness of his sin. St. Augustine calls these two distinctions or considerations of sin, *ignorantiam, et difficultatem*; first that David was ignorant, that he saw not the tide, as it swelled up upon him, *abyssus abyssum*, depth called upon depth; and all thy waters, and all thy billows are gone over me (says he in another place); he perceived them not coming till they were over him, he discerned not his particular sins then when he committed them, till they came to the *supergrassæ super*, to that height that he was overflowed, surrounded, his iniquities were gone over his head; and in that St. Augustine notes *ignorantiam*, his observance, his inconsiderations of his own case; and then he notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering, because he that is under water hath no air to see by, no air to hear by, he hath nothing to reach to, he touches not ground, to push him up, he feels no bough to pull him up, and therein that further notes *difficultatem*, the hardness of recovering. Now Moses expresses these two miseries together, in the destruction of the Egyptians, in his song, after Israel's deliverance and the Egyptians' submersion, "The depths have covered them" (there is the *supergrassæ super*, their iniquities, in that punishment of their iniquities were gone over their heads), and then, they sank into the bottom like a stone (says Moses), there is the *gravatæ super*, they depressed them, suppressed them, oppressed them, they were under them, and there they must lie. The Egyptians had, David had, we have, too many sins to swim above water, and too great sins to get above water again when we are sunk.—*John Donne*.

*Verse 4.*—"As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." No strength is so great but it may be overburdened: though Samson went light away with the gates of Gaza, yet when a whole house fell upon him it crushed him to death. And such, alas! am I; I have had sin as a burden upon me ever since I was born, but bore it a long time as light as Samson did the gates of Gaza; but now that I have pulled a whole house of sin upon me, how can I choose but be crushed to death with so great a weight? And crushed, O my soul, thou shouldst be indeed, if God for all his anger did not take some pity on thee, and for all his displeasure did not stay his hand from further chastening thee.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

*Verse 4.*—It is of singular use to us, that the backslidings of the holy men of God are recorded in Holy Writ. Spots appear nowhere more disagreeable than when seen in a most beautiful face, or on the cleanest garment. And it is expedient to have a perfect knowledge of the filthiness of sin. We also learn from them to think humbly of ourselves, to depend on the grace of God, to keep a stricter eye upon ourselves, lest perhaps we fall into the same or more grievous sins. Gal. vi. 1.—*Herman Witsius, D.D., 1636—1708.*



*Verses 4, 5.*—It is only when we can enter into *all* that is implied here that we begin to see our exceeding sinfulness. There is a certain feeling of sin which does not interfere with our pride and self-respect. We can have that sort of feeling, and say pretty earnestly, “*Mine iniquities are gone over mine head : as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*” But it is otherwise with us when we get to know ourselves better and to feel ourselves *loathsome* in our wickedness, when our folly and meanness and ingratitude oppress us, and we begin to loathe ourselves, and can enter into verse five. Our wounds, once an object of self-pity, and something in which we could claim sympathy and healing from our friends, have become “*corrupt,*” because of the meanness and folly we feel to be in us. We hide them now, for if they were seen, would not “*lovers and friends stand aloof from our sore ?*” Then we are silent except to God, “*For in thee, O Lord, do I hope : thou wilt hear, O Lord my God,*” verse 15. O love of God that turns not away ! O blessed Jesus, that thou wilt not away from the leprous man that fell upon his face and said, “*If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,*” but put forth thine hand and *touch*ed him, saying, ‘*I will : be thou clean,*’ to whom *can* we go but unto thee !”—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

*Verse 5.*—“*My wounds stink and are corrupt,*” etc. These expressions seem to be in a great measure figurative, and significant rather of the diseased state of his mind than of his body.—*William Walford.*

*Verse 5.*—“*My wounds stink and are corrupt.*”—I know, O Lord, I have done most foolishly, to let my sores run so long without seeking for help ; for now, “*My wounds stink and are corrupt,*” in as ill a case as Lazarus’ body was when it had been four days buried ; enough to make any man despair that did not know thee as I do. For, do not I know, that *nullum tempus occurrit tibi* ; do not I know thou hast as well wisdom to remedy my foolishness as power to cure my wounds ? Could the grave hold Lazarus when thou didst but open thy mouth to call him forth ? No more can the corruption of my sores be any hindrance to their healing when thy pleasure is to have them be cured. Although, therefore, I have done my own discretion wrong to defer my care, yet I will not do thy power wrong to despair of thy cure : for, how should I despair, who know thee to be as powerful as thou art merciful ; if I may not rather say, to be as merciful as thou art powerful !—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 5.*—“*My wounds stink and are corrupt.*” Either they must be understood literally of the sores that were in his body (as the words in the following verse may also seem to import) which he calls *wounds*, to intimate that he looked upon them as the wheals or swelling tumours (for so the original word may signify) which the rod of God had made in his flesh, or the wounds of those arrows of which he had spoken (verse 2), “*Thine arrows stick fast in me ;*” or else figuratively, of any other miseries that God had brought upon him, comparing them to stinking and festering sores ; either to imply the long continuance of them, or the sharp pains and sorrows which he felt in himself by reason thereof. Yet some, I know, would have it meant of the shame which his sins had brought upon him.—*Arthur Jackson.*

*Verses 5, 6.*—The spiritual feeling of sin is indispensable to the feeling of salvation. A sense of the malady must ever precede, and prepare the soul for a believing reception and due apprehension of the remedy. Wherever God intends to reveal his Son with power, wherever he intends to make the gospel to be “*a joyful sound,*” he makes the conscience feel and groan under the burden of sin. And sure am I that when a man is labouring under the burden of sin, he will be full of complaint. The Bible records hundreds of the complaints of God’s people under the burden of sin. “*My wounds stink and are corrupt,*” cries one, “*because of my foolishness. I am troubled ; I am bowed down greatly ; I go mourning all the day long.*” “*My soul,*” cries another, “*is full of troubles : and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.*” Psalm lxxxviii. 3. “*He hath led me,*” groans out a third, “*and brought me into darkness, but not into light.*” Lam. iii. 2. A living man must need cry under such circumstances. He cannot carry the burden without complaining of its weight. He cannot feel the arrow sticking in his conscience without groaning under the pain. He cannot have the worm gnawing his vitals, without complaining of its venomous tooth. He cannot feel that God is incensed against him without bitterly complaining that the Lord is his enemy. Spiritual complaint then is a mark of spiritual life, and is one which God recognises as such. “*I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.*” Jer. xxxi. 18. It shows that he has something to mourn over ; something to make him groan being burdened ; that sin has been



opened up to him in its hateful malignancy ; that it is a trouble and distress to his soul ; that he cannot roll it like a sweet morsel under his tongue ; but that it is found out by the penetrating eye, and punished by the chastening hand of God.—*J. C. Philpot, 1842.*

*Verse 6.*—“ *I am troubled.*” *I writhe with pain.* This is the proper sense of the original, which means to “ turn out of its proper situation, or course ; ” thence to be “ distorted, writhed,” as a person in pain. Our Bible translation, which says in the text, “ *I am troubled,*” adds in the margin, “ wried,” an obsolete word, correctly expressing the Hebrew.—*Richard Mant.*

*Verse 6.*—“ *I go mourning all the day long.*” And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself, nor did I ever so know, as now, what it was to be weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh, how gladly now would I have been anybody but myself ! Anything but a man ! and in any condition but mine own ! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come.—*John Bunyan, in “ Grace Abounding.”*

*Verse 6.*—Let a man see and feel himself under the bonds of guilt, in danger of hell, under the power of his lusts, enmity against God, and God a stranger to him ; let but the sense of this condition lie upon his heart, and let him go on in his jollity if he can. What a woful creature doth a man see himself now to be ! He envies the happiness of the beasts that are filled, and play in their pastures. We have heard of him who when he saw a toad, stood weeping, because God had made him a *man*, so excellent a creature, and not a toad, so abominable : the goodness of God, then, it seems, as he apprehended it, made him weep ; but this man meets a toad, and he weeps also, but why ? because he is a *man*, who thinks his estate infinitely worse than the condition of a toad, and if it were possible to attain it, would change states with the toad, that hath no guilt of sin, fears no wrath of God, is not under power of lusts or creatures ; God is no enemy to it, which is his miserable state.—*Giles Firmin, 1617—1697.*

*Verse 7.*—“ *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.*” The word here used, according to Gesenius (*Lex.*), properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys, to which the fat adheres. The word rendered “ *loathsome* ”—the word “ *disease* ” being supplied by our translators—is derived from קָלָה, *kalah*, a word which means to roast, to parch, as fruit, grain, etc. ; and then, in the form used here, it means scorched, burned ; hence, a burning or inflammation ; and the whole phrase would be synonymous with *an inflammation of the kidneys*. The word here used does not imply that there was any eruption, or ulcer, though it would seem from verse five that this was the fact, and that the inflammation had produced this effect.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse 7.*—“ *A loathsome disease.*” In many things our estimates are extravagant ; but we never over-estimate the evil of sin. It is as corrupting as it is damning. It covers the soul with plague-spots, with the leprosy. Isaiah i. 5, 6.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse 8.*—“ *I am feeble.*” literally, *I am benumbed*, I have become deadly cold, cold as a corpse ; possibly with reference to the burning inflammation in the previous verse, as marking the alternations in the fever fit.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse 8.*—“ *I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.*” Where sin is, there will never be but unquietness of heart ; and an unquiet heart will always produce these miserable effects—feebleness of body, dejectedness of mind, and roaring of voice. But how can roaring stand with feebleness, which seems to require a strength of spirits ? Is it not, therefore, a roaring, perhaps not so much in loudness as in an inarticulate expressing ? that having done actions more like a beast than a man, I am forced to use a voice not so much of a man as of a beast ? Or is it perhaps a roaring in spirit, which the heart may send forth though the body be feeble ; or rather then, most, when it is most feeble ; not unlike the blaze of a candle, then greatest when going out ? Howsoever it be, this is certain : the heart is that unhappy plot of ground, which, receiving into it the accursed seed of sin, brings forth in the body and soul of man these miserable fruits : and how, then, can I be free from these weeds of the fruits, since I have received into me so great a measure of the seed ? Oh, vile sin, that I could as well avoid

thee as I can see thee, or could as easily resist thee as I deadly hate thee, I should not then complain of either feebleness of body, or dejectedness of mind, or roaring of voice; but I should perfectly enjoy that happy quietness in all my parts, which thou, O God, didst graciously bestow as a blessed dowry on our first parents at their creation.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 8.*—“*I have roared,*” etc. It is difficult for a true penitent, in the bitterness of his soul, to go over the life which he has dragged on in sinfulness, without groaning and sighing from the bottom of his heart. But happy are these groans, happy these sighs, happy these sobs, since they flow from the influence of grace, and from the breath of the Holy Spirit, who himself in an ineffable manner groans in us and with us, and who forms these groans in our hearts by penitence and love! but as the violence of both, that is, of penitence and of love, cannot but burst the narrow limits of a penitent heart, it must make a vent for itself by the eyes and mouth. The eyes shed tears, and the mouth sends forth sighs and groans, which it can no longer restrain; because they are driven on by the fire of divine love, and so these lamentations frame themselves into words and intelligible sentences.—*Jean Baptiste Elias Avrillon, 1652—1729.*

*Verse 8.*—“*The disquietness of my heart.*” David felt pains gather about his heart, and then he cried out. The heart is the mark that God principally aims at when a Christian hath turned aside from his upright course; other outward parts he may hit and deeply wound, but this is but to make holes in the heart, where the seat of unsoundness that principally offends him is. The fire which conscience kindles, it may flash forth into the eyes, and tongue, and hands, and make a man look fearfully, speak desperately, and do bloodily, against the body; but the heat of the fire is principally within, in the furnace, in the spirit; 'tis but some sparkles and flashes only that you see come forth at the lower holes of the furnace, which you behold in the eyes, words, and deeds of such men.—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

*Verse 9.*—There are usually, if not always, pains with desires, especially in desires after the creature, because that oftentimes there is a frustration of our desires, or an elongation of the things, the things are far off, hard to come by; our desires oftentimes are mute, they speak not; or the things that we desire, know not our minds: but our desires after God always speak, they are open unto God, he heareth their voice. “*Lord, all my desire is before thee,*” saith David, “*and my groaning is not hid from thee.*” Therefore it must needs be sweet, when the soul lies thus open unto God. Other desires do not assure and secure a man in the things he desires; a man may wish this and wish that and go without both; but the soul that thus longs after God is instated in his wish, hath a present enjoyment, and certainly shall have a full enjoyment of him. “*He will fulfil the desire of those that fear him: he also will hear their cry.*” Ps. cxlv. 19.—*Joseph Symonds.*

*Verse 9.*—“*My groaning is not hid from thee.*” Secret tears for secret sins are an excellent sign of a holy heart, and a healing balsam for broken spirits. God well understands the language of half words interrupted with sighs, and interprets them as the streams and breathings of a broken heart. As all our foolishness is before him to cover it, so is all our heaviness to ease it; and therefore shall our souls praise and please him more than a bullock with young horns and hoofs upon his altar. Holy mourning keeps out carnal sorrow and produces spirit joy. It stirs up the heart of a saint to beg preventing grace which no false heart can perform without secret reserves. This inward sorrow prevents open shame. God will never give up *such* souls to be trampled on by spiritual enemies, who are already humbled by themselves. In saints' humiliation there's a door opened for secret hope, because of the precious promises that are pledged to it, and especially of preventing future sin by strengthening grace. For as the love of God is the fountain of all true repentance, so it is the attractive of more incomes of divine love to the soul.—*Samuel Lee.*

*Verse 10.*—“*My heart panteth.*” The verb which David here uses signifies to travel or wander hither and thither, but here it is taken for the agitation or disquietude which distress of heart engenders when we know not what to do. According as men are disquieted in mind, so do they turn themselves on all sides; and so their heart may be said to turn round, or to run to and fro.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 11.*—“*My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*” So miserable am I, that I am left alone as one utterly forsaken;



they are all pieces that recoil and fly back at the first voice of the powder. Yet it is not so much me they stand aloof from as my sore ; for if it were not for my sore, I should have enough of their company easily enough ; but they cannot abide sores, their eyes are too tender to endure to see them, and yet hard enough not to relieve them. Or is it they stand aloof, that is, so near as to show they are willing enough to see them ; but yet so far off as to show they have no meaning to come and help them ! . . . .

" *My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore,*" as fearing more my sore than me ; but "*my kinsmen stand afar off,*" as fearing me no less than my sore ; and where my lovers and friends by standing aloof do but violate the law of a contracted friendship, my kinsmen by standing afar off violate even the law of natural affection ; and is not this a grievous thing, that the law of reason, the law of friendship, the law of nature, shall all be broken rather than I shall be relieved or find assistance ?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 11.*—" *My lovers and my friends stand afar off.*" Deserted by false friends, but conqueror through thee, to thee I speed, who though seeming to act the part of an enemy, yet never changest thy love ; but lovest for ever him whom thou once hast loved. When thou seemest afar off, thou art near. I conceive this sorrow on account of the treachery of false friends, and the cowardliness of my kinsfolk, who are to me as piercing thorns rather than sweet-smelling roses. The proof of affection is seen by deeds. I hear the *name* of kinsman and friend ; I see no deed. To thee, therefore, I flee, whose word is deed ; for I need thy help.—*From the Latin of A. Rivetus.*

*Verse 13.*—" *But I, as a deaf man, heard not ; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*" For why should I hear when I meant not to speak ? and why should I speak when I knew beforehand I should not be heard ? I knew by contesting I should but provoke them, and make them more guilty that were guilty too much before. I therefore thought it better myself to be silent than to set them a roaring and make them grow outrageous. No doubt a great wisdom in David, to know that to be deaf and dumb was in this case his best course, but yet a far greater virtue that knowing it, he was able to do it. Oh, how happy should we be, if we could always do that which we know is best to be done, and if our wills were as ready to act, as our reason is able to enact ; we should then decline many rocks we now run upon, we should then avoid many errors we now run into. To be deaf and dumb are indeed great inabilities and defects, when they be natural ; but when they be voluntary, and I may say artificial, they are then great abilities, or rather perfections.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 13.*—" *But I, as a deaf man, heard not.*" The inspired writer here compares himself to a dumb and deaf man for two reasons. In the first place, he intimates that he was so overwhelmed with the false and wicked judgments of his enemies, that he was not even permitted to open his mouth in his own defence. In the second place, he alleges before God his own patience, as a plea to induce God the more readily to have pity upon him ; for such meekness and gentleness, not only with good reason, secures favour to the afflicted and the innocent, but it is also a sign of true piety.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 14.*—" *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*" You, who truly know yourselves ; by whom silent suffering, secret grief, and hidden joy are understood ; by the knowledge of your own unspoken sorrow, unexpressed, because inexpressible feelings, by the consciousness of the unrevealed depths of your own nature, the earnest, but ever unsatisfied yearnings of your spirit, learn to reverence and love those by whom you are surrounded, whose inner life can never be completely read, but whom you are sure must need sacred sympathy and tender consideration. If a secret grief is constantly gnawing my heart, making my voice falter in the song of praise, may not my brother's down-cast eye and heavy heart be occasioned by a similar cause ; shall I condemn him for his want of gladness ? No : but remember, " the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." The silent breathings of the spirit are not for our ears ; the hot tears which in secret fall, are not for our eyes ; in mercy has the veil been drawn round each heart ; but by the sacred memory of our own sadness, let our voice be gentle, our look tender, our tread quiet, as we pass amongst the mourners.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life," 1867.*



*Verse 15.*—A man that is to go down into a deep pit, he does not throw himself headlong into it, or leap down at all adventures, but fastens a rope at top upon a cross beam or some sure place, and so lets himself down by degrees : so let thyself down into the consideration of thy sin, hanging upon Christ ; and when thou art gone so low that thou canst endure no longer, but art ready to be overcome with the horror and darkness of thy miserable estate, dwell not too long at the gates of hell, lest the devil pull thee in, but wind thyself up again by renewed acts of faith, and “ fly for refuge unto the hope that is set before thee.” Heb. vi. 18.—*Thomas Cole* (1627—1697), in “*Morning Exercises*.”

*Verse 17.*—“*For I am ready to halt :*” to show my infirmity in my trials and afflictions ; as Jacob halted after his wrestling with God. Gen. xxxii. 31. In the Greek, *I am ready for scourges*, that is, to suffer correction and punishment for my sins : so the Chaldee saith, *for calamity*.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

*Verse 18.*—Pliny writeth of some families that had private marks on their bodies peculiar to those of that line, and every man hath, as it were, a private sin, which is most justly called his ; but if we will confess our sins aright, we must not leave out that sin ; nay, our chiefest spite must be against it, according to David’s resolve : “*I will declare mine iniquity ; I will be sorry for my sin*.” . . . David doth not only say, “*I will declare*,” but, “*I will be sorry for my sin*.” The people of God (1 Sam. vii. 6) in the day of their confession not only say, “*We have sinned*,” but draw water, and pour it out before the Lord in token of contrition. We should, in confessing sin, have our hearts so affected, that our eyes, with Job, may “*pour tears before God*” (Job xvi. 20) ; that, with David, “*rivers of tears, may run down our eyes*” (Psalm cxix. 136) ; yea, we should wish with Jeremiah, that “*our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears*.” Jer. ix. 1. But, however, *nonne stillabit oculus noster ?* If we cannot pour out, shall we not drop a tear ? or at least, if we cannot shed a tear, let us breathe forth a sigh for our sins. It is only the heart broken with godly sorrow that sends forth a true confession.—*Nathanael Hardy*.

*Verse 20.*—“*They are mine enemies because I follow the thing that good is*.” It is a bold attempt to ding Satan out of his nest. If we conform us to the men of this world we find peace with them ; they will not discord with us so long as we go their way ; but to shame them by a godly life is an affront they cannot digest ; and to rebuke their sin, findeth at their hand all that Satan disappointed or corruption provoked can devise. A sleeping dog is quiet, but being stirred, turneth all in barking and biting. Not to do as they do is matter enough of anger, but a reproof is the highest degree of disgrace in their account. All that hatred which they ought to bear to Satan and his instruments, is turned upon God in his rebuking and reclaiming servants. That anger that in remorse should burn against their own sin is set against their reprovers.—*William Struther*.

*Verse 22.*—“*O Lord my salvation*.” Faith the suppliant is now made faith triumphant.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

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#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Title.*—The art of memory. Holy memorabilia. The usefulness of sacred remembrances.

*Verse 1.*—The rebuke of God’s wrath. I. Richly deserved. II. Reasonably dreaded. III. Earnestly deprecated.—*B. Davies*.

*Verse 1.*—The evil consequences of sin in this world.—*J. J. Blunt*.

*Verse 1.*—The bitterest of bitters, “*thy wrath* ;” why deprecated ; and how escaped.

*Verse 2.*—God sharply chasteneth many of his children, and yet for all that he loves them never a whit the less, nor withholdeth in good time his mercy from them.—*Thomas Wilcocks*.

*Verse 3 (last clause).*—Sin causes *unrest*. He who cures it alone gives rest. Dwell on both facts.

*Verse 4 (first clause).*—Sin in its relations to us. To the *eye* pleasing. To the *heart* disappointing. In the *bones* vexing. Over the *head* overwhelming.

*Verse 4.*—The confession of an awakened sinner.

*Verse 4 (last clause).*—Sin. I. Heavy—“*a burden*.” II. Very heavy—“*a heavy burden*.” III. Superlatively heavy—“*too heavy for me*.” IV. Not immovable, for though *too heavy for me*, yet Jesus bore it.

*Verse 5.*—“*Foolishness*.” The folly of sin. Everything that a man has to do with sin shows his folly. I. Dallying with sin. II. Committing it. III. Continuing in it. IV. Hiding it. V. Palliating it.—*B. Davies*.

*Verse 6.*—Conviction of sin. Its grief, its depth, its continuance.

*Verse 6.*—“*I go mourning*.” I. Unlawful reasons for mourning. II. Legitimate themes for sorrow. III. Valuable alleviations of grief.

*Verse 9.*—The many desires of God’s children : the fact that God understands them even when unexpressed ; and the certainty that he will grant them.

*Verse 9.*—Omniscience, a source of consolation to the desponding.

*Verse 13.*—The wisdom, dignity, power and difficulty of silence.

*Verse 15.*—Prayer, the offspring of hope.

Hope strengthened by confidence in God’s answering prayer.

*Verse 17.*—Mr. Ready-to-Halt. His pedigree, and infirmity ; his crutches, and his cure ; his history, and safe departure.

*Verse 18.*—The excellence of penitent confession.

*Verse 18.*—The twin children of grace—confession and contrition : their mutual revelation and reaction.

*Verse 18 (last clause).*—There is good reason for such sorrow, God is well pleased with it. It benefits the mourner.

*Verse 19.*—The terrible energy and industry of the powers of evil.

*Verse 22.*—Faith tried, faith trembling, faith crying, faith grasping, faith conquering.

