

PSALM XXXIX.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, even to Jeduthun. *Jeduthun's name, which signifies praising or celebrating, was a most appropriate one for a leader in sacred psalmody. He was one of those ordained by the King's order "for song in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psalteries, and harps" (1 Chron. xv. 6), and his children after him appear to have remained in the same hallowed service, even so late as the days of Nehemiah. To have a name and a place in Zion is no small honour, and to hold this place by a long entail of grace is an unspeakable blessing. O that our households may never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to do him service. David left this somewhat sorrowful ode in Jeduthun's hands because he thought him most fit to set it to music, or because he would distribute the sacred honour of song among all the musicians who in their turn presided in the choir. A Psalm of David. Such as his chequered life would be sure to produce; fit effusion for a man so tempted, so strong in his passions, and yet so firm in faith.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist, bowed down with sickness and sorrow, is burdened with unbelieving thoughts, which he resolves to stifle, lest any evil should come from their expression, 1, 2. But silence creates an insupportable grief, which at last demands utterance, and obtains it in the prayer of verses 3 to 6, which is almost a complaint and a sigh for death, or at best, a very desponding picture of human life. From verses 7 to 13 the tone is more submissive, and the recognition of the divine hand more distinct: the cloud has evidently passed, and the mourner's heart is relieved.*

EXPOSITION.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.
2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

1. "*I said.*" I steadily resolved and registered a determination. In his great perplexity his greatest fear was lest he should sin; and, therefore, he cast about for the most likely method for avoiding it, and he determined to be silent. It is right excellent when a man can strengthen himself in a good course by the remembrance of a well and wisely-formed resolve. "What I have written I have written," or what I have spoken I will perform, may prove a good strengthener to a man in a fixed course of right. "*I will take heed to my ways.*" To avoid sin one had need be very circumspect, and keep one's actions as with a guard or garrison. Unguarded ways are generally unholy ones. Heedless is another word for graceless. In times of sickness or other trouble we must watch against the sins peculiar to such trials, especially against murmuring and repining. "*That I sin not with my tongue.*" Tongue sins are great sins: like sparks of fire ill-words spread, and do great damage. If benevers utter hard words of God in times of depression, the ungodly will take them up and use them as a justification for their sinful courses. If a man's own children rail at him, no wonder if his enemies' mouths are full of abuse. Our tongue always wants watching, for it is restive as an ill-broken horse; but especially must we hold it in when the sharp cuts of the Lord's rod excite it to rebel. "*I will keep my mouth with a bridle,*" or more accurately, with a muzzle. The original does not so much mean a bridle to check the tongue as a muzzle to stop it altogether. David was not quite so wise as our translation would make him; if he had resolved to be very guarded in his speech, it would have been altogether commendable, but when he went so far as to condemn himself to entire silence, "*even from good,*" there must have been at least a little sullenness in his soul. In trying to avoid one fault, he fell into another. To use the tongue against God is a sin of commission, but not to use it at all involves an evident sin of omission. Commendable virtues may be followed so eagerly that we may fall into vices; to avoid Scylla we run into Charybdis. "*While the wicked is before me.*" This qualifies the silence, and almost screens it from criticism, for bad men are so sure

to misuse even our holiest speech, that it is as well not to cast any of our pearls before such swine; but what if the Psalmist meant, "I was silent while I had the prosperity of the wicked in my thoughts," then we see the discontent and questioning of his mind, and the muzzled mouth indicates much that is not to be commended. Yet, if we blame we must also praise, for the highest wisdom suggests that when good men are bewildered with sceptical thoughts, they should not hasten to repeat them, but should fight out their inward battle upon its own battlefield. The firmest believers are exercised with unbelief, and it would be doing the devil's work with a vengeance if they were to publish abroad all their questionings and suspicions. If I have the fever myself, there is no reason why I should communicate it to my neighbours. If any on board the vessel of my soul are diseased, I will put my heart in quarantine, and allow none to go on shore in the boat of speech till I have a clean bill of health.

2. "*I was dumb with silence.*" He was as strictly speechless as if he had been tongueless—not a word escaped him. He was as silent as the dumb. "*I held my peace, even from good.*" Neither bad nor good escaped his lips. Perhaps he feared that if he began to talk at all, he would be sure to speak amiss, and, therefore, he totally abstained. It was an easy, safe, and effectual way of avoiding sin, if it did not involve a neglect of the duty which he owed to God to speak well of his name. Our divine Lord was silent before the wicked, but not altogether so, for before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and asserted his kingdom. A sound course of action may be pushed to the extreme, and become a fault. "*And my sorrow was stirred.*" Inward grief was made to work and ferment by want of vent. The pent-up floods were swollen and agitated. Utterance is the natural outlet for the heart's anguish, and silence is, therefore, both an aggravation of the evil and a barrier against its cure. In such a case the resolve to hold one's peace needs powerful backing, and even this is most likely to give way when grief rushes upon the soul. Before a flood gathering in force and foaming for outlet the strongest banks are likely to be swept away. Nature may do her best to silence the expression of discontent, but unless grace comes to her rescue, she will be sure to succumb.

3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue,

4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; *that* I may know how frail I am.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age is *as* nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

3. "*My heart was hot within me.*" The friction of inward thoughts produced an intense mental heat. The door of his heart was shut, and with the fire of sorrow burning within, the chamber of his soul soon grew unbearable with heat. Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour it out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath. "*While I was musing the fire burned.*" As he thought upon the ease of the wicked and his own daily affliction, he could not unravel the mystery of providence, and therefore he became greatly agitated. While his heart was musing it was fusing, for the subject was confusing. It became harder every moment to be quiet; his volcanic soul was tossed with an inward ocean of fire, and heaved to and fro with a mental earthquake; an eruption was imminent, the burning lava must pour forth in a fiery stream. "*Then spake I with my tongue.*" The original is grandly laconic. "*I spake.*" The muzzled tongue burst all its bonds. The gag was hurled away. Misery, like murder, will out. You can silence praise, but anguish is clamorous. Resolve or no resolve, heed or no heed, sin or no sin, the impetuous torrent forced for itself a channel and swept away every restraint.

4. "*Lord.*" It is well that the vent of his soul was Godward and not towards man. Oh! if my swelling heart must speak, Lord let it speak with thee; even if there be too much of natural heat in what I say, thou wilt be more patient with

me than man, and upon thy purity it can cast no stain ; whereas if I speak to my fellows, they may harshly rebuke me or else learn evil from my petulance. “ *Make me to know my end.*” Did he mean the same as Elias in his agony, “ Let me die, I am no better than my fathers ?” Perhaps so. At any rate, he rashly and petulantly desired to know the end of his wretched life, that he might begin to reckon the days till death should put a finis to his woe. Impatience would pry between the folded leaves. As if there were no other comfort to be had, unbelief would fain hide itself in the grave and sleep itself into oblivion. David was neither the first nor the last who had spoken unadvisedly in prayer. Yet, there is a better meaning : the Psalmist would know more of the shortness of life, that he might better bear its transient ills, and herein we may safely kneel with him, uttering the same petition. That there is no end to its misery is the hell of hell ; that there is an end to life’s sorrow is the hope of all who have a hope beyond the grave. God is the best teacher of the divine philosophy which looks for an expected end. They who see death through the Lord’s glass, see a fair sight, which makes them forget the evil of life in foreseeing the end of life. “ *And the measure of my days.*” David would fain be assured that his days would be soon over and his trials with them ; he would be taught anew that life is measured out to us by wisdom, and is not a matter of chance. As the trader measures his cloth by inches, and ells, and yards, so with scrupulous accuracy is life measured out to man. “ *That I may know how frail I am,*” or when I shall cease to be. Alas ! poor human nature, dear as life is, man quarrels with God at such a rate that he would sooner cease to be than bear the Lord’s appointment. Such pettishness in a saint ! Let us wait till we are in a like position, and we shall do no better. The ship on the stocks wonders that the barque springs a leak, but when it has tried the high seas, it marvels that its timbers hold together in such storms. David’s case is not recorded for our imitation, but for our learning.

5. “ *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.*” Upon consideration, the Psalmist finds little room to bewail the length of life, but rather to bemoan its shortness. What changeable creatures we are ! One moment we cry to be rid of existence, and the next instant beg to have it prolonged ! A handbreadth is one of the shortest natural measures, being the breadth of four fingers ; such is the brevity of life, by divine appointment ; God has made it so, fixing the period in wisdom. The “ *behold* ” calls us to attention ; to some the thought of life’s hastiness will bring the acutest pain, to others the most solemn earnestness. How well should those live who are to live so little ! Is my earthly pilgrimage so brief ? then let me watch every step of it, that in the little of time there may be much of grace. “ *And mine age is as nothing before thee.*” So short as not to amount to an entity. Think of eternity, and an angel is as a new-born babe, the world a fresh blown bubble, the sun a spark just fallen from the fire, and man a nullity. Before the Eeternal, all the age of frail man is less than one ticking of a clock. “ *Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*” This is the surest truth, that nothing about man is either sure or true. Take man at his best, he is but a man, and man is a mere breath, unsubstantial as the wind. Man is *settled*, as the margin has it, and by divine decree it is settled that he shall not be settled. He is constant only in inconstancy. His vanity is his only verity ; his best, of which he is vain, is but vain ; and this is verily true of every man, that everything about him is every way fleeting. This is sad news for those whose treasures are beneath the moon ; those whose glorying is in themselves may well hang the flag half-mast ; but those whose best estate is settled upon them in Christ Jesus in the land of unfading flowers, may rejoice that it is no vain thing in which they trust.

6. “ *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew.*” Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us ; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial ; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. Worldly men walk like travellers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair. “ *Surely they are disquieted in vain.*” Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end his labour lost ; for like the treasure of the miser’s dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamour of the market, the hum of the ex-

change, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over-worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon. "*He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*" He misses often the result of his ventures, for there are many slips between the cup and the lips. His wheat is sheaved, but an interloping robber bears it away—as often happens with the poor Eastern husbandman; or, the wheat is even stored, but the invader feasts thereon. Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all-gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all-scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. We know not our heirs, for our children die, and strangers fill the old ancestral halls; estates change hands, and entail, though riveted with a thousand bonds, yields to the corroding power of time. Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its first builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope *is* in thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst *it*.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

7. "*And now, Lord, what wait I for?*" What is there in these phantoms to enchant me? Why should I linger where the prospect is so uninviting, and the present so trying? It were worse than vanity to linger in the abodes of sorrow to gain a heritage of emptiness. The Psalmist, therefore, turns to his God, in disgust of all things else; he has thought on the world and all things in it, and is relieved by knowing that such vain things are all passing away; he has cut all cords which bound him to earth, and is ready to sound "*Boot and saddle, up and away.*" "*My hope is in thee.*" The Lord is self-existent and true, and therefore worthy of the confidence of men; he will live when all the creatures die, and his fulness will abide when all second causes are exhausted; to him, therefore, let us direct our expectation, and on him let us rest our confidence. Away from sand to rock let all wise builders turn themselves, for if not to-day, yet surely ere long, a storm will rise before which nothing will be able to stand but that which has the lasting element of faith in God to cement it. David had but one hope, and that hope entered within the veil, hence he brought his vessel to safe anchorage, and after a little drifting all was peace.

8. "*Deliver me from all my transgressions.*" How fair a sign it is when the Psalmist no longer harps upon his sorrows, but begs freedom from his sins! What is sorrow when compared with sin! Let but the poison of sin be gone from the cup, and we need not fear its gall, for the bitter will act medicinally. None can deliver a man from his transgressions but the blessed One who is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins; and when he once works this great deliverance for a man from the cause, the consequences are sure to disappear too. The thorough cleansing desired is well worthy of note: to be saved from some transgressions would be of small benefit; total and perfect deliverance is needed. "*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*" The wicked are the foolish here meant: such are always on the watch for the faults of saints, and at once make them the theme of ridicule. It is a wretched thing for a man to be suffered to make himself the butt

of unholy scorn by apostasy from the right way. Alas, how many have thus exposed themselves to well-deserved reproach! Sin and shame go together and from both David would fain be preserved.

9. "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*" This had been far clearer if it had been rendered, "I am silenced, I will not open my mouth." Here we have a nobler silence, purged of all sullenness, and sweetened with submission. Nature failed to muzzle the mouth, but grace achieved the work in the worthiest manner. How like in appearance may two very different things appear! silence is ever silence, but it may be sinful in one case and saintly in another. What a reason for hushing every murmuring thought is the reflection, "because thou didst it"! It is his right to do as he wills, and he always wills to do that which is wisest and kindest; why should I then arraign his dealings? Nay, if it be indeed the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

10. "*Remove thy stroke away from me.*" Silence from all repining did not prevent the voice of prayer, which must never cease. In all probability the Lord would grant the Psalmist's petition, for he usually removes affliction when we are resigned to it; if we kiss the rod, our Father always burns it. When we are still, the rod is soon still. It is quite consistent with resignation to pray for the removal of a trial. David was fully acquiescent in the divine will, and yet found it in his heart to pray for deliverance; indeed, it was while he was rebellious that he was prayerless about his trial, and only when he became submissive did he plead for mercy. "*I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.*" Good pleas may be found in our weakness and distress. It is well to show our Father the bruises which his scourge has made, for peradventure his fatherly pity will bind his hands, and move him to comfort us in his bosom. It is not to consume us, but to consume our sins, that the Lord aims at in his chastisements.

11. "*When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity.*" God does not trifle with his rod; he uses it because of sin, and with a view to whip us from it; hence he means his strokes to be felt, and felt they are. "*Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.*" As the moth frets the substance of the fabric, mars all its beauty, and leaves it worn out and worthless, so do the chastisements of God discover to us our folly, weakness, and nothingness, and make us feel ourselves to be as worn-out vestures, worthless and useless. Beauty must be a poor thing when a moth can consume it and a rebuke can mar it. All our desires and delights are wretched moth-eaten things when the Lord visits us in his anger. "*Surely every man is vanity.*" He is as Trapp wittily says "a curious picture of nothing." He is unsubstantial as his own breath, a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. *Selah.* Well may this truth bring us to a pause, like the dead body of Amasa, which, lying in the way, stopped the hosts of Joab.

12. "*Hear my prayer, O Lord.*" Drown not my pleadings with the sound of thy strokes. Thou hast heard the clamour of my sins, Lord, hear the laments of my prayers. "*And give ear unto my cry.*" Here is an advance in intensity: a cry is more vehement, pathetic, and impassioned, than a prayer. The main thing was to have the Lord's ear and heart. "*Hold not thy peace at my tears.*" This is a yet higher degree of importunate pleading. Who can withstand tears, which are the irresistible weapons of weakness? How often women, children, beggars, and sinners, have betaken themselves to tears as their last resort, and therewith have won the desire of their hearts!—"This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul," falls not in vain. Tears speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues; they act as keys upon the wards of tender hearts, and mercy denies them nothing, if through them the weeper looks to richer drops, even to the blood of Jesus. When our sorrows pull up the sluices of our eyes, God will ere long interpose and turn our mourning into joy. Long may he be quiet as though he regarded not, but the hour of deliverance will come, and come like the morning when the dewdrops are plentiful. "*For I am a stranger with thee.*" Not to thee, but with thee. Like thee, my Lord, a stranger among the sons of men, an alien from my mother's children. God made the world, sustains it, and owns it, and yet men treat him as though he were a foreign intruder; and as they treat the Master, so do they deal with the servants. "'Tis no surprising thing that we should be unknown." These words may also mean, "I share the hospitality of God," like a stranger entertained by a generous host. Israel was bidden to deal tenderly with the stranger, and the God of Israel has in much compassion treated us poor aliens with unbounded liberality. "*And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*" They knew

that this was not their rest; they passed through life in pilgrim guise, they used the world as travellers use an inn, and even so do I. Why should we dream of rest on earth when our fathers' sepulchres are before our eyes? If they had been immortal, their sons would have had an abiding city this side the tomb; but as the sires were mortal, so must their offspring pass away. All of our lineage, without exception, were passing pilgrims, and such are we. David uses the fleeting nature of our life as an argument for the Lord's mercy, and it is such a one as God will regard. We show pity to poor pilgrims, and so will the Lord.

13. "*O spare me.*" Put by thy rod. Turn away thine angry face. Give me breathing time. Do not kill me. "*That I may recover strength.*" Let me have sufficient cessation from pain, to be able to take repose and nourishment, and so recruit my wasted frame. He expects to die soon, but begs a little respite from sorrow, so as to be able to rally and once more enjoy life before its close. "*Before I go hence, and be no more.*" So far as this world is concerned, death is a being no more; such a state awaits us, we are hurrying onward towards it. May the short interval which divides us from it be gilded with the sunlight of our heavenly Father's love. It is sad to be an invalid from the cradle to the grave, far worse to be under the Lord's chastisements by the month together, but what are these compared with the endurance of the endless punishment threatened to those who die in their sins!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—"To Jeduthun." A Levite of the family of Merari, and one of the great masters of the temple of music. The department superintended by Jeduthun and his colleagues in the temple service was that of the "instruments of the song of God," by which are intended the nebel or psaltery, the kinnor or harp, and the metsiltain or cymbals. In 2 Chron. xxxv. 15, Jeduthun is called "the king's seer," which would seem to indicate that he was the medium of divine guidance to David. The name occurs in the title of Psalms xxxix., lxii., lxxvii.; where some have thought that it indicates some special kind of composition, and others some instrument of music, but without reason.—*William Lindsay Alexander, in Kitto's Cyclopædia.*

Whole Psalm.—The most beautiful of all the elegies in the Psalter.—*H. Ewald.*

Verse 1.—"I said." It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that, some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast has anything of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness, and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavour to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 1.—No lesson so hard to be learned of us here, as the wise and discreet government of the tongue. David promised a singular care of this, "*I said, I will take heed,*" etc. Socrates reports of one Pambo, an honest, well meaning man, who came to his friend, desiring him to teach him one of David's Psalms, he read

to him this verse. He answered: this one verse is enough, if I learn it well. Nineteen years after, he said, in all that time he had hardly learned that one verse.—*Samuel Page.*

Verse 1.—“*That I sin not with my tongue.*” Man’s mouth, though it be but a little hole, will hold a world full of sin. For there is not any sin forbidden in the law or gospel which is not spoken by the tongue, as well as thought in the heart, or done in the life. Is it not then almost as difficult to rule the tongue as to rule the world?—*Edward Reynor.*

Verse 1.—“*I will keep a muzzle on my mouth, whilst a wicked man is before me.*” —*New Translation, by Charles Carter.*

Verse 1.—“*While the wicked is before me.*” It is a vexation to be tied to hear so much impertinent babbling in the world, but profitable to discern and abhor it. A wonder that men can cast out so much wind, and the more they have to utter, the more they are prodigal of their own breath and of the patience of others, and careless of their own reckoning. If they believed to give account of every idle word, they would be more sparing of foolish speaking. I like either to be silent, or to speak that that may edify. At tables or meetings I cannot stop the mouths of others, yet may I close mine own ears, and by a heavenly soul-speech with God divert my mind from fruitless talking. Though I be among them I shall as little partake their prattling as they do my meditation.—*William Struther.*

Verse 2.—“*I was dumb with silence,*” etc. That is, for a while I did what I resolved; I was so long wholly silent, that I seemed in a manner to be dumb, and not able to speak. “*I held my peace, even from good;*” that is, I forbore to speak what I might well and lawfully enough have spoken, as from alleging anything that I might have said in mine own defence, from making my complaint to God, and desiring justice at his hands, and such like; to wit, lest by degrees I should have been brought to utter anything that was evil, and whilst I intended only to speak that which was good, some unseemly word might suddenly slip from me; or lest mine enemies should misconstrue anything I spake.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 2.—“*I was dumb with silence.*”—We shall enquire what kind of *dumbness* or *silence* this of the Psalmist was, which he is commended for, and which would so well beseech us when we smart under the rod of God, and then the doctrine will be, in a great measure, evident by its own light. We shall proceed in our enquiry, 1. Negatively, to prevent mistakes. 2. Positively, and show you what it doth import.

First, negatively. 1. This dumbness doth not import any such thing, as if the prophet had been brought to that pass that he had nothing to say to God by way of prayer and supplication. He was not so dumb, but that he could *pray and cry too*. Verses 8, 10, 11. 2. Nor was he so dumb, as that he could not frame to the confession and bewailing of his sins. 3. Nor was it a dumbness of stupidity and senselessness. It doth not imply any such thing, as if by degrees he grew to that pass, he cared not for, or made no matter of his affliction, but set, as the proverb is, an hard heart against his hard hap. No, he did make his moan to God, and as he smarted, so he did lament under the sense of his afflicting hand. 4. Neither was he so dumb as not to answer God’s voice in the rod that was upon him. 5. Much less was he dumb, and kept silence in any such sort as they did of whom Amos speaks (vi. 10), that in their misery they took up a resolution *to mention the name of God no more*, in whom they had gloried formerly.

Secondly, affirmatively. 1. He was dumb so as neither to complain of, nor quarrel with God’s providence, nor to entertain any hard thoughts against him. Complain to God he did; but *against* him he durst not. 2. He neither did nor durst quarrel, or fall out with the ways of holiness for all his sufferings, a thing we are naturally prone unto. 3. He was dumb, so as not to defend himself, or justify his own ways before God, as if they were righteous, and he had not deserved what he suffered. 4. He was dumb, so as to hearken to the voice of the rod. “*I will (saith he in another place) hear what God the Lord will speak.*” Psalm lxxxv. 8. Now a man cannot listen to another while he will have all the talk and discourse to himself. 5. Lastly, the prophet was dumb, that is, he did acquiesce, and rest satisfied with God’s dispensation; and that not only as good, but as best.—*Condensed from a Funeral Sermon by Thomas Burroughes, B.D., entitled, “A Sovereign Remedy for all kindes of Grief,”* 1657.

Verse 2.—“*I held my peace.*” A Christian being asked what fruit he had by

Christ : Is not this fruit, said he, not to be moved at your reproaches ? In cases of this nature, we must refer all to God ; *si tu tacueris, Deus loquitur* ; if thou hold thy peace, God speaks for thee ; and if God speaks for us, it is better than we can speak for ourselves. David saith, *Obmutui, quia tu fecisti*. “ *I held my peace, for it was thy doing.*”—*Christopher Sutton, B.D., 1629, in Discæ Vivere.*

Verses 2—9.—An invalid who had been ordered a couple of pills, took them very absurdly, for, in place of swallowing them at once, he rolled them about in his mouth, ground them to pieces, and so tasted their full bitterness. Gotthold was present, and thus mused : The insults and calumnies of a slanderer and adversary are bitter pills, and all do not understand the art of swallowing without chewing them. To the Christian, however, they are wholesome in many ways. They remind him of his guilt, they try his meekness and patience, they show him what he needs to guard against, and at last they redound to his honour and glory in the sight of him for whose sake they were endured. In respect of the pills of slander, however, as well as the others, it is advisable not to roll them about continually in our minds, or judge of them according to the flesh, and the world’s opinion. This will only increase their bitterness, spread the savour of it to the tongue, and fill the heart with proportional enmity. The true way is to *swallow, keep silence and forget*. We must inwardly devour our grief, and say, “ *I will be dumb, and not open my mouth, because thou didst it.*” The best antidotes to the bitterness of slander, are the sweet promises and consolations of Scripture, of which not the least is this, “ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven.” Matt. v. 11, 12. Alas, my God ! how hard it is to swallow the pills of obloquy, to bless them that curse me, to do good to them that hate me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me ! *But, Lord, as thou wilt have it so, give it as thou wilt have it*, for it is a matter in which, without thy grace, I can do nothing !—*Christian Scriver.*

Verse 3.—“ *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned.*” They say of the loadstone (that wonder in nature), when either by carelessness in keeping it, or by some accident it loses its virtue, yet by laying it some good space of time in the filings of steel, it will again recover its virtues : when the spirit of a Christian by not looking well to it, loses of its heavenly heat and liveliness, the way of recovery is by laying it astep in this so warming and quickening meditation. Oh, how burning and flaming may we often observe the spirit of the holy Psalmist David, in his acting of meditation ! Musing made him hot, yea, burning hot at the heart. Thus oft in the beginning of a Psalm we find his heart low and discouraged but as this musing was acted and heightened, his spirit grew hotter, and at last flies all on a flame, flies up to a very high pitch of heavenly heat. Oh, how do all the conscientious practisers of meditation, ever and anon experience these happy, heavenly heats, and heart-enlargements ! Ah, if all the saints’ so glorious heart-quickenings were gathered together, what a rich chain of pearls, pearls of rare experiences, would they make up of the heart-warming efficacies of meditation.—*Nathanael Ranew.*

Verse 3.—“ *I was musing.*” What a blessed (shall I say duty or) privilege is prayer ! Now meditation is a help to prayer. Gerson calls it the nurse of prayer. Meditation is like oil to the lamp ; the lamp of prayer will soon go out unless meditation cherish and support it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles, if you separate one the other dies ; a cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in the angle ; when the heart is warmed by meditation, now is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a Christian is fittest by prayer to discharge ; now he sends up whole volleys of sighs and groans to heaven. Meditation hath a double benefit in it, it pours in and pours out ; first it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again into prayer ; meditation first furnisheth with matter to pray and then it furnisheth with a heart to pray. “ *I was musing,*” saith David, and the very next words are a prayer, “ *Lord, make me to know mine end.*” I muse on the works of thy hands, I stretch forth my hands to thee. The musing of his head made way for the stretching forth of his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the Mount, then he prayed : so when the soul is upon the mount of

meditation, now it is in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation: meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—“*Musing.*” Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore, soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is *in proxima potentia* to prayer. This was an ejaculatory prayer shot from his soul when in the company of the wicked.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 3.—“*The fire burned.*” My thoughts kindled my passions.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 3.—“*The fire burned.*” Meditate so long till thou findest thy heart grow warm in this duty. If, when a man is cold you ask how long he should stand by the fire? sure, till he be thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, thy heart is cold; never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer, but it freezeth there; now stand at the fire of meditation till thou findest thy affections warmed, and thou art made fit for spiritual service. David mused till his heart waxed hot within him. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard: “Lord, I will never come away from thee without thee.” Let this be a Christian’s resolution, not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him; some moving of the bowels after God; some flammings of love, Cant. v. 4.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3.—His company was bad, but his thoughts were good; even while the wicked was before him his heart was hot within him, while he was musing the fire burned. His thoughts inflame his affections with holy zeal, and this *holy fire*, as by an antepertasis, burnt so much the hotter for the frost of cursed contrariety that was about it. When the careful magistrates or officers of a city break into a suspected house in the night-time, the great question is, What company have you here? So when God breaks in upon our dark hearts, the enquiry is, What thoughts have you here? Why do thoughts arise in your minds? Are ye not become judges of evil thoughts? Luke xxiv. 38; James ii. 4.—*Faithful Teat.*

Verse 3.—“*Then spake I with my tongue, Lord,*” etc. It is, indeed, a happy circumstance when that silence which has long been perserved is first broken before the Lord.—*John Morison.*

Verse 4.—“*Lord, make me to know mine end,*” etc. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. . . . We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life; yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 4.—“*Lord, make me to know mine end.*” David would know his *end*, not so much his death—the end consuming, as Christ the Lord of life—the end and perfection of all our desires; or know it, not for vain science, but in his experience feel the reward of his patience. Though thy chastisement be sharp, it will be but short, and therein sweet; thou shalt lie still and be quiet, thou shalt sleep and be at rest, Job iii. 13, 17, 18, 19. How few and evil soever thy days be in the world, by patience and rolling thyself upon God they will prove unto thee both long enough and good.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 4.—“*Lord, make me to know mine end,*” etc. Seeing that both sorrow and joy are both able to kill you, and your life hangeth upon so small a thread, that the least gnat in the air can choke you, as it choked a pope of Rome; a little hair in your milk strangle you, as it did a councillor in Rome; a stone of a raisin stop your breath, as it did the breath of Anacreon: put not the evil day far from you, which the ordinance of God hath put so near; “Remember your Creator in time, before the days comes wherein you shall say, We have no pleasure in them;” walk not always with your faces to the east, sometimes have an eye to the west, where the sun goeth down; sit not ever in the prow of the ship, sometimes go to the stern; “stand in your watch-towers,” as the creature doth (Rom. viii. 19), and wait for the hour of your deliverance; provide your armies before that dreadful king cometh to fight against you with his greater forces; order your houses before you die, that is, dispose of your bodies and souls, and all the implements of them both; let not your eyes be gadding after pleasure, nor your ear itching after rumours, nor your minds wandering in the fields, when death is in your houses; your bodies are not brass, nor your strength the strength of stones, your life none inheritance, your breath no more than as the vapour and smoke of the chimney within your

nostrils, or as a stranger within your gates, coming and going again, not to return any more till the day of final redemption.—*John King.*

Verse 4.—“*Lord, make me to know mine end,*” etc. ’Tis worthy your notice, that passage you read of in Scripture, 1 Sam. x. 2. Samuel, when he had anointed Saul king, and the people had chosen him, what signal doth he give him, to confirm him anointed? It was to go to Rachel’s sepulchre. Now the reason is this, that he might not be glutted with the preferments and honours he was entering upon. The emperors of Constantinople, in their inaugurations, on their coronation days, had a mason come and show them several marble stones, and ask them to choose which of those should be made ready for their grave-stones. And so we read of Joseph of Arimathea, that he had his tomb in his garden, to check the pleasures of the place.—*Christopher Love.*

Verse 4.—“*How frail I am.*” Between Walsall and Iretsy, in Cheshire, is a house built in 1636, of thick oak framework, filled in with brick. Over the window of the tap-room is still legible, cut in the oak, the following Latin inscription:—*Fletes si scires unum tua tempora mensem; rides cum non scis si sit forsitan una dies.* The sense of which is “You would weep if you knew that your life was limited to one month, yet you laugh while you know not but it may be restricted to a day.” How sad the thought, that with this silent monitor, this truthful sermon before their very eyes, numbers have revelled in soul-destructive inebriation! And yet this is but a likeness of what we see constantly about us.—*Quoted in a Monthly Periodical.*

Verse 5.—“*My days.*” Man’s life is styled *days* because it is not conferred upon us by wholesale, by months and years, but by retail of days, hours, minutes, moments, as to check our curiosity in making enquiry how long we have to live (verse 4); so acquainting us with the brevity thereof, we may learn to depend upon God’s bounty for the *loan* of our life, employ it for his glory, and every day prepare for the Bridegroom, Christ.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—“*My days an handbreath.*” That is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by: each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span: that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a handbreath, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that! Many attain not to a finger-breadth: multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood!—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 5.—“*Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreath.*” The line where-with our lives are measured, is made both of coarse and fine thread. 1. It is measured by itself, and considerable in its own frailty; so the just length of it is “*an handbreath.*” 2. Secondly, with eternity, so it is found to be as nothing: “*Mine age is as nothing before thee.*” “*An handbreath,*” and is that all? So he saith, that exactly measureth them all, and whatsoever else was created with his own hand. A handbreath is one of the shortest kind of measures. There is an ell, a cubit, and a palm or handbreath, whereof there be two kinds, the greater and the less. The greater handbreath is the whole space betwixt the top of the thumb and the little finger, when the hand is extended, called a span, in account near twelve inches. The lesser handbreadth, in a more proper and strict signification, is the just breadth of the four fingers of the hand closed together, here chiefly intended, this interpretation best agreeing with the original, and complying most with the prophet’s mind, by the unanimous consent of the choice interpreters.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 5.—“*Mine age is as nothing before thee.*” 1. David might truly have said, Mine age is short in respect of Methuselah’s; the days of Methuselah are said to be nine hundred sixty and nine years; the days of David, by computation of the time when he began and how long he reigned were not much above three score and ten, so that he lived not so many tens as Methuselah did hundreds. 2. David might have said, Mine age is very short in comparison of the age of the world. St. Paul saith of the fashion of this Macrocosm, it passeth away (1 Cor. vii. 31); but the age of the microcosm, man, passeth away far swifter. 3. David might have said, Mine age in this world is exceeding little in comparison of the duration of the other world. 4. Finally, David might have said, Mine age is scarcely anything before the angels, whose duration began with this world and shall continue in the world to come, and so is coetaneous with both the worlds. But all these are far

short of this comparison which he here maketh of his age *with God* which is eternal, both *a parte ante*, and *a parte post*, from everlasting to everlasting.—*Nathanael Hardy.*

Verse 5.—“*As nothing.*” If a man be so diminutive a creature, compared with the fabric of that great world, and the world itself so little that it cannot contain the Lord, so little and light that he feels not the weight thereof upon the tip of his finger, man will well merit the name “*nothing*,” when he is placed before the Lord. The keel of man’s life is laden with more vanity than verity and substance, if the searcher of the reins and heart come aboard to view it. Ten thousand of our days will not make God one year, and a thousand of our years in his sight are but “as a day when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” As drops of rain are unto the sea, and as a gravel stone is in comparison of the sand, so are a thousand years to the days everlasting.—*Edmund Layfelde.*

Verse 5.—“*Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*” The Holy Spirit is pleased elsewhere to speak more sparingly, as it were, in favour of man; he discovers the nakedness, but yet comes backward to cast a garment of lenity over it, that somewhat shadows the shame of it. “Man is like to vanity (Ps. cxliv. 4); their days consume in vanity (Ps. lxxviii. 33); Man is vanity” (Ps. xxxix. 11); but here with open mouth and unveiled terms full of emphasis, he proclaims every man to be *abstracted vanity*; and as if that were short he adds, *he is all vanity; mere vanity, all manner of vanity, altogether vanity*: nothing else, nothing less; yea, somewhat more than vanity, “*lighter than vanity*” (Ps. lxii. 9); and “vanity of vanities.” Eccl. i. 2. And that no place of dubitation may be left, he ushers the doctrine unto our hearts with a strong asseveration; *assuredly, in truth*, without all controversy, “*man is altogether vanity.*”—*Edmund Layfelde.*

Verse 5.—“*Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.*” Bythner expounds it thus. “*Every man at his best state is altogether vanity; hoc est omni ex parte, ita ut vanitas et miseria quæ per creaturas frustratim spargitur in uno homine aggregata videatur: sic homo evadit compendium omnium vanitatum quæ in creaturis extant: that is, he is the sink and centre of all the vanities in the world; he is as it were the universe of vanity.*—*Quoted in William Reynold’s Funeral Sermon for the Honourable Francis Pierrepont, 1657.*

Verse 5.—“*Every Adam standing is all Abel.*”—*See Hebrew Text.*

Verse 5.—“*Selah.*” A little word, yet of no small difficulty to explain. Left out of the *Bible* by the vulgar translators, as though it were *impertinent*, where, let them consider, whether they come not within the verge of that malediction in *Revelation* xxii. 19. The ancient interpreters did not much meddle with it, and our editions leave it *uninterpreted*. But seeing “*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Romans xv. 4), and till “*heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*” (Matt. v. 18), we have sufficient warrant after the example of the learned, and encouragement to make enquiry after the mind of the Holy Spirit, in that which he hath both *commanded* to be written, and hath *commended* unto us. Wherein, like the crystal glass, I will rather present you with the true visage of antiquity, than use any new-framed feature or painting of my own.

Selah is mentioned *seventy-four times* in the Scripture, whereof seventy-one in the book of Psalms, and thrice in the prophet Habakkuk, which is written Psalm-wise; and it is ever placed in the end of a Psalm or verse, four places only excepted, where, like the sun in the midst of the planets, it is seated to con-join the precedent words with the subsequent, and communicate splendour unto both. There was a threefold use of it in ancient times, whereof the first concerned the music; the second, the matter handled unto which it was affixed; and the third, the men or congregation assembled in the temple of the Lord, which two last may still have place among us Christians, who are ingrafted into the stock Christ, from whence the Jews were cut off, but from the first we cannot properly suck such nourishment as once they did.

First of the music. The king’s choir (1 Chron. xxv. 1—6; Psalm lxii., *Ἐπιγραφὴ*; 1 Chron. xvi. 41) learned five things by it:

1st. To make a little pause, stop, or stay, when they came to *Selah*, and to meditate awhile upon the matter foregoing.

2nd. They knew by that cessation and interval that King David, as he was prophesying unto the people, and praising God upon the loud sounding cymbals, was at that instant inspired and taught some new lesson. Wherefore, as men

being in serious discourse, when they hear a sudden noise hold their peace to listen, saying, hark ! see, lo ! so David's heart being smitten by the voice of God's Spirit, the music ceased, stopped, and he checked himself as it were thus : " Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

3rd. It signifieth the change and variation of the music in some strains, or of the metre, or sense, or disjunction of the rhyme, or ceasing of some one sort of music, which howsoever St. Hierome makes some scruple of. The Septuagint, as often as they meet with *Selah* in the Hebrew text, in their Greek version translated it, *the change of the song*.

4th. It directed them to sing the same verse over again whereunto *Selah* was annexed. Lastly, it was their instruction to elevate and lift up their voices, praising God with louder voices and loud sounding cymbals. "*Selah*" called upon them for louder strains of music and shrillness of voice. But seeing the Jewish harmony and sweet melody is overwhelmed in the ruins of their glorious temple, we remain unskilled in their notes, which doth obscure our annotations upon it. Let this suffice for the "music."

II. "*Selah*" concerns the *text* of Scripture itself, or the matter handled, in five branches. 1st. Some think it to be only an ornament of speech, to grace the language with a sweet emphasis ; or a non-significant word to complete the harmony, lest the verse should halt for want of a foot, but this conjecture is infirm, and many feet wide from the truth.

2nd. It is not only an adoration of speech, but signifies *an end* of that verse, matter, or Psalm, where it is found, and it is ever in the end of Psalm and verse, these four places only exempted from this rule : Psalm lv. 19 ; lvii. 3 ; Habakkuk iii. 3, 9. For as we write "finis" at the end of a book, song, or poem, so the Jews underwrite "*Selah*," "Salome," or "Amen," at the end or finishing of any canticle or work. And the modern Jews at this day, following the opinion of Aben-Ezra, take "*Selah*" to be the same with "Amen," using it at the end of their epitaphs and prayers twice or thrice indifferently ; thus : "Amen, *Selah*, Amen, *Selah*," which receives some credit from this that the particular Psalms end with "*Selah*" (Psalm iii. 8), and the books of Psalms with "Amen." For whereas the Psalter is divided into five books, four of them end with "Amen"—*so be it*. As you shall find : Psalm xli. 13, the end of the first book ; Psalm lxxii. 19, the end of the second book ; Psalm lxxxix. 52, the end of the third ; and Psalm cvi. 48, the conclusion of the fourth.

3rd. *Selah* is an hyperbole or illustration of the truth by way of excess in advancing and enlarging it, to make the truth and sense more clear and evident, as if we should say, "*that is wonderful!*" or, "*that is excellent!*" and sometimes by way of aggravation that is "*monstrous*," "*intolerable*," "*horrible!*" "*The Lord came from Teman and the holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.*" Habak. iii. 3. *Selah*. 1. God came with *great dignity, excellency, and ample majesty*. "Many there be that say of my soul there is no help for him in God. *Selah.*" Psalm iii. 2. *Selah*, as if he had said, *Oh, monstrous, and horrible blasphemy*, to excommunicate a child out of the favour of his heavenly Father ; and limit his mercy whose hand is *omnipotent* to relieve all that rely upon him.

4th. It serves to declare *the eternity of the truth* revealed in that Psalm or verse, though perhaps it only began then to be manifested to the church, or more fully at that time than in former ages. Howsoever, the people unto whom it was published, or the persons unto whom it was sent, were otherwise persuaded at the first publication of it. That it was a veritie from everlasting and shall continue for ever : instance Psalm iii. 8, "Salvation belongs unto the Lord, thy blessing is upon thy people. *Selah.*" As if he had said, "This is a thing beyond all controversy true, that God hath ever delivered, and will for ever bless his people." This doctrine is sempiternal and durable, that the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. Psalm cxxxvi.

5th. It did instruct them to meditate seriously upon those themes where "*Selah*" was engraven, as containing matter worthy of singular observation, meditation, and remembrance, as either concerning Christ, "Who is the King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. *Selah.*" Psalm xxiv. 10. The mysteries of grace. "The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah.*" Psalm xlvi. 7. Man's duty (Psalm iv. 4 ; Psalm xxxii. 5), or frailty (Psalm ix. 20 ; xxxii. 4). That as the diamond is of greater value than other precious stones, and the sun is more glorious than the planets, so those sentences are more resplendent,

than other parcels of Scripture. Which though at the first bare view, it doth not always so appear, there being other texts of Holy Writ more excellent (if it were meet to make any comparison) where *Selah* is not found, yet if we dive into the *occasion*, *scope*, and *nature* of the sentence, we shall more willingly accept, when we consider, that it is an usual custom of the Holy Spirit, for our singular instruction and benefit, to propound things of a low and inferior nature to our deepest meditation. Instance Psalm ix. 16. "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," which is shut up with "Higgaion *Selah*," meditation *Selah*, as if he had said, here is a matter worthy of observation and eternal meditation; the righteous should never forget this, that the wicked perish in their own counsels, and are taken in their own net. An observation worthy to be engraven in every religious person's bosom, that God will one time or other be known among the wicked by his most severe judgments executed upon them, though they would never learn by his patience and mercies to acknowledge him for their Lord. Thus far of the matter. Now it remains for a conclusion to unfold the several instructions which "*Selah*" afforded unto the congregation, which are these six.

1st. It served as a *note of attention and inattention of the mind* to what was sung or said, Ps. iii. v. 2—8, that wheresoever they cast an eye upon "*Selah*," they might conceive they heard the Lord's voice from heaven speaking. "Hear this, all ye people, give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. Both high and low, rich and poor together." Ps. xlix. 1, 2. That as their voices were lift up in singing, so much more their hearts and affections might be elevated, that their voice and hearts being both in tune, the joint harmony might be sweet in the ears of the Lord.

2ndly. It was a note of affirmation, whereby they declared their consent and assent unto the truth delivered, as we say when we approve of another's speech; right, just, you say truly, it is most certain. So their "*Selah*" was as much as true, certain, excellent. Instance, Ps. iii. 4, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. *Selah*," *i.e.*, It is most certain that the Lord knows the secrets of our hearts, and is the judge of the quick and dead, and will pass most righteous sentence upon us, giving to every man according to his deeds in the flesh, whether good or evil. Ps. lii. 3. "Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. *Selah*."—that is to say, undeniable, we all confess it, our own experience and sorrows have made us know this, that those who have not the fear of God before their eyes love to speak and do all the mischief they are able against God's people, to *hurt* them rather than *help* them, to wound their innocent reputation rather than preserve it.

3rdly. It was a devout *ejaculation* of the heart and soul unto God, wishing and desiring the *accomplishment* of what was spoken or promised. Instance, Habak. iii. 13.—"Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people. *Selah*." As if he had said, Lord, I beseech thee, evermore go out so to deliver thine anointed. Ps. lv. 17—19. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me; for there were many with me. God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. *Selah*," *i.e.*, O Lord, I entreat thee, ever bow down an ear unto my humble suit, and rise up against them that rise up against me.

4thly. It denoted their *admiration* at some strange, unusual effect, whether the work of God, or wickedness of man. Ps. lvii. 3. "He shall send from heaven and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. *Selah*," *i.e.*, Oh, wonderful and admirable goodness of God, that is pleased to send sometimes his angel from heaven, always his mercy and truth, to deliver his poor perplexed servants from them that are too strong and mighty for them, Ps. liv. 3. "Strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. *Selah*," *i.e.*, Oh, horrible impiety and cruelty to hunt after the life of the saints, and cast the God of life and his remembrance behind their backs.

5thly. Of *humiliation and consternation of their mind*, by the consideration of God's incomprehensible majesty, and their own great frailty and misery. Instance, Ps. lxxvi. 7. "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah*," *i.e.*, here is matter of humiliation before the King of all the world, Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness. *Selah*," *i.e.*, my very heart trembled to consider; I am moved out of my place, to reflect upon that majesty before whom "the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence

of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." Ps. xxxix. 11. "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. *Selah.*" As if he should say, this may humble the proudest heart in the world, and cast him down to the ground.

6thly. *It was a note of Doxology and praising of God in a special manner, not much unlike, or the very same with this, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever."* As for example, "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee, they shall sing to thy name. *Selah,*" Ps. lxvi. 4. "Yea, Lord, in thee will we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. *Selah,*" Ps. xlii. 8. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; so be it, even so be it." Ps. lxxii. 18, 19.—*Edmund Layfielde*

Verse 6.—"Man walketh in a vain shew." I see that we who live are nothing else but images, and a vain shadow.—*Sophocles.*

Verse 6 (first clause).—When in the Bristol election, his competitor died, Burke said, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue."—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 6.—Every carnal man walks in a vain shew, and yet how vain is he of his shew of vanity! He is "*disquieted in vain,*" and it is only vanity which disquiets him. He labours all his life for the profit of riches, and yet in death his riches will not profit him. He that views an ox grazing in a fat pasture, concludes that he is but preparing for the day of slaughter.—*William Secker.*

Verse 6.—"He heapeth up riches." This is the great foolishness and disease, especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it. When the hands are stiff, and fit for no other labour, they are fitted and composed for scraping together.—*Robert Leighton.*

Verse 6.—"He heapeth up riches." The Hebrew word rendered, "*He heapeth up,*" signifies to rake together; in which there is an allusion to the husbandman's collecting his corn together before he carries it to the barn. The metaphor is elegant, intimating the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of human acquisitions; which though heaped up together like corn, by one person, may soon become the possession of another.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 6.—

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

William Shakspeare.

Verse 6.—The plentiful showers of tears which stand in our eyes when we come from the womb, and when we draw to the tomb, are faithful witnesses of man's vanity. We bid the world "good morrow" with grief, and "good night" with a groan.—*Edmund Layfielde.*

Verse 7.—"Lord, what wait I for?"

At first her mother earth she holdeth deare,
And doth embrace the world and worldly things:
She flies close by the ground and houers here
And mounts not up with her celestial wings.

Yet vnder heauen she cannot light on ought
That with her heavenly nature doth agree;
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
She cannot in this world contented bee.

Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,
Which seeme sweet flowers with lustre fresh and gay
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
But pleased with none, doth rise, and soare away.

So, when the soule finds here no true content,
 And like Noah's doue, can no sure footing take,
 She doth returne from whence she first was sent,
 And flies to Him, that first her wings did make.

Sir John Davies.

Verse 7.—

O loose this frame, this knot of man untie,
 That my free soul may use her wing,
 Which is now pinioned with mortality,
 As an entangled, hamper'd thing.
 What have I left that I should stay and groan?
 The most of me to heaven is fled;
 My thoughts and joys are all pack'd up and gone,
 And for their old acquaintance plead.

George Herbert.

Verse 7.—“*My hope is in thee.*” Sweet is it that our hope should rest in him who is never shaken; should abide in him who never changeth; should bind us to him who can hold us fast to himself, who alone is the full contentment of the soul; should, as it were, enter into him; since “*in him is our being,*” who is love.—E. B. Pusey, D.D., 1853.

Verse 8.—“*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*” Let not their prosperity and my misery give them occasion to deride and reproach me for my serving of thee and trusting in thee to so little purpose.—Matthew Pool.

Verse 8.—“*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*” Doubt not this; that of all the bitter agony which will be the portion of the lost soul at that, “*Depart, ye cursed,*” not the least will be the bitter reproaches and derision of those evil spirits who have seduced him to his ruin. “*For this morsel of meat to have sold thy birthright! For the fleshly pleasures of a few days to have bartered thine eternal jewel! For a few grains of yellow earth to have missed the city with streets of gold, and gates of several pearls! O fool, beyond all folly! O madman, beyond all insanity! Truly we have need to pray with all earnestness, ‘Make me not the reproach of the foolish.’*”—Origen, quoted by J. M. Neale.

Verse 9.—“*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*” See David's carriage here; it was a patience not constrained, but from satisfaction of spirit: he saw love in his affliction, and that sweetened his soul.—Joseph Symonds.

Verse 9.—“*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*” God is training up his children here. This is the true character of his dealings with them. The education of his saints is the object he has in view. It is training for the kingdom; it is education for eternity. . . . It is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath nor vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be harsh and stern; but that of the family is love. We are sure of this; and the consolation which it affords is unutterable. Love will not wrong us. There will be no needless suffering. Were this but kept in mind there would be fewer hard thoughts of God amongst men, even when his strokes are most severe. I know not a better illustration of what the feelings of a saint should be, in the hour of bitterness, than the case of Richard Cameron's father. The aged saint was in prison “*for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” The bleeding head of his martyred son was brought to him by his unfeeling persecutors, and he was asked derisively if he knew it. “*I know it, I know it,*”—said the father, as he kissed the mangled forehead of his fair-haired son—“*it is my son's, my own dear son's!* It is the Lord! good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but who hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days.”—Horatius Bonar, in “*The Night of Weeping,*” 1847.

Verse 9.—“*Because thou didst it.*” This holy man had a breach made both at his body and spirit at this time; he was sick and sad; yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came. Thou, Lord, didst it; thou, whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly; thou whom I have offended, and so take it patiently; yea, thou, who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness, and therefore I accept thy correction thankfully. Thus he catches at the blow without retorting it back upon God by any quarrelling discontented language.—William Gurnall.

Verse 9.—" *Because thou didst it.*" We digest not a blow from our equals, but a blow from our king we can well digest. If the King of kings lays his hand on our backs, let us, beloved, lay our hands on our mouths. I am sure this stopped David's mouth from venting fretful speeches. "I held my tongue and said nothing." Why didst thou so, David? " *Because thou, Lord, didst it;*" and God gives this testimony of such an one; that he is a prudent man that keeps silence at an evil time. Amos v. 13.—*Nicholas Estwick, B.D., 1644.*

Verse 9.—Perkins, in his "*Salve for a Sick Man,*" gives the "last words" of many holy men, among others of Calvin:—"I held my tongue, because thou, Lord, hast done it—I mourned as a dove—Lord, thou grindest me to powder, but it sufficeth me because it is thy hand."

Verse 9.—I wondered once at providence, and called white providence black and unjust, that I should be smothered in a town where no soul will take Christ off my hand. But providence hath another lustre* with God than with my bleared eyes. I proclaim myself a blind body, who knoweth not black and white, in the unco† course of God's providence. Suppose that Christ should set hell where heaven is and devils up in glory beside the elect angels (which yet cannot be), I would I had a heart to acquiesce in his way, without further dispute. I see that infinite wisdom is the mother of his judgments, and that his ways pass finding out. I cannot learn, but I desire to learn, to bring my thoughts, will, and lusts in under‡ Christ's feet, that he may trample upon them. But, alas! I am still upon Christ's wrong side.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Verse 9.—A little girl, in the providence of God, was born deaf and dumb. She was received, and instructed, at an institution established for these afflicted ones. A visitor was one day requested to examine the children thus sadly laid aside from childhood's common joys. Several questions were asked, and quickly answered by means of a slate and pencil. At length the gentleman wrote, "*Why were you born deaf and dumb?*" A look of anguish clouded for the moment the expressive face of the little girl; but it quickly passed, as she took her slate, and wrote, "*Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*"—*Mrs. Rogers, in "The Shepherd King."*

Verse 10.—" *Remove thy plague away from me:*" thy plague and mine; thine by affliction, mine by passion; thine because thou didst send it, mine because I endure it; thine because it comes from thy justice, mine because it answers my injustice; remit what I have done, and remove what thou hast done. But whosoever laid it on, the Lord will take off.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—" *Remove,*" etc. Having first prayed off his sin, he would now pray off his pain, though it less troubled him; and for ease he repaireth to *Jehovah that healeth*, as well as woundeth. Hosea vi. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—" *Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.*" The meaning may be, As the moth crumbles into dust under the slightest pressure, or the gentlest touch, so man dissolves with equal ease, and vanishes into darkness, under the finger of the Almighty.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

Verse 11.—" *Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.*" Moths I must not omit naming. I once saw some knives, the back bone hafts of which were said to have been half-consumed by them. I also saw the remains of a hair-seated sofa which had been devoured. It is no uncommon thing to find dresses consumed in a single night. In Isaiah li. 6, "wax old" probably refers to a garment that is moth-eaten. So in Psalm vi. 7, and xxxi. 9, "consumed" means moth-eaten; and again in Psalm xxxix. 11.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 11.—" *Like a moth.*" The moths of the East are very large and beautiful, but short lived. After a few showers these splendid insects may be seen fluttering in every breeze, but the dry weather, and their numerous enemies, soon consign them to the common lot. Thus the beauty of man consumes away like that of this gay rover, dressed in his robes of purple, and scarlet, and green.—*John Kitto.*

Verse 11.—The body of man is as a "garment" to the soul: in this garment sin hath lodged a "moth," which, by degrees, fretteth and weareth away, first, the beauty, then the strength, and, finally, the contexture of its parts. Whoever has watched the progress of a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, nay, the

* Shining; appearance.

† Strange.

‡ Close under.

slow and silent devastations of time alone, in the human frame, will need no farther illustration of this just and affecting similitude; but will discern at once the propriety of the reflection which follows upon it.—“*Surely every man is vanity.*” *George Horne.*

Verse 11.—“*Surely every man is vanity.*” What is greatness? Can we predicate it of man, independently of his qualities as an immortal being? or of his actions, independently of principles and motives? Then the glitter of nobility is not superior to the plumage of the peacock; nor the valour of Alexander to the fury of a tiger; nor the sensual delights of Epicurus to those of any animal that roam the forest.—*Ebenezer Porter, D.D., in Lectures on Homiletics, 1834.*

Verse 12.—“*Hear my prayer, O Lord,*” etc. Now, in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers. The first is *humility*. He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical, flinty kind of spirit under our affliction, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of *despising the hand of God*, but we are to humble our proud hearts, and break our unruly passions. . . . The second qualification of this prayer is, *fergency and importunity*, which appears in the elegant gradation of the words, “*Hear my prayer,*” my words; if not that, yet “*Give ear to my cry,*” which is louder; and if that prevail not, yet, “*Hold not thy peace at my tears,*” which is the loudest of all; so David, elsewhere, calls it “*the voice of my weeping.*” . . . The third qualification is *faith*, “*He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” Heb. xi. 6. And, certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this, cannot but come to God; and if he be not presently answered, “*he that believes makes no haste,*” he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and to go to no other.—*Condensed from Robert Leighton.*

Verse 12.—“*Hold not thy peace at my tears.*” We may, in all humility, plead our heart-breakings and weepings in sense of want of mercies which we crave, and our pantings and faintings after the same.—*Thomas Cobbett.*

Verse 12.—“*For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*” Both in thy judgment expressed (Levit. xxv. 23), and in their own opinion (Heb. xi. 13), Upon which account thou didst take a special care of them, and therefore do so to me also.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 12.—“*I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner.*” How settled soever their condition be, yet this is the temper of the saints upon earth—to count themselves but strangers. All men indeed are strangers and sojourners, but the saints do best discern it, and most freely acknowledge it. Wicked men have no firm dwelling upon earth, but that is against their intentions; their inward thought and desire is that they may abide for ever; they are strangers against their wills, their abode is uncertain in the world, and they cannot help it. And pray mark, there are two distinct words used in this case, *strangers and sojourners*. A stranger is one that hath his abode in a foreign country, that is not a native and a denizen of the place, though he liveth there, and in opposition to the natives he is called a stranger: as if a Frenchman should live in England, he is a stranger. But a *sojourner* is one that intendeth not to settle, but only passeth through a place, and is in motion travelling homeward. So the children of God in relation to a country of their own in another place, namely, heaven, they are denizens there, but strangers in the world; and they are sojourners and pilgrims in regard of their motion and journey towards their country.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 12.—“*A stranger.*” 1. A stranger is one that is absent from his country, and from his father’s house: so are we, heaven is our country, God is there, and Christ is there. 2. A stranger in a foreign country is not known, nor valued according to his birth and breeding; so the saints walk up and down in the world like princes in disguise. 3. Strangers are liable to inconveniences, so are godly men in the world. Religion, saith Tertullian, is like a strange plant brought from a foreign country, and doth not agree with the nature of the soil, it thriveth not in the world. 4. A stranger is patient, standeth not for ill usage, and is contented with pilgrims’ fare and lodging. We are now abroad, and must expect hardship. 5. A stranger is wary, that he may not give offence, and incur the hatred and displeasure of the natives. 6. A stranger is thankful for the least favour; so we must be thankfully contented with the things God hath bestowed upon us: anything in a strange country is much. 7. A stranger, that hath a journey to go, would pass over it as soon as

he can, and so we, who have a journey to heaven desire to be dissolved. 8. A stranger buyeth not such things as he cannot carry with him ; he doth not buy trees, house, household stuff, but jewels and pearls, and such things as are portable. Our great care should be to get the jewels of the covenant, the graces of God's Spirit, those things that will abide with us. 9. A stranger's heart is in his country ; so is a saint's. 10. A stranger is inquisitive after the way, fearing lest he should go amiss, so is a Christian. 11. A stranger provides for his return, as a merchant, that he may return richly laden. So we must appear before God in Sion. What manner of persons ought we to be ? Let us return from our travel well provided.—*Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

Verse 13.—"O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar, he hath a beast's heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite ; but when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled in praying for temporals to elevate his desires to a nobler end. Doth David pray that some farther time may be added to his temporal life ? It is not out of a fond love for this world, but to prepare himself the better for another. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay here ? It is not this world's carnal pleasures that kindle this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage that thereby he shall have for praising God in the land of the living. . . . "O spare me, that I may recover strength." David was not yet recovered out of that sin which had brought him exceeding low as you may perceive, ver. 10, 11. And the good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holier frame : and for the peace of the gospel, serenity of conscience, and inward joy ; alas ! all unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirits which drink them up.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 13.—"O spare me," etc. Attachment to life, the feeling cherished by the Psalmist, when he thus appealed to the Sovereign of the universe, varies in its character with the occasions and the sentiments by which it is elicited and confirmed. Take one view of it, and you pronounce it *criminal* ; take another, and you pronounce it *innocent* ; take a third, and you pronounce it *laudable*. I. Life may inspire a *criminal* attachment, warranting our censure. The most obvious and aggravated case is that in which the attachment has its foundations in the opportunities which life affords, of procuring "the wages of unrighteousness," and "the pleasures of sin." II. Life may inspire an *innocent* attachment, awakening our sympathy. . . . Life is a scene in which we often desecry a verdant and luxuriant spot, teeming with health, and ease, and harmony, and joy. We have beheld the husbands and the wives whose interwoven regards have, from year to year, alleviated all their afflictions, and heightened all their privileges. We have beheld the parents and the children whose fellowship has yielded them, through the shifting seasons, a daily feast. There are indulgent masters, and faithful servants ; some neighbourhoods are undisturbed ; some Christian societies are exquisitely attractive ; here and there we have intercourse with those individuals in whom are seen the beauties of high character irradiated by the beams of general prosperity. You would pronounce no censure on a man thus happily connected, were he, when beginning to languish, as one "going the way of all the earth, to cry," "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." III. The last view which is has been proposed to take of human life, shows that it may inspire a *laudable* attachment, at once challenging our approbation, and urging us to bring our minds under its influence. The language before us admits of being illustrated as the prayer of a *penitent*, a *saint*, and a *philanthropist*. 1. Commend him who pleads for life as a *penitent*. Was it recently that the Holy Spirit first wounded him with the arrows of conviction ? Perhaps, he doubts the source, the quality, and the result, of his powerful feelings. He knows that we may be solemnly impressed, without being converted. There are many considerations which entitle to favourable opinion those who, not having arrived at a view of their moral state, at once evident and encouraging, wish earnestly to live, till grace shall have carried them from victory to victory, and enabled them "to make" their "calling and election sure." Even they may fall from their steadfastness ; and these words, "O spare me, that I may recover my strength," may proceed from the lips of a backslider, once more blushing, trembling, and petitioning to be restored. 2. Commend him, in the next place, who pleads for life, as a *saint*. . . . The distinguished office of pleading, acting, and suffering, for the advancement of the divine honour among the profane, the

sensual, the formal, and the worldly is delegated, exclusively, to "the saints which are upon the earth." Yet, surely he whose attachment to life is strongly enhanced by a commission which dooms him to the contradiction of sinners, and defers "the fulness of joy," a saint so magnanimous and devoted, puts forth the expressions of a piety which the very angels are compelled to revere. 3. Commend him, finally, who pleads for life as a *philanthropist*. I refer to the generous *patron*, a man intent on doing good. I would also refer to a fond *parent*. I would now refer to "a preacher of righteousness," "a good minister of Jesus Christ."—*Outline of a sermon entitled "Attachment to Life," preached by Joseph Hughes, M.A., as a Funeral Sermon for Rev. John Owen, M.A., 1822.*

Verse 13.—May not the very elect and faithful themselves fear the day of judgment, and be far from fetching comfort at it? I answer, he may. First, at his first conversion and soon after, before he have gotten a full persuasion of the remission of his sins. And again, in some spiritual desertion, when the Lord seems to leave a man to himself, as he did David and others, he may fear to think of the same. And lastly, when he hath fallen into some great sin after he is a strong man in Christ, he may fear death and judgment, and be constrained to pray with Job and David, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."—*John Barlow's Sermon, 1618.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verses 1, 2.—"I was dumb, etc." I. There is a time to be silent. He had been enabled to do this when reproached and unjustly accused by others. He did it for good; others might attribute it to sullenness, or pride, or timidity, or conscious guilt; but he did it for good. Breathe upon a polished mirror and it will evaporate and leave it brighter than before; endeavour to wipe it off, and the mark will remain. II. There is a time to meditate in silence. The greater the silence without, often the greater commotion within. "*His heart was hot.*" The more he thought, the warmer he grew. The fire of pity and compassion, the fire of love, the fire of holy zeal burned within him. III. There is a time to speak. "*Then spake I.*" The time to speak is when the truth is clear and strong in the mind, and the feeling of the truth is burning in the heart. The emotions burst forth as from a volcano. Jer. xx. 8, 9. The language should always be a faithful representation of the mind and the heart.—*G. Rogers, Tutor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle College.*

Verse 2.—There is a sevenfold silence. 1. A *stoical* silence. 2. A *politic* silence. 3. A *foolish* silence. 4. A *sullen* silence. 5. A *forced* silence. 6. A *despairing* silence. 7. A *prudent, a holy, a gracious* silence.—*Thomas Brooks' "Mute Christian."*

Verse 4.—"Make me to know mine end." I. *What we may desire to know about our end.* Not its date, place, circumstances, but 1. *Its nature.* Will it be the end of saint or sinner? 2. *Its certainty.* 3. *Its nearness.* 4. *Its issues.* 5. *Its requirements.* In the shape of attention, preparation, passport. II. *Why ask God to make us know it?* Because the knowledge is important, difficult to acquire, and can be effectually imparted by the Lord only.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 4.—David prays, I. That he may be enabled continually to keep in view the end of life: all things should be judged by their *end*. "Then understood I their end." Life may be honourable, and cheerful, and virtuous here; but the *end!* What will it be? II. That he may be diligent in the performance of all the duties of this life. The measure of his days, how short, how much to be done, how little time to do it in! III. He prays that he may gain much instruction and benefit from the frailties of life. "*That I may know,*" etc. My frailties may make me more humble, more diligent, while I am able for active service; more dependent upon divine strength, more patient and submissive to the divine will, more ripe for heaven.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 5 (last clause).—Man is vanity, *i.e.*, he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. I. *Every man is vanity, without*

exception, high and low, rich and poor. II. He is so at his *best estate*; when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, etc. III. He is *altogether* vanity, as vain as you can imagine. IV. *Verily* he is so. V. *Selah* is annexed, as a note commanding observation.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 6.—The vanity of man, as mortal, is here instanced in three things, and the vanity of each shown. I. The vanity of our joys and honours: “*Surely every man walketh in a vain show.*” II. The vanity of our griefs and fears: “*Surely they are disquieted in vain.*” III. The vanity of our cares and toils: “*He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*”—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 6.—The world's trinity consists, 1. In fruitless honours: what appears to them to be substantial honours are but “*a vain show.*” 2. In needless cares. “*They are disquieted in vain.*” Imaginary cares are substituted for real ones. 3. In useless riches; such as yield no lasting satisfaction to themselves, or in their descent to others.—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 7.—“*What wait I for?*” 1. *For what salvation as a sinner?* Of works or grace—from Sinai or Calvary. 2. *For what consolation as a sufferer?* Earthly or heavenly? 3. *For what supply as a suppliant?* Meagre or bountiful? Present or future? 4. *For what communication as a servant?* Miraculous or ordinary? Pleasing or unacceptable? 5. *For what instruction as a pupil?* Mental or spiritual? Elating or humbling? Ornamental or useful? 6. *For what inheritance as a heir?* Sublunary or celestial?—*W. Jackson*.

Verse 7.—I. An urgent occasion. “*And now Lord,*” etc. There are seasons that should lead us specially to look up to God, and say, “*Now, Lord.*” “*Father, the hour is come.*” II. A devout exclamation, “*Now, Lord, what wait I for?*” Where is my expectation? Where my confidence? To whom shall I look? I am nothing, the world is nothing, all earthly sources of confidence and consolation fail: “*What wait I for?*” In life, in death, in a dying world, in a coming judgment, in an eternity at hand; what is it that I need?—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 8.—I. Prayer should be *general*: “*Deliver me from all my transgressions.*” We often need anew to say, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Afflictions should remind us of our sins. If we pray to be delivered from all transgressions, we are sure to be delivered from the one for which affliction was sent. II. Prayer should be *particular*: “*Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*” Suffer me not so to speak or show impatience in affliction as to give occasion even to the foolish to blaspheme. The thought that many watch for our halting should be a preservative from sin.—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 9.—I. The *occasion* referred to. “*I was dumb,*” etc. We are not told what the particular trial was, that each one may apply it to his own affliction, and because all are to be viewed in the same light. II. The *conduct* of the Psalmist upon that particular occasion: “*I opened not my mouth.*” 1. Not in anger and rebellion against God in murmurs or complaints. 2. Not in impatience, or complaining, or angry feelings against men. III. The *reason* he assigns for this conduct: “*Because thou didst it.*”—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 10.—I. *Afflictions are sent by God.* “*Thy strokes.*” They are strokes of his hand, not of the rod of the law, but of the shepherd's rod. Every affliction is his stroke. II. *Afflictions are removed by God.* “*Remove.*” He asks not for miracles, but that God in his own way, in the use of natural means, would interpose for his deliverance. We should seek his blessing upon the means employed for our deliverance both by ourselves and others. “*Cause to remove,*” etc. III. *Afflictions have their end from God.* “*I am consumed by the conflict,*” etc. God has a controversy with his people. It is a conflict between his will and their wills. The Psalmist owns himself conquered and subdued in the struggle. We should be more anxious that this end should be accomplished than that the affliction should be removed, and when this is accomplished the affliction will be removed.—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 10.—I. The *cause* of our trials: “*for iniquity.*” Oh, this trial is come to take away my comforts, my peace of mind, and the divine smile! No, this is all the fruit to take away their sin—the dross, none of the gold—sin, nothing but sin. II. The *effect* of our trials. All that he counted desirable in this life, but is not for his real good, is “*consumed.*” His robes which are beautiful in men's esteem are moth-eaten, but the robe of righteousness upon his soul cannot decay. III. The *design* of our trials. They are not penal inflictions, but friendly *rebukes* and fatherly *corrections*. On Christ our Surety the penal consequences were laid, upon us their paternal chastisements only. IV. The *reasonableness* of our trials. “*Surely every*

man is vanity." How in a world like this could any expect to be exempt from trials! The world is the same to the Christian as before, and his body is the same. He has a converted soul in an unconverted body, and how can he escape the external ills of life?—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 12.—David pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. I. It had set him a weeping. II. It had set him a praying. III. It had helped to wean him from the world.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12 (last clause).—Am I a stranger and a sojourner with God? Let me realise, let me exemplify the condition. I. Let me look for *the treatment* such characters commonly meet with. II. And surely if any of my own nation be near me, I shall *be intimate with them.* III. Let me *not be entangled* in the affairs of this life. IV. Let my affection be *set on things that are above*, and my conversation be always *in heaven.* V. Let me be *not impatient for home*; but *prizing it.*—*W. Jay.*

Verse 13.—I. The *subject* of his petition—not that he may escape death and live always in this life, because he knows that he must go hence; but 1. That he may be recovered from his afflictions; and, 2. That he may continue longer in this life. Such a prayer is lawful when offered in submission to the will of God. II. The *reasons* for this petition. 1. That he may remove by his future life the calumnies that had been heaped upon him. 2. That he may have brighter evidences of his interest in the divine favour. 3. That he may become a blessing to others, his family and nation. 4. That he might have greater peace and comfort in death; and, 5. That he might "have an entrance ministered more abundantly," etc.—*G. Rogers.*
