

## PSALM XLVI.

**TITLE.**—To the Chief Musician.—*He who could sing other Psalms so well was fitly entrusted with this noble ode. Trifles may be left to commoner songsters, but the most skilful musician in Israel must be charged with the due performance of this song, with the most harmonious voices and choicest music. For the Sons of Korah. One alone cannot fulfil the praise, there must be picked choristers under him, whose joyful privilege it shall be to celebrate the service of song in the house of the Lord. As to why the Sons of Korah were selected, see our remarks at the head of Psalm XLII. It may be well to add that they were a division of the Levites who took their turn in serving at the temple. All the works of holy service ought not to be monopolised by one order of talent, each company of believers should in due course enjoy the privilege. None ought to be without a share in the service of God.*

A Song upon Alamoth. Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistine, it was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and gladsome strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill-sounding instruments, as in 1 Chron. xv. 20, where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord “with psalteries on Alamoth.” We are not always, in a slovenly manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music.

**SUBJECT.**—Happen what may, the Lord's people are happy and secure, this is the doctrine of the Psalm, and it might, to help our memories, be called THE SONG OF HOLY CONFIDENCE, were it not that from the great reformer's love to this soul-stirring hymn it will probably be best remembered as LUTHER'S PSALM.

**DIVISION.**—It is divided by inspired authority into three parts, each of which ends with *Selah*.

### EXPOSITION.

**G**OD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ;

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. *Selah*.

1. “*God is our refuge and strength.*” Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these : and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word “*our* ;” make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, “*He is my refuge and strength.*” Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God : but as God is all-sufficient, our defence and might are equal to all emergencies. “*A very present help in trouble,*” or *in distresses he has so been found,* he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly ; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasised by the word “*very*” in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly

present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter ; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, " Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

" A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,  
Is God in time of danger ;  
A shield and sword in every shock,  
From foe well-known or stranger."

2. "*Therefore.*" How fond the Psalmist is of *therefores* ! his poetry is no poetic rapture without reason, it is as logical as a mathematical demonstration. The next words are a necessary inference from these. "*Will not we fear.*" With God on our side, how irrational would fear be ! Where he is all power is, and all love, why therefore should we quail ? "*Though the earth be removed,*" though the basis of all visible things should be so convulsed as to be entirely changed. "*And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ;*" though the firmest of created objects should fall to headlong ruin, and be submerged in utter destruction. The two phrases set forth the most terrible commotions within the range of imagination, and include the overthrow of dynasties, the destruction of nations, the ruin of families, the persecutions of the church, the reign of heresy, and whatever else may at any time try the faith of believers. Let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust ; since God remaineth faithful there can be no danger to his cause or people. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away in the last general conflagration, we shall serenely behold " the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds," for even then our refuge shall preserve us from all evil, our strength shall prepare us for all good.

3. "*Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.*" When all things are excited to fury, and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise, nor even of real force, she knows that the Lord stilleth the raging of the sea, and holdeth the waves in the hollow of his hand. "*Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.*" Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis, and is not to be moved by swelling seas. Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never be dismayed.

"*Selah.*" In the midst of such a hurly-burly the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singers breath, and ourselves time for meditation. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves, and mountains rock, and oceans roar. Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage, we can calmly confront the danger, and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music : we do not suspend our song in alarm, but retune our harps with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm. It were well if all of us could say, "*Selah,*" under tempestuous trials, but alas ! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life-song.

4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 *God is* in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved : God shall help her, *and that* right early.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved : he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. *Selah.*

4. "*There is a river.*" Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilising, full, and never-failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that

there is such a river of God. "*The streams whereof*" in their various influences, for they are many, "*shall make glad the city of God,*" by assuring the citizens that Zion's Lord will unfailingly supply all their needs. The streams are not transient like Cherith, nor muddy like the Nile, nor furious like Kishon, nor treacherous like Job's deceitful brooks, neither are their waters "naught" like those of Jericho, they are clear, cool, fresh, abundant, and gladdening. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact, that in seasons of trial all-sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure unto the end. The church is like a well-ordered city, surrounded with mighty walls of truth and justice, garrisoned by omnipotence, fairly built and adorned by infinite wisdom: its burgesses the saints enjoy high privileges; they trade with far-off lands, they live in the smile of the King; and as a great river is the very making and mainstay of a town, so is the broad river of everlasting love and grace their joy and bliss. The church is peculiarly the "*City of God,*" of his designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to his praise, and glorified by his presence. "*The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.*" This was the peculiar glory of Jerusalem, that the Lord within her walls had a place where he peculiarly revealed himself, and this is the choice privilege of the saints, concerning which we may cry with wonder, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To be a temple for the Holy Ghost is the delightful portion of each saint, to be the living temple for the Lord our God is also the high honour of the church in her corporate capacity. Our God is here called by a worthy title, indicating his power, majesty, sublimity, and excellency; and it is worthy of note that under this character he dwells in the church. We have not a great God in nature, and a little God in grace; no, the church contains as clear and convincing a revelation of God as the works of nature, and even more amazing is the excellent glory which shines between the cherubim overshadowing that mercy-seat which is the centre and gathering place of the people of the living God. To have the Most High dwelling within her members, is to make the church on earth like the church in heaven.

5. "*God is in the midst of her.*" His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! Let us take heed that we do not grieve him; let us have such respect to him as Moses had when he felt the sand of Horeb's desert to be holy, and put off his shoes from off his feet when the Lord spake from the burning bush. "*She shall not be moved.*" How can she be moved unless her enemies move her Lord also? His presence renders all hope of capturing and demolishing the city utterly ridiculous. The Lord is in the vessel, and she cannot, therefore, be wrecked. "*God shall help her.*" Within her he will furnish rich supplies, and outside her walls he will lay her foes in heaps like the armies of Sennacherib, when the angel went forth and smote them. "*And that right early.*" As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and, when rightly viewed, are no delays at all. To-day the bands of evil may environ the church of God, and threaten her with destruction; but ere long they shall pass away like the foam on the waters, and the noise of their tumult shall be silent in the grave. The darkest hour of the night is just before the turning of the morning; and then, even then, shall the Lord appear as the great ally of his church.

6. "*The heathen raged.*" The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea. "*The kingdoms were moved.*" A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord. "*He uttered his voice, the earth melted.*" With no other

instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word. O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!

7. "*The Lord of hosts is with us.*" This is the reason for all Zion's security, and for the overthrow of her foes. The Lord rules the angels, the stars, the elements, and all the hosts of heaven; and the heaven of heavens are under his sway. The armies of men though they know it not are made to subserve his will. This Generalissimo of the forces of the land, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas, is on our side—our august ally; woe unto those who fight against him, for they shall fly like smoke before the wind when he gives the word to scatter them. "*The God of Jacob is our refuge.*" Immanuel is Jehovah of Hosts, and Jacob's God is our high place of defence. When this glad verse is sung to music worthy of such a jubilate, well may the singers pause and the players wait awhile to retune their instruments; here, therefore, fitly stands that solemn, stately, peaceful note of rest, SELAH.

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

II The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

8. "*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*" The joyful citizens of Jerusalem are invited to go forth and view the remains of their enemies, that they may mark the prowess of Jehovah and the spoil which his right hand hath won for his people. It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history it should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel. "*What desolations he hath made in the earth.*" The destroyers he destroys, the desolators he desolates. How forcible is the verse at this date! The ruined cities of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, are our instructors, and in tables of stone record the doings of the Lord. In every place where his cause and crown have been disregarded ruin has surely followed; sin has been a blight on nations, and left their palaces to lie in heaps. In the days of the writer of this Psalm, there had probably occurred some memorable interposition of God against his Israel's foes; and as he saw their overthrow, he called on his fellow citizens to come forth and attentively consider the terrible things in righteousness which had been wrought on their behalf. Dismantled castles and ruined abbeys in our own land stand as memorials of the Lord's victories over oppression and superstition. May there soon be more of such desolations.

"Ye gloomy piles, ye tombs of living men,  
Ye sepulchres of womanhood, or worse;  
Ye refuges of lies, soon may ye fall,  
And 'mid your ruins may the owl, and bat,  
And dragon find congenial resting place."

9. "*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.*" His voice quiets the tumult of war, and calls for the silence of peace. However remote and barbarous the tribe, he awes the people into rest. He crushes the great powers till they cannot provoke strife again; he gives his people profound repose. "*He breaketh the bow,*" the sender of swift-winged death he renders useless. "*And cutteth the spear in sunder*"—the lance of the mighty man he shivers. "*He burneth the chariot in the*

fire"—the proud war-chariot with its death-dealing scythes he commits to the flames. All sorts of weapons he piles heaps on heaps, and utterly destroys them. So was it in Judea in the days of yore, so shall it be in all lands in eras yet to come. Blessed deed of the Prince of Peace! when shall it be literally performed? Already the spiritual foes of his people are despoiled of their power to destroy; but when shall the universal victory of peace be celebrated, and instruments of wholesale murder be consigned to ignominious destruction? How glorious will the ultimate victory of Jesus be in the day of his appearing, when every enemy shall lick the dust!

10. "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Hold off your hands, ye enemies! Sit down and wait in patience, ye believers! Acknowledge that Jehovah is God, ye who feel the terrors of his wrath! Adore him, and him only, ye who partake in the protections of his grace. Since none can worthily proclaim his nature, let "expressive silence muse his praise." The boasts of the ungodly and the timorous forebodings of the saints should certainly be hushed by a sight of what the Lord has done in past ages. "*I will be exalted among the heathen.*" They forget God, they worship idols, but Jehovah will yet be honoured by them. Reader, the prospects of missions are bright, bright as the promises of God. Let no man's heart fail him; the solemn declarations of this verse must be fulfilled. "*I will be exalted in the earth,*" among all people, whatever may have been their wickedness or their degradation. Either by terror or love God will subdue all hearts to himself. The whole round earth shall yet reflect the light of his majesty. All the more because of the sin, and obstinacy, and pride of man shall God be glorified when grace reigns unto eternal life in all corners of the world.

11. "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*" It was meet to sing this twice over. It is a truth of which no believer wearies, it is a fact too often forgotten, it is a precious privilege which cannot be too often considered. Reader, is the Lord on thy side? Is Emmanuel, God with us, thy Redeemer? Is there a covenant between thee and God as between God and Jacob? If so, thrice happy art thou. Show thy joy in holy song, and in times of trouble play the man by still making music for thy God.

SELAH. Here as before, lift up the heart. Rest in contemplation after praise. Still keep the soul in tune. It is easier to sing a hymn of praise than to continue in the spirit of praise, but let it be our aim to maintain the uprising devotion of our grateful hearts, and so end our song as if we intended it to be continued.

SELAH bids the music rest,  
Pause in silence soft and blest;  
SELAH bids uplift the strain,  
Harps and voices tune again;  
SELAH ends the vocal praise,  
Still your hearts to God upraise.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—The LXX referring to the notion of the theme  $\kappaρυφίω$ , *occultavit*, render it  $\text{ἰνῆρ τῶν κρυφίω}$ , *for the hidden*; and the Latin, *pro arcanis*; and the rest of the ancient interpreters take the same course; the Chaldee referring it to *Coreh*, and those that were *hidden*, i.e., *swallowed up*, by the earth with him, whilst these *sons of Coreh* escaped; as if the mention of the *sons of Coreh* in the title, by whom this song was to be sung, referred the whole Psalm to that story. Accordingly, verse 2, when the Hebrew reads, "*Though the earth be removed,*" the paraphrase is, "*When our fathers were changed from the earth.*"—Henry Hammond.

*Title.*—The title is peculiar, "*Upon Alamothe,*" suggesting "*a choir of virgins,*" as if this virgin-choir were selected to sing a Psalm that tells of perils and fears and alarms abounding, in order to show that even the feeble virgins may in that day sing without dread, because of "*The Mighty One*" on their side.—Andrew A. Bonar.

*Title.*—"*Upon Alamothe.*" [To be sung] *en soprano.*—Armand de Mestral, quoted by Perowne.

*Whole Psalm.*—We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin.—*Martin Luther.*

*Whole Psalm.*—Luther and his companions, with all their bold readiness for danger and death in the cause of truth, had times when their feelings were akin to those of a divine singer, who said, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” But in such hours the unflinching Reformer would cheerily say to his friend Melancthon, “Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm;” and they could sing it in Luther’s own characteristic version:—

A sure stronghold our God is He,  
A timely shield and weapon;  
Our help he’ll be, and set us free  
From every ill can happen.

\* \* \* \* \*

And were the world with devils filled,  
All eager to devour us,  
Our souls to fear shall little yield,  
They cannot overpower us.

*S. W. Christopher, in “Hymn Writers and their Hymns.”*

*Verse 1.*—“*God is our refuge and strength,*” etc. It begins abruptly, but nobly; ye may trust in whom and in what ye please; but GOD (ELOHIM) *is our refuge and strength.* “*A very present help.*” A help found to be very powerful and effectual in straits and difficulties. The words are very emphatic: עֲזָרָה בְּצָרוֹת נִקְצֵא פָאָר, *ezrah betsaroth nimitsa meod*, “He is found an exceeding, or superlative, help in difficulties.” Such we have found him, and therefore celebrate his praise.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Though the earth be removed.*” John Wesley preached in Hyde-park, on the occasion of the earthquake felt in London, March 8, 1750, and repeated these words. Charles Wesley composed Hymn 67, Wesley’s Collection, the following lines of which illustrate this verse:—

How happy then are we,  
Who build, O Lord, on thee!  
What can our foundation shock?  
Though the shatter’d earth remove,  
Stands our city on a rock,  
On the rock of heavenly love.

*Verses 2, 3.*—The earth thrown into a state of wild confusion, the mountains hurled into the mighty deep, the sea tossed into a tempest, and the everlasting hills drifting on its foaming billows, are the vivid images by which the divine judgments on wicked and persecuting nations are described in the language of the prophets.—*John Morison.*

*Verses 2, 3, 5.*—Palestine was frequently subject to earthquakes, as might have been expected from its physical character and situation; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that although all other parts of the land seem to have been occasionally the scene of those terrible convulsions, the capital was almost wholly free from them. Mount Moriah, or the hill of vision, was so called from its towering height, which made it a conspicuous object in the distance. It stands in the centre of a group of hills, which surround it in the form of an amphitheatre, and it was chiefly to this position, under the special blessing of God, that it stood firm and immovable amid the frequent earthquakes that agitated and ravaged the Holy Land.—*Paxton’s Illustrations of Scripture.*

*Verse 3.*—“*Selah.*” See “*Treasury of David,*” Vol. I., pp. 23, 26, 27; and Vol. II., pp. 224—227.

*Verse 4.*—“*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.*” What is the *river* that makes glad the city of God? I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, “*God is in the midst of her.*” 1. God the *Father*

is the river : " For my people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. ii. 13. 2. God the *Son* is the river, the fountain of salvation : " In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zech. xiii. 1. 3. God the *Spirit* is the river : " He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John vii. 38 ; iv. 14. What are the *streams* of this river ? Answer—the *perfections* of God, the *fulness* of Christ, the *operations* of the Spirit, and these running in the *channel* of the *covenant of promise*.—Ralph Erskine.

Verse 4.—" *There is a river,*" etc. This is that flood which Ezekiel beheld in vision, the waters that came down from the right side of the house, and rising first to the ancles—then as the prophet passed onward, to the knees—then to the loins—became afterwards a river that he could not pass over ; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Shall we see in this, with the angelic doctor, the river of grace which burst forth from Mount Calvary ? streams branching off hither and thither, the *pelagim* of the Hebrew—" to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Job xxxviii. O " fountain of gardens," " well of living waters," " streams from Lebanon," how do you, the " nether springs " of this world, bring to us something of the everlasting loveliness and peace of those " upper springs," by which the beautiful flock now feed and lie down, none making them afraid ! Or with S. Ambrose and S. Bernard, understand the verse of the " river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." And then the rivers of that flood shall indeed " *make glad the city of God,*" the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where is the tree of life, that beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month ; that country and that river of which the old liturgies say, " They who rest in the bosom of Abraham are in the tabernacles of joy and rest, in the dwellings of light, in the world of pleasure, in the church of the true Jerusalem, where there is no place for affliction, nor way of sadness, where there are no wars with the flesh, and no resistance to temptation, where sin is forgotten, and past danger is only remembered as a present pleasure."—Thomas Aquinas, Ambrose, and Bernard, in *Neale's Commentary*.

Verse 4.—" *There is a river.*" The river of God that flows from his throne. No enemy can cut off this stream from the church of Christ. Observe the reference to Isaiah xxxvi. 2 ; xxxvii. 25, compared with 2 Chron. xxxii. 2—4. These gently flowing, but full streams, are contrasted with the roaring waves of the sea.—T. C. Barth.

Verse 4.—" *There is a river,*" etc. The allusion is either to the river Kidron, which ran by Jerusalem, or to the waters of Shiloah, which by different courses and branches ran through the city of Jerusalem, and supplied the several parts of it with water, to the joy and comfort of its inhabitants. But the words are to be understood in a figurative sense, as applicable to gospel times ; and this river either designs the gospel, the streams of which are its doctrines, which are living waters, that went out from Jerusalem, and which publish glad tidings of great joy to all sensible sinners ; or the Spirit and his graces, which are compared to a well and rivers of living water, in the exercises of which the saints have much joy and peace ; or else the Lord himself, who is the place of broad rivers and streams to his people, and is both their refreshment and protection ; or rather his everlasting love to them is here intended.—John Gill.

Verse 4.—Compared with the waterless deserts around, Judæa and Jerusalem were well watered, and drought pressed more severely on the besiegers than the besieged. The allusion here is to the well-known rill and pool of Siloam. So in Isaiah viii. 6, the blessing of God's protection is represented by the waters of Siloah, which go softly.—From " *The Psalms Chronologically arranged. By Four Friends,*" 1867.

Verse 4.—" *The city.*" The church of God is like a city, 1. Because a city is a place of *security*. 2. A place of *society* : what one wants another supplies ; they have mutual fellowship. 3. A place of *unity*, that people may therein live in peace and concord. 4. A place of *trade* and *traffic*. Here is the market of free grace : " Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc. Here is the *pearl of great price* exposed for

sale. 5. A place of *freedom*, and *liberty*, freedom from the guilt of sin, wrath of God, curse of the law, present evil world, bondage to Satan, etc., etc. 6. A place of *order* and *regularity*; it hath its constitutions and ordinances. 7. A place of *rest*, and commodious to live in, and thus it is opposed to the wilderness. 8. A place of *privileges*. 9. A place of *pomp* and *splendour*; there is the king, the court, the throne. 10. A place of *pleasure* and *beauty*, Psalm xlvi. 2.—*Ralph Erskine*.

*Verse 5.*—“*God is in the midst of her.*” It is the real presence of Christ, and the supernatural power of his Spirit, which makes the church mighty to the conquest of souls. The church spreads because her “*God is in the midst of her.*” When at any time she has forgotten her dependence on the invisible intercession of her Head, and the gracious energy of his Spirit, she has found herself shorn of the locks of her great strength, and has become the laughing-stock of the Philistines.—*William Binnie, D.D.*

*Verse 5.*—“*God is in the midst of her.*” etc. The enemies of the church may toss her as waves but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a *feather*, but shall not sink therein as *lead*. He that is a well of water within her to keep her from fainting, will also prove a wall of fire about her to preserve her from falling. *Tried* she may be, but *destroyed* she cannot be. Her foundation is the Rock of Ages, and her defence the everlasting Arms. It is only such fabrics as are bottomed upon the *sand*, that are overthrown by the *wind*. The adversaries of God’s people will push at them as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution, as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such wisps into the fire.—*William Secker*.

*Verse 5.*—When the Papists were in their ruff, and Melancthon began sometimes to fear lest the infant Reformation should be stifled in the birth, Luther was wont to comfort him with these words: “*Si nos ruemus, ruet Christus una, scilicet ille regnator mundi, esto ruat, malo ego cum Christo ruere, quam cum Cæsare stare*; that is, If we perish, Christ must fall too (he is in the midst of us), and if it must be so, be it so; I had rather perish with Christ, that great Ruler of the world, than prosper with Cæsar.—*John Collings*.

*Verse 5.*—“*And that right early.*” Therefore, notice that all the great deliverances wrought in Holy Scriptures, were wrought *so early*, as to have been brought to pass in the middle of the night. So Gideon, with his pitchers and lamps against the Midianites; so Saul, when he went forth against Nahash, the Ammonite; so Joshua, when he went up to succour Gibeon; so Samson, when he carried off in triumph the gates of Gaza; so also the associate kings, under the guidance of Elisha, in their expedition against the Moabites, when they, according to God’s command, filled the wilderness with ditches, and then beheld their enemies drawn to their destruction, by the reflection of the rising sun upon the water.—*Michael Agyuan*.

*Verse 5.*—“*Right early.*” Rather, with the margin, *when the morning appeareth*. The restoration of the Jews will be one of the first things at the season of the second advent. It will be accomplished in the very dawning of that day, “when the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing on his wings.”—*Samuel Horsley*.

*Verse 7.*—“*The Lord of hosts is with us.*” There be three sorts of God’s special presence, all which may be justly accounted the church’s privilege. First, his *glorious* presence, or his presence testified by eminent glory, and the residence thereof. Thus God is said to be in heaven differentially, so as he is not anywhere else; and heaven is therefore called his throne or dwelling place (1 Kings viii. 39); as a king is nowhere so majestically as upon his throne, or in his chair of state; and this is so great a privilege of the church as that she comes not to enjoy it, until she be triumphant in heaven, and therefore is not the presence here intended. Secondly, his *gracious* presence or his presence testified by tokens of his grace and favour toward a people, whether visible, as in the temple where he chose to place his name, and wherein above all places he would be worshipped, in which respect he is said to dwell between the cherubim (2 Sam. vi. 2); or spiritual tokens of his grace, as assistance and acceptance in the duties of his worship, together with enjoyment and benefit of his ordinances. Thus he is present with his church and people in times of the gospel: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matt. xviii. 20. This kind of presence is a privilege of the church militant, that he will be with her in holy and spiritual administrations



and ordinances; yet this is not the presence principally intended here. Thirdly, the *providential* presence, or his presence testified by acts of special providence, wherein the power, wisdom, or any other of God's attributes are eminently put forth, either by way of assistance or defence for a people. Thus the Lord was present with Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of fire and of a cloud (Exod. xiii. 21): "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." And as this presence was intended for a guide, so was it also for a defence to his people against their enemies, and at which their enemies the Egyptians were troubled. Exodus xiv. 20. By this kind of presence the Lord is with his church militant, in reference to her external regiment, and more especially in her warfare, standing up for her and with her against her enemies; and this is the church's privilege in these words, "*The Lord of hosts is with us.*"—*John Strickland, B.D. (1601—1670), in a Sermon, entitled, "Immanuel," 1644.*

*Verse 7.—"The God of Jacob."* If any shall ask me, Why then the God of Jacob more than the God of Isaac? Though it might suffice that the Spirit of God is pleased so to speak, yet Mr. Calvin gives this reason, the covenant of grace was more solemnly made and publicly ratified with Abraham and Jacob, than it was with Isaac, and therefore when he will be looked upon as a God in covenant with his people, he holds forth himself more frequently by the name of the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob, than of the God of Isaac; albeit sometimes he is pleased to take upon him that style also.—*John Strickland.*

*Verse 7.—"Our refuge."* Our refuge, or stronghold, where the church, as a ship in quiet haven, may anchor and ride safe; or it may be a metaphor from the dens or burrows, where weaponless creatures find shelter, when they are hunted and pursued by their enemies, as Prov. xxx. 26, "*The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.*" They are safe in the rock if they can get thither, though never so weak in themselves. So the church, though pursued by bloody enemies, and though weak in herself, if yet she get under the wing of the God of Jacob, she may be fearless, for she is safe there. *He is our refuge.* It were to undervalue God, if we should fear the creatures, when he is with us. Antigonus, when he overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, he steps in unto them suddenly, demanding, "And how many do you reckon me for?"—*John Strickland.*

*Verse 8.—"Come, behold the works of the Lord."* *Venito, videto.* God looks that his works should be well observed, and especially when he hath wrought any great deliverance for his people. Of all things, he cannot abide to be forgotten.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 8.—"What desolations he hath made in the earth."* We are here first invited to a tragical sight. We are carried into the *camera di morte*, to see the ghastly visage of deaths and desolations all the world over; than which nothing can be more horrible and dreadful. You are called out to see piles of dead carcasses; to see whole basketfuls of heads, as was presented to Jehu: a woeful spectacle, but a necessary one. See, therefore *what desolations the Lord hath wrought in all the earth.* Desolations by wars: how many fields have been drenched with blood, and composted with carcasses; how many millions of men have been cut off in all ages by the edge of the sword! Desolations by famine; wherein men have been forced to make their bodies one another's sepulchres, and mothers to devour their children of a span long. Desolations by plague and pestilence; which have swept away, as our story tells us, eight hundred thousand in one city. Desolations by inundations of waters; which have covered the faces of many regions, and rinsed the earth of her unclean inhabitants. Desolations by earthquakes, which have swallowed up whole cities, and those great and populous. Desolations wrought by the hand of his angels; as in Egypt; in the tents of the Assyrians, one hundred and eighty-five thousand in one night; in the camp of Israel, in David's pestilence. Desolations wrought by the hand of men, in battles and massacres. Desolations by wild beasts; as in the colonies of Ashur planted in Samaria. Desolations by the swarms of obnoxious and noisome creatures; as in Egypt, and since in Africa: "He spoke the word, and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable," Ps. cv. 34. Insomuch as, in the consulship of M. Fulvius Flaccus, after the bloody wars of Africa, followed infinite numbers of locusts; which, after devouring of all herbs and fruit, were, by a sudden wind, hoisted into the African Sea: infection followed upon their

putrefaction, and thereupon a general mortality : in number, four-score thousand died : upon the sea-coast betwixt Carthage and Utica, above two-hundred thousand. Desolations every way, and by what variety of means soever ; yet all wrought by the divine hand : “ *What desolations he hath wrought.*” Whoever be the instrument, he is the Author.—*Joseph Hall (Bishop).*

*Verse 8.*—Doth not God make great desolations, when he makes that man that counted himself a most religious man, to confess himself not sufficient for one good thought ? As it was with Paul, does he not make wars to cease when he turns the heart of a persecutor, earnestly to seek peace with God and man, yea, with his very enemies ? Doth he not break the bow and all weapons of war asunder, and that in all the earth, when he proclaims peace to all that are far off and near, professor and profane, Jews and Gentiles ?—*Richard Coore.*

*Verse 8—10.*—“ *Come, behold the works of the Lord.*” What works ? ruining works. “ *What desolations he hath made in the earth.*” God made strange work in the world at that time. Those countries which before were as the garden of God, became like a desolate wilderness : who was able to bear this with patience ? Yet the Spirit of God saith in the next words, it must be patiently borne. When God lets men strive and war with one another to a common confusion, yet no man may strive with God about it ; and the reason given why no man may, is only this (which is indeed all the reason in the world), *He is God.* So it follows in the Psalm ; “ *Be still, and know that I am God ;*” as if the Lord had said, Not a word, do not strive nor reply ; whatever you see, hold your peace ; know that I, being God, give no account of any of my matters.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 9.*—He that destroyeth all the instruments of war doth surely make peace ; and he that *maketh war to cease*, doth certainly make peace begin. Peace is made two ways ; first, by taking up the differences and reconciling the spirits of men ; secondly, by breaking the power and taking away all provisions of war from men. The Lord maketh peace by both these ways, or by either of them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

*Verse 9.*—“ *He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*” When the Romans had, in their way of speaking, given peace to a nation, by extirpating the greatest part of the miserable inhabitants, they collected the arms of the vanquished, and setting them on fire, reduced them to ashes. A medal, struck by Vespasian, the Roman emperor, on finishing his wars in Italy, and other parts of the world, represents the goddess of peace holding an olive branch in one hand, and with a lighted torch in the other, setting fire to a heap of armour. The custom is thus alluded to by Virgil :—

“ *O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos !  
Qualis eram cum primam aciem Præneste sub ipsa  
Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos.*”

*Æn. lib. iii. v. 1. 560.*

“ O that Jupiter would restore to me the years that are past ! Such as I was, when under Præneste itself, I routed the foremost rank of the enemy, and victorious set fire to heaps of armour.”

The same practice, by the command of Jehovah, prevailed among the Jews ; the first instance of it occurs in the book of Joshua, xi. 6. It is also celebrated in the songs of Zion, as the attendant of peace, and the proof of its continuance : “ *He maketh wars to cease,*” etc.—*Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

*Verse 9.*—“ *He burneth the chariot in the fire.*” By degrees the chariot came to be one of the recognised forces in war, and we find it mentioned throughout the books of Scriptures, not only in its literal sense, but as a metaphor which every one could understand. In the Psalms, for example, are several allusions to the war-chariot. “ *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth ; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*” Ps. xli. 9. Again : “ *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep.*” Ps. lxxvi. 6. And : “ *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses : but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.*” Ps. xx. 7. Now ; the force of these passages cannot be properly appreciated unless we realise to ourselves the dread in which the war-chariot was held by the foot soldiers. Even cavalry were much feared ; but the chariots were objects of almost superstitious fear, and the rushing sound of their wheels, the noise of the horses' hoofs, and the shaking

of the ground as the "prancing horses and jumping chariots" (Nah. iii. 2), thundered along, are repeatedly mentioned.—*J. G. Wood.*

*Verse 10.*—"Be still, and know that I am God." The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all to be still, and know that he is God. For, says he, "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

In the words may be observed, 1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to words; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to actions and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as to the inward frame of our hearts, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it may be.

2. We may observe the ground of this duty, namely the divinity of God. His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be still before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him.

3. How we must fulfill this duty of being still before God, namely, with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we "know" him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. Hence, the bare consideration that God is God may well be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign dispensations.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

*Verse 10.*—"Be still, and know that I am God." This text of Scripture forbids quarrelling and murmuring against God. Now let me apply as I go along. There are very few, and these very well circumstanced, that find themselves in no hazard of quarrelling with God. I think almost that if angels were on earth, they would be in hazard of it. I will assure you, there are none that have corruption, but they have need to be afraid of this. But many give way to this quarrelling, and consider not the hazard thereof. Beware of it, for it is a dreadful thing to quarrel with God: who may say unto him, "What doest thou?" It is a good account of Aaron, that when God made fire to destroy his sons, he held his peace. Let us then, while we bear the yoke, "sit alone and keep silence, and put our mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Lam. iii. 28, 29. Ye know, the murmuring of the children of Israel cost them very dear. "Be still," that is, beware of murmuring against me, saith the Lord. God gives not an account of his matters to any; because there may be many things ye cannot see through; and therefore ye may think it better to have wanted them, and much more, for the credit of God and the church. I say, God gives not an account of his matters to any. Beware, then, of drawing rash conclusions.—*Richard Cameron's Sermon preached July 18th, 1680, three days before he was killed at Airmoss.*

*Verse 10.*—"Be still and know that I am God." Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quencheth the temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great; therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God, under this notion, is propounded: "Be still, and know that I am God;" as if he had said, Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion; and again, know, ye trembling souls, that I am God; and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins, and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse 10.*—"Be still, and know that I am the Lord." Not everyone is a fit scholar for God's school, but such as are purified according to the purification of the sanctuary. Carnal men are drowned in fleshly and worldly cares, and neither purged nor lifted up to receive the light of God, or else indisposed by prejudice or passion, that they cannot learn at all. We will never savingly know him, till our souls be free of these indispositions. Among all the elements the earth is fitted to receive seed of the sower; if he cast it into the fire, it burneth; if in the air, it withereth;

if in the waters, it rotteth, the instability of that body is for producing monsters, because it closeth not straitly the seeds of fishes. Spirits of a fiery temper, or light in inconstancy, or moving as waters, are not for God's lessons, but such as in *stayed humility* do rest under his hand. If waters be mixed with clay in their substance, or their surface be troubled with wind, they can neither receive nor render any image; such unstable spirits in the school of God, lose their time and endanger themselves.—*William Struther.*

Verse 10.—“*Be still, and know,*” etc. As you must come and see (verse 8), so come and hear what the Lord saith to those enemies of yours.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11.—“*The Lord of hosts is with us.*” On Tuesday Mr. Wesley could with difficulty be understood, though he often attempted to speak. At last, with all the strength he had, he cried out, “The best of all is, God is with us.” Again, raising his hand, and waving it in triumph, he exclaimed with thrilling effect, “The best of all is, God is with us.” These words seem to express the leading feature of his whole life. God had been with him from early childhood; his providence had guided him through all the devious wanderings of human life; and now, when he was entering the “valley of the shadow of death,” the same hand sustained him.—*From “Wesley and his Coadjutors.” By Rev W. C. Larrabee, A.M. Edited by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D. Cincinnati. 1851.”*

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The song of faith in troublous times. I. *Our refuge.* Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat is our God. II. *Our strength.* Our all-sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength is our God. III. *Our help.* Ever near, sympathising, faithful, real, and potent is our God.

Verse 1.—“*A very present help in trouble.*” Religion never so valuable as in seasons of trouble, sickness, and death. God is present helping us to bear trouble, to improve it, and to survive it. Present by gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when he seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying trouble. Trust and wait.—*James Smith.*

Verse 2.—The reasons, advantages, and glory of holy courage.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The great and many causes for fear. 1. What might come—mountains, waters, etc., persecution, pestilence, etc. 2. What must come—afflictions, death, judgment. II. The great and one cause for not fearing. Fearlessness under such circumstances should be well grounded. God himself is our refuge, and we confiding in him are fearless.—*G. Rogers.*

Verse 4.—Glad tidings in sad times; or, the city of God in the times of trouble and confusion, watered with the river of consolation.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 4.—What can this “*river*” be, but that blessed covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble? . . . And what are “*the streams*” of this river, but the outgoings and effects of this divine constitution? I. The blood of Jesus. II. The influences of the Holy Spirit. III. The doctrines and promises of the gospel. IV. The ordinances of religion. V. All the means of grace.—*W. Jay.*

Verse 4.—“*Make glad the city of God.*” There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens. I. The first regards *prospect.* II. The second regards *traffic.* III. The third regards *fertility.* IV. The fourth regards *supply.*—*W. Jay.*

Verse 4.—“*City of God.*” The church may be called “*the city of God,*” because, 1. He dwells in it (see verse 5). 2. He *founded* it and *built* it. 3. It derives all *privileges* and *immunities* from him. 4. He is the chief Ruler or Governor there. 5. It is his property. 6. He draws the *rent* of it.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verses 4, 5.—To the church, Joy, Establishment, Deliverance.

Verse 6.—What man did and what God did.

*Verse 8.*—"Behold the works of the Lord." I. They are worth beholding, for they are all like himself; well becoming his infinite power, wisdom, justice. II. Our eyes were given us for this very purpose—not for the beholding of vanity, not for the ensnaring or wounding of the soul; but for the use and honour of the Creator. III. The Lord delights to have his works beheld; he knows their excellency and perfection, and that the more they are seen and noted the more honour will accrue to the Maker of them. IV. None but we can do it; there is great reason then that we should carefully "behold," etc. V. This shall be of great benefit to ourselves.—*Bishop Hall.*

*Verse 8.*—The desolations of the Lord, the consolation of his saints. I. A declaration of what has happened. II. A promise of what shall be achieved.—*Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 190.*

*Verse 9.*—The Great Peacemaker, or the principles of the gospel our only hope, for the total abolition of war.

*Verse 10.*—"Be still, and know that I am God." The sole consideration that God is God, sufficient to still all objections to his sovereignty.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

*Verse 10.*—"I am God." 1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely perfect being. 2. As he is God he is so great, that he is infinitely above all comprehension. 3. As he is God, all things are his own. 4. In that he is God, he is worthy to be sovereign over all things. 5. In that he is God, he will be sovereign, and will act as such. 6. In that he is God, he is able to avenge himself on those who oppose his sovereignty.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

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