

## PSALM LI.

TITLE.—To the chief Musician.—*Therefore not written for private meditation only, but for the public service of song. Suitable for the loneliness of individual penitence, this matchless Psalm is equally well adapted for an assembly of the poor in spirit. A Psalm of David. It is a marvel, but nevertheless a fact, that writers have been found to deny David's authorship of this Psalm, but their objections are frivolous, the Psalm is David-like all over. It would be far easier to imitate Milton, Shakespeare, or Tennyson, than David. His style is altogether sui generis, and it is as easily distinguishable as the touch of Raffaele or the colouring of Rubens. "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his Psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologise for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they may reflect that the like licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.*

DIVISIONS.—*It will be simplest to note in the first twelve verses the penitent's confessions and plea for pardon, and then in the last seven his anticipatory gratitude and the way in which he resolves to display it.*

### EXPOSITION.

**H**AVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.

1. "*Have mercy upon me, O God.*" He appeals at once to the mercy of God, even before he mentions his sin. The sight of mercy is good for eyes that are sore with penitential weeping. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of pure mercy, and therefore to that attribute the awakened sinner flies. "*According to thy loving-kindness.*" Act, O Lord, like thyself; give mercy like thy mercy. Show mercy such as is congruous with thy grace.

"Great God, thy nature hath no bound:  
So let thy pardoning love be found."

What a choice word is that of our English version, a rare compound of precious things: love and kindness sweetly blended in one—"lovingkindness." "*According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.*" Let thy most loving compassions come to me, and make thou thy pardons such as these would suggest. Reveal all thy gentlest attributes in my case, not only in their essence but in their abundance. Numberless have been thine acts of goodness, and vast is thy grace; let me be the object of thine infinite mercy, and repeat it all in me. Make my one case an epitome of all thy tender mercies. By every deed of grace to others I feel encouraged, and I pray thee let me add another and a yet greater one, in my own person, to the long list of thy compassions. "*Blot out my transgressions.*" My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock for ever: many strokes of thy mercy may be needed, to cut out the deep inscription, but then thou hast a multitude of mercies, and therefore, I beseech thee, erase my sins.

2. "*Wash me thoroughly.*" It is not enough to blot out the sin; his person is defiled, and he fain would be purified. He would have God himself cleanse him, for none but he could do it effectually. The washing must be thorough, it must be repeated, therefore he cries, "Multiply to wash me." The dye is in itself immovable, and I, the sinner, have lain long in it, till the crimson is ingrained: but, Lord, wash, and wash, and wash again, till the last stain is gone, and not a trace of my defilement is left. The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed; but the true suppliant cries, "wash me." The careless soul is content with a nominal cleansing, but the truly-awakened conscience desires a real and practical washing, and that of a most complete and efficient kind. "*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.*" It is viewed as one great pollution, polluting the entire nature, and as all his own; as if nothing were so much his own as his sin. The one sin against Bathsheba, served to show the Psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity, of which that foul deed was but one falling stone. He desires to be rid of the whole mass of his filthiness, which though once so little observed, had then become a hideous and haunting terror to his mind. "*And cleanse me from my sin.*" This is a more general expression; as if the Psalmist said, "Lord, if washing will not do, try some other process; if water avails not, let fire, let anything be tried, so that I may but be purified. Rid me of my sin by some means, by any means, by every means, only do purify me completely, and leave no guilt upon my soul." It is not the punishment he cries out against, but the sin. Many a murderer is more alarmed at the gallows than at the murder which brought him to it. The thief loves the plunder, though he fears the prison. Not so David: he is sick of sin as sin; his loudest outcries are against the evil of his transgression, and not against the painful consequences of it. When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. When we hate what the Lord hates, he will soon make an end of it, to our joy and peace.

3. "*For I acknowledge my transgressions.*" Here he sees the plurality and immense number of his sins, and makes open declaration of them. He seems to say, I make a full confession of them. Not that this is my plea in seeking forgiveness, but it is a clear evidence that I need mercy, and am utterly unable to look to any other quarter for help. My pleading guilty has barred me from any appeal against the sentence of justice: O Lord, I must cast myself on thy mercy, refuse me not, I pray thee. Thou hast made me willing to confess. O follow up this work of grace with a full and free remission! "*And my sin is ever before me.*" My sin as a whole is never out of my mind; it continually oppresses my spirit. I lay it before thee because it is ever before me: Lord, put it away both from thee and me. To an awakened conscience, pain on account of sin is not transient and

occasional, but intense and permanent, and this is no sign of divine wrath, but rather a sure preface of abounding favour.

4. "*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.*" The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the Psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of his feeling of sin against God. All his wrong-doing centred, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken-hearted acknowledgment of offence against him. "*And done this evil in thy sight.*" To commit treason in the very court of the king and before his eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed. "*That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*" He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, placed the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

5. "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.*" He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This was not intended to justify himself, but it rather meant to complete the confession. It is as if he said, not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner. The fountain of my life is polluted as well as its streams. My birth-tendencies are out of the square of equity; I naturally lean to forbidden things. Mine is a constitutional disease, rendering my very person obnoxious to thy wrath. "*And in sin did my mother conceive me.*" He goes back to the earliest moment of his being, not to traduce his mother, but to acknowledge the deep tap-roots of his sin. It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who cavil at this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith. David's mother was the Lord's handmaid, he was born in chaste wedlock, of a good father, and he was himself "the man after God's own heart;" and yet his nature was as fallen as that of any other son of Adam, and there only needed the occasion for the manifesting of that sad fact. In our shaping we were put out of shape, and when we were conceived our nature conceived sin. Alas, for poor humanity! Those who will may cry it up, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament its lost estate.

6. "*Behold.*" Here is the great matter of consideration. God desires not merely outward virtue, but inward purity, and the penitent's sense of sin is greatly deepened as with astonishment he discovers this truth, and how far he is from satisfying the divine demand. The second "*Behold*" is fitly set over against the first; how great the gulf which yawns between them! "*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart-fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretence of purity, he looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions; to him the inward is as visible as the outward, and he rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it. "*And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*" The penitent feels that God is teaching him truth concerning his nature, which he had not before perceived. The love of the heart, the mystery of its fall, and the way of its purification—this hidden wisdom we must all attain; and it is a great blessing to be able to believe that the Lord will "make us to know it." No one can teach our innermost nature but the Lord, but he can instruct us to profit. The Holy Spirit can write the law on our heart, and that is the sum of practical wisdom. He can put the fear of the Lord within, and that is the beginning of wisdom. He can reveal Christ in us, and he is essential wisdom. Such poor, foolish, disarranged souls as ours, shall yet be ordered aright, and truth and wisdom shall reign within us.

7. "*Purge me with hyssop.*" Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me with the appointed means. Give me the reality which legal ceremonies symbolise. Nothing but blood can take away my blood-stains, nothing but the strongest purification

can avail to cleanse me. Let the sin-offering purge my sin. Let him who was appointed to atone, execute his sacred office on me; for none can need it more than I. The passage may be read as the voice of faith as well as a prayer, and so it runs—"Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Foul as I am, there is such power in the divine propitiation, that my sin shall vanish quite away. Like the leper upon whom the priest has performed the cleansing rites, I shall be again admitted into the assembly of thy people and allowed to share in the privileges of the true Israel; while in thy sight also, through Jesus my Lord, I shall be accepted. "*Wash me.*" Let it not merely be in type that I am clean, but by real spiritual purification, which shall remove the pollution of my nature. Let the sanctifying as well as the pardoning process be perfected in me. Save me from the evils which my sin has created and nourished in me. "*And I shall be whiter than snow.*" None but thyself can whiten me, but thou canst in grace outdo nature itself in its purest state. Snow soon gathers smoke and dust, it melts and disappears; thou canst give me an enduring purity. Though snow is white below as well as on the surface, thou canst work the like inward purity in me, and make me so clean that only an hyperbole can set forth my immaculate condition. Lord, do this; my faith believes thou wilt, and well she knows thou canst.

Scarcely does Holy Scripture contain a verse more full of faith than this. Considering the nature of the sin, and the deep sense the Psalmist had of it, it is a glorious faith to be able to see in the blood sufficient, nay, all-sufficient merit entirely to purge it away. Considering also the deep, natural inbred corruption which David saw and experienced within, it is a miracle of faith that he could rejoice in the hope of perfect purity in his inward parts. Yet, be it added, the faith is no more than the word warrants, than the blood of atonement encourages, than the promise of God deserves. O that some reader may take heart, even now while smarting under sin, to do the Lord the honour to rely thus confidently on the finished sacrifice of Calvary and the infinite mercy there revealed.

8. "*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*" He prays about his sorrow late in the Psalm; he began at once with his sin; he asks to hear pardon, and then to hear joy. He seeks comfort at the right time and from the right source. His ear has become heavy with sinning, and so he prays, "Make me to hear." No voice could revive his dead joys but that which quickeneth the dead. Pardon from God would give him double joy—"joy and gladness." No stinted bliss awaits the forgiven one; he shall not only *have* a double-blooming joy, but he shall *hear* it; it shall sing with exultation. Some joy is felt but not heard, for it contends with fears; but the joy of pardon has a voice louder than the voice of sin. God's voice speaking peace is the sweetest music an ear can hear. "*That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*" He was like a poor wretch whose bones are crushed, crushed by no ordinary means, but by omnipotence itself. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds; his firmest and yet tenderest powers were "broken in pieces all asunder;" his manhood had become a dislocated, mangled, quivering sensibility. Yet if he who crushed would cure, every wound would become a new mouth for song, every bone quivering before with agony would become equally sensible of intense delight. The figure is bold, and so is the supplicant. He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God! Preposterous there most of all but for the cross where Jehovah Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. A penitent need not ask to be an hired servant, or settle down in desparing content with perpetual mourning; he may ask for gladness and he shall have it; for if when prodigals return the father is glad, and the neighbours and friends rejoice and are merry with music and dancing, what need can there be that the restored one himself should be wretched?

9. "*Hide thy face from my sins.*" Do not look at them; be at pains not to see them. They thrust themselves in thy way; but, Lord, refuse to behold them, lest if thou consider them, thine anger burn, and I die. "*Blot out all mine iniquities.*" He repeats the prayer of the first verse with the enlargement of it by the word "all." All repetitions are not "vain repetitions." Souls in agony have no space to find variety of language: pain has to content itself with monotonous. David's face was ashamed with looking on his sin, and no diverting thoughts could remove it from his memory; but he prays the Lord to do with his sin what he himself cannot. If God hide not his face from our sin, he must hide it for ever from us; and if he blot not out our sins, he must blot our names out of his book of life.

10. "*Create.*" What! has sin so destroyed us, that the Creator must be called in again? What ruin then doth evil work among mankind! "*Create in me.*" I, in outward fabric, still exist; but I am empty, desert, void. Come, then, and let thy power be seen in a new creation within my old fallen self. Thou didst make a man in the world at first; Lord, make a new man in me! "*A clean heart.*" In the seventh verse he asked to be clean; now he seeks a heart suitable to that cleanliness; but he does not say, "Make my old heart clean;" he is too experienced in the hopelessness of the old nature. He would have the old man buried as a dead thing, and a new creation brought in to fill its place. None but God can create either a new heart or a new earth. Salvation is a marvellous display of supreme power; the work *in us* as much as that *for us* is wholly of Omnipotence. The affections must be rectified first, or all our nature will go amiss. The heart is the rudder of the soul, and till the Lord take it in hand we steer in a false and foul way. O Lord, thou who didst once make me, be pleased to new make me, and in my most secret parts renew me. "*Renew a right spirit within me.*" It was there once, Lord, put it there again. The law on my heart has become like an inscription hard to read: new write it, gracious Maker. Remove the evil as I have entreated thee; but, O replace it with good, lest into my swept, empty, and garnished heart, from which the devil has gone out for awhile, seven other spirits more wicked than the first should enter and dwell. The two sentences make a complete prayer. "*Create*" what is not there at all; "*renew*" that which is there, but in a sadly feeble state.

11. "*Cast me not away from thy presence.*" Throw me not away as worthless; banish me not, like Cain, from thy face and favour. Permit me to sit among those who share thy love, though I only be suffered to keep the door. I deserve to be for ever denied admission to thy courts; but, O good Lord, permit me still the privilege which is dear as life itself to me. "*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*" Withdraw not his comforts, counsels, assistances, quickenings, else I am indeed as a dead man. Do not leave me as thou didst Saul, when neither by Urim, nor by prophet, nor by dream, thou wouldst answer him. Thy Spirit is my wisdom, leave me not to my folly; he is my strength, O desert me not to my own weakness. Drive me not away from thee, neither do thou go away from me. Keep up the union between us, which is my only hope of salvation. It will be a great wonder if so pure a Spirit deigns to stay in so base a heart as mine; but then, Lord, it is all wonder together, therefore do this, for thy mercy's sake, I earnestly entreat thee.

12. "*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.*" Salvation he had known, and had known it as the Lord's own; he had also felt the joy which arises from being saved in the Lord, but he had lost it for awhile, and therefore he longed for its restoration. None but God can give back this joy; he can do it; we may ask it; he will do it for his own glory and our benefit. This joy comes not first, but follows pardon and purity: in such order it is safe, in any other it is vain presumption or idiotic delirium. "*And uphold me with thy free Spirit.*" Conscious of weakness, mindful of having so lately fallen, he seeks to be kept on his feet by power superior to his own. That royal Spirit, whose holiness is true dignity, is able to make us walk as kings and priests, in all the uprightness of holiness; and he will do so if we seek his gracious upholding. Such influences will not enslave but emancipate us; for holiness is liberty, and the Holy Spirit is a free Spirit. In the roughest and most treacherous ways we are safe with such a keeper; in the best paths we stumble if left to ourselves. The praying for joy and upholding go well together; it is all over with joy if the foot is not kept; and, on the other hand, joy is a very upholding thing, and greatly aids holiness; meanwhile, the free, noble, loyal Spirit is at the bottom of both.

13 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion : build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering : then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

13. "*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.*" It was his fixed resolve to be a teacher of others ; and assuredly none instruct others so well as those who have been experimentally taught of God themselves. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers. Huntingdon's degree of S.S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul-winning evangelist than either M.A. or D.D. The pardoned sinner's matter will be good, for he has been taught in the school of experience, and his manner will be telling, for he will speak sympathetically, as one who has felt what he declares. The audience the Psalmist would choose is memorable—he would instruct transgressors like himself ; others might despise them, but, " a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." If unworthy to edify saints, he would creep in along with the sinners, and humbly tell them of divine love. The mercy of God to one is an illustration of his usual procedure, so that our own case helps us to understand his " ways." or his general modes of action : perhaps, too, David under that term refers to the preceptive part of the word of God, which, having broken, and having suffered thereby, he felt that he could vindicate and urge upon the reverence of other offenders. "*And sinners shall be converted unto thee.*" My fall shall be the restoration of others. Thou wilt bless my pathetic testimony to the recovery of many who, like myself, have turned aside unto crooked ways. Doubtless this Psalm and the whole story of David, have produced for many ages the most salutary results in the conversion of transgressors, and so evil has been overruled for good.

14. "*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.*" He had been the means of the death of Uriah, the Hittite, a faithful and attached follower, and he now confesses that fact. Besides, his sin of adultery was a capital offence, and he puts himself down as one worthy to die the death. Honest penitents do not fetch a compass and confess their sins in an elegant periphrasis, but they come to the point, call a spade a spade, and make a clean breast of all. What other course is rational in dealing with the Omniscient ? "*O God, thou God of my salvation.*" He had not ventured to come so near before. It had been, "*O God,*" up till now, but here he cries, "*Thou God of my salvation.*" Faith grows by the exercise of prayer. He confesses sin more plainly in this verse than before, and yet he deals with God more confidently : growing upward and downward at the same time are perfectly consistent. None but the King can remit the death penalty, it is therefore a joy to faith that God is King, and that he is the author and finisher of our salvation. "*And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*" One would rather have expected him to say, I will sing of thy mercy ; but David can see the divine way of justification, that righteousness of God which Paul afterwards spoke of by which the ungodly are justified, and he vows to sing, yea, and to sing lustily of that righteous way of mercy. After all, it is the righteousness of divine mercy which is its greatest wonder. Note how David would preach in the last verse, and now here he would sing. We can never do too much for the Lord to whom we owe more than all. If we could be preacher, precentor, doorkeeper, pewopener, footwasher, and all in one, all would be too little to show forth all our gratitude. A great sinner pardoned makes a great singer. Sin has a loud voice, and so should our thankfulness have. We shall not sing our own praises if we be saved, but our theme will be the Lord our righteousness, in whose merits we stand righteously accepted.

15. "*O Lord, open thou my lips.*" He is so afraid of himself that he commits his whole being to the divine care, and fears to speak till the Lord unstops his shame-silenced mouth. How marvellously the Lord can open our lips, and what divine things we poor simpletons pour forth under his inspiration ! This prayer of a penitent is a golden petition for a preacher. Lord, I offer it for myself and my brethren. But it may stand in good stead any one whose shame for sin makes him stammer in his prayers, and when it is fully answered, the tongue of the dumb begins to sing. "*And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*" If God opens the mouth he is sure to have the fruit of it. According to the porter at the gate is the nature of that which comes out of man's lips ; when vanity, anger, falsehood, or

lust unbar the door, the foulest villainies troop out; but if the Holy Spirit opens the wicket, then grace, mercy, peace, and all the graces come forth in tuneful dances, like the daughters of Israel when they met David returning with the Philistine's head.

16. "*For thou desirest not sacrifice.*" This was the subject of the last Psalm. The Psalmist was so illuminated as to see far beyond the symbolic ritual; his eye of faith gazed with delight upon the actual atonement. "*Else would I give it.*" He would have been glad enough to present tens of thousands of victims if these would have met the case. Indeed, anything which the Lord prescribed he would cheerfully have rendered. We are ready to give up all we have if we may but be cleared of our sins; and when sin is pardoned our joyful gratitude is prepared for any sacrifice. "*Thou delightest not in burnt offering.*" He knew that no form of burnt sacrifice was a satisfactory propitiation. His deep soul-need made him look from the type to the antitype, from the external rite to the inward grace.

17. "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.*" All sacrifices are presented to thee in one, by the man whose broken heart presents the Saviour's merit to thee. When the heart mourns for sin, thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. "A broken heart" is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. So excellent is a spirit humbled and mourning for sin, that it is not only a sacrifice, but it has a plurality of excellencies, and is pre-eminently God's "*sacrifices.*" "*A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" A heart crushed is a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what men esteem, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent, and never will he while God is love, and while Jesus is called the man who receiveth sinners. Bullocks and rams he desires not, but contrite hearts he seeks after; yea, but one of them is better to him than all the varied offerings of the old Jewish sanctuary.

18. "*Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.*" Let blessings according to thy wont be poured upon thy holy hill and chosen city. Zion was David's favourite spot, whereon he had hoped to erect a temple. The ruling passion is so strong on him, that when he has discharged his conscience he must have a word for Zion. He felt he had hindered the project of honouring the Lord there as he desired, but he prayed God still to let the place of his ark be glorious, and to establish his worship and his worshipping people. "*Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.*" This had been one of David's schemes, to wall in the holy city, and he desires to see it completed; but we believe he had a more spiritual meaning, and prayed for the prosperity of the Lord's cause and people. He had done mischief by his sin, and had, as it were, pulled down her walls; he, therefore, implores the Lord to undo the evil and establish his church. God can make his cause to prosper, and in answer to prayer he will do so. Without his building we labour in vain; therefore are we the more instant and constant in prayer. There is surely no grace in us if we do not feel for the church of God, and take a lasting interest in its welfare.

19. In those days of joyful prosperity thy saints shall present in great abundance the richest and holiest thank offerings to thee, and thou shalt be pleased to accept them. A saved soul expects to see its prayers answered in a revived church, and then is assured that God will be greatly glorified. Though we bring no more sacrifices for sin, yet as priests unto God our solemn praises and votive gifts are thank offerings acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. We bring not the Lord our least things—our doves and pigeons; but we present him with our best possessions—our bullocks. We are glad that in this present time we are able to fulfil in person the declaration of this verse: we also, forecasting the future, wait for days of the divine presence, when the church of God, with unspeakable joy, shall offer gifts upon the altar of God, which will far eclipse anything beheld, in these less enthusiastic days. Hasten it, O Lord.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—"After he had gone in to Bathsheba." This was the devil's nest-egg that caused many sins to be laid, one to, and upon another. See the woful chain of David's lust, 2 Sam. xi. and xii.—*John Trapp.*

*Title.*—"When Nathan the prophet came unto him as he (i.e., David) had come unto Bathsheba." The significant repetition of the phrase *came unto*, is lost in the English and most other versions. "As" is not a mere particle of time, simply equivalent to *when*, but suggests the ideas of analogy, proportion, and retaliation.—*J. A. Alexander.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm is the brightest gem in the whole book, and contains instruction so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongue of angels could not do justice to the full development.—*Victorinus Strigelius, 1524—1569.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm is often and fitly called THE SINNER'S GUIDE. In some of its versions it often helps the returning sinner. Athanasius recommends to some Christians, to whom he was writing, to repeat it when they awake at night. All evangelical churches are familiar with it. Luther says, "There is no other Psalm which is oftener sung or prayed in the church." This is the first Psalm in which we have the word *Spirit* used in application to the Holy Ghost.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Whole Psalm.*—I cannot doubt the prophetic bearing of this Psalm upon the nation of Israel. In the latter day they shall consider their ways: repentance and self-loathing will be the result. Blood-guiltiness heavier than that of David has to be removed from that nation. They will become the teachers of the Gentiles. when first the iniquity of their own transgression has been purged away.—*Arthur Pridham.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This is the most deeply affecting of all the Psalms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me. It seems to have been the effusion of a soul smarting under the sense of a recent and great transgression. My God, whether recent or not, give me to feel the enormity of my manifold offences, and remember not against me the sins of my youth. What a mine of rich matter and expression for prayer! Wash, cleanse me, O Lord, and let my sin and my sinfulness be ever before me. Let me feel it chiefly as sin against thee, that my sorrow may be of the godly sort. Give me to feel the virulence of my native corruption, purge me from it thoroughly, and put truth into my inward parts, that mine may be a real turning from sin unto the Saviour. Create me anew, O God. Withdraw not thy Spirit. Cause me to rejoice in a present salvation. Deliver me, O God, from the blood-guiltiness of having offended any of thy little ones; and so open my lips that I may speak of the wondrous things thou hast done for my soul! May I offer up spiritual sacrifices; and oh! let not any delinquencies of mine bring a scandal upon thy church; but do thou so purify and build her up, that even her external services, freed from all taint of corruption or hypocrisy, may be well-pleasing in thy sight.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

*Verse 1.*—"Have mercy upon me, O God." I tremble and blush to mention my name, for my former familiarities with thee only make me more confounded at being recognised by thee after my guilt. I therefore say not, "Lord, remember David," as on a happier occasion; nor as propitiating thee, I used to say, to thy "servant," or, "to the son of thy handmaid." I suggest nothing that should recall my former relation to thee, and so enhance my wickedness. Ask not, then, Lord, who I am, but only forgive me who confess my sin, condemn my fault, and beseech thy pity. "Have mercy upon me, O God." I dare not say *my* God, for that were presumption. I have lost thee by sin, I have alienated myself from thee by following the enemy, and therefore am unclean. I dare not approach thee, but standing afar off and lifting up my voice with great devotion and contrition of heart, I cry and say, "Have mercy upon me, O God."—*From "A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, chiefly from ancient sources." By the Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, 1857.*

*Verse 1.*—"Have mercy." The Hebrew word here translated *have mercy*, signifieth without cause or desert; Psalm xxxv. 19; lxix. 4; Ezekiel xiv. 23; and freely, without paying any price, Exodus xxi. 11. And it is made use of in



Lev. vi. 8, where Noah is said to have found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, that is special favour, such as the Lord beareth to his chosen in Christ Jesus.—*Charles de Coetlogon, A.M., in "The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent," 1775.*

*Verse 1.*—"Mercy," "lovingkindness," "tender mercies." I cannot but observe here, the gradation in the sense of the three words made use of, to express the divine compassion, and the propriety of the order in which they are placed, which would be regarded as a real excellence and beauty in any classical writer. The first, רַחֲמִים, denotes that kind of affection which is expressed by moaning over any object that we love and pity that סְתוּרָה, natural affection and tenderness, which even brute creatures discover to their young ones, by the several noises which they respectively make over them; and particularly the shrill noise of the camel, by which it testifies its love to its foal. The second, רַחֲמִים, denotes a strong proneness, a ready, large, and liberal disposition to goodness and compassion powerfully prompting to all instances of kindness and bounty; flowing as freely and plentifully as milk into the breasts, or as waters from a perpetual fountain. This denotes a higher degree of goodness than the former. The third, רַחֲמִים, denotes what the Greeks express by σπλαγχνίζεσθαι; that most tender pity which we signify by the moving of the heart and bowels, which argues the highest degree of compassion of which human nature is susceptible. And how reviving is the belief and consideration of these abundant and tender compassions of God to one in David's circumstances, whose mind laboured under the burthen of the most heinous complicated guilt, and the fear of the divine displeasure and vengeance!—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 1.*—"According to the multitude." Men are greatly terrified at the multitude of their sins, but here is a comfort—our God hath multitude of mercies. If our sins be in number as the hairs of our head, God's mercies are as the stars of heaven; and as he is an infinite God, so his mercies are infinite; yea, so far are his mercies above our sins, as he himself is above us poor sinners. By this that the Psalmist seeketh for multitude of mercies, he would show how deeply he was wounded with his manifold sins, that one seemed a hundred. Thus it is with us, so long as we are under Satan's guiding, a thousand seem but one; but if we betake ourselves to God's service, one will seem a thousand.—*Archibald Symson.*

*Verse 1.*—"Tender mercies," or, according to Zanchy in his treatise upon the attributes of God, such a kind of affection as parents feel when they see their children in any extremity. 1 Kings iii. 26.—*Charles de Coetlogon.*

*Verse 1.*—"Blot out my transgressions." מָחָה, *mechah*, wipe out. There is reference here to an indictment: the Psalmist knows what it contains; he pleads guilty, but begs that the writing may be defaced; that a proper fluid may be applied to the parchment, to discharge the ink, that no record of it may ever appear against him: and this only the mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassions of the Lord can do.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 1.*—"Blot out my transgressions." What the Psalmist alludes to is not, as Mr. LeClerc imagines, debts entered into a book, and so blotted out of it when forgiven; but the wiping or cleansing of a dish, so as nothing afterwards remains in it. The meaning of the petition is, that God would entirely and absolutely forgive him, so as that no part of the guilt he had contracted might remain, and the punishment of it might be wholly removed.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 1.*—"Blot out," or, as it is used in Exod. xvii. 14, utterly extirpate, so as that there shall not be any remembrance of them for ever. Isaiah xliii. 25; xlv. 22.—*Charles de Coetlogon.*

*Verse 1.*—"My transgressions." Conscience, when it is healthy, ever speaks thus: "My transgressions." It was not the guilt of them that tempted you: they have theirs; but each as a separate agent, has his own degree of guilt. Yours is your own: the violation of your own and not another's sense of duty; solitary, awful, unshared, adhering to you alone of all the spirits of the universe.—*Frederick William Robertson.*

*Verses 1, 2.*—"Transgressions" . . . "iniquity" . . . "sin." 1. It is transgression, פְּשָׁע, *pesha*, rebellion. 2. It is iniquity, רָעָה, *avon*, crooked dealing. 3. It is sin, חַטָּאת, *chattath*, error and wandering.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 2.*—"Wash me." David prays that the Lord would wash him; therefore sin defiles, and he was made foul and filthy by his sin; and to wash him much, and to rinse and bathe him, to show that sin had exceedingly defiled him and stained him both in soul and body, and made him loathsome, and therefore he desireth

to be washed, and cleansed, and purged from the pollution of sin. Hence we may learn what a vile, filthy, and miserable thing sin is in the sight of God : it staineth a man's body, it staineth a man's soul, it maketh him more vile than the vilest creature that lives : no toad is so vile and loathsome in the sight of man, as a sinner, stained and defiled with sin, is in the sight of God, till he be cleansed and washed from it in the blood of Christ.—*Samuel Smith.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Wash me,*” etc.  $\text{רָחַץ}$  is peculiarly applied to the washing and cleansing of garments as fullers wash and cleanse their cloths. 2 Kings xviii. 7 ; Exod. xix. 10 ; Levit. xvii. 15.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.*” No other washing will do it but *lava tu*, wash thou ; so foul, as it will need his washing *thoroughly*.—*Samuel Page*, in “*David's Broken Heart,*” 1646.

*Verse 2.*—“*Wash me thoroughly.*” Heb. *multiply to wash me* ; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him, even of God's grace, and the blood of Christ.—*Matthew Pool.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Wash me . . . cleanse me.*” But why should David speak so superfluously ? use two words when one would serve ? For if we be cleansed, what matter is it whether it be by washing or no ? Yet David had great reason for using both words ; for he requires not that God would cleanse him by miracle, but by the ordinary way of cleansing, and this was washing ; he names therefore washing as the means, and cleansing as the end : he names washing as the work a-doing, and cleansing as the work done ; he names washing as considering the agent, and cleansing as applying it to the patient ; and indeed, as in the figure of the law there was not, so in the verity of the gospel there is not any ordinary means of cleansing, but only by washing ; and therefore out of Christ our Saviour's side there flowed water and blood.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Cleanse me from my sin.*” Observe, it is from the guilt, and not from the punishment, that he thus asks deliverance. That the sword should never depart from his house : that the sin, begun, not only secretly even in its full accomplishment, but far more secretly in the recesses of David's heart, should be punished before all Israel and before the sun ; that the child so dear to David should be made one great punishment of his offence ; these things, so far as this Psalm is concerned, might, or might not be. It is of the offence against God ; of the defiling, although it were not then so expressly declared, God's temple by impurity, that David speaks.—*Ambrose*, in *J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Sin.*” The original word signifies to miss an aim, as an archer does who shoots short of his mark, beyond, or beside it. It is also used for treading aside, or tripping, in the act of walking. In a spiritual sense it denotes deviation from a rule, whether by omission or commission.—*Thomas T. Biddulph, A.M.*, in *Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm*, 1835.

*Verse 2.*—Sin is filthy to think of, filthy to speak of, filthy to hear of, filthy to do ; in a word, there is nothing in it but vileness.—*Archibald Symson.*

*Verse 3.*—“*For I acknowledge my transgressions,*” etc. To *acknowledge our transgressions*, there is confession ; and to *have our sin ever before us*, there is conviction and contrition. To *acknowledge our transgressions*, I say, is to confess our sins ; to call them to mind, to bring them back to our remembrance what we can ; to own them with shame, and to declare them with sorrow ; to reckon them up one by one, to give in a particular account of them, as far as our memory will serve, and to spread them before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and in an humble sense of our own vileness to implore his goodness, that he would multiply his mercies over us, as we have multiplied our transgressions against him, in the free and full forgiveness of them all. To *have our sin ever before us*, is thoroughly to be convinced of it, to be continually troubled in mind about it, to be truly humbled under the sense of it, and to be possess of those dreads and terrors of conscience which may never let us rest or enjoy any quiet within our own breast till we have reconciled ourselves to a gracious God for it.—*Adam Littleton.*

*Verse 3.*—“*I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me.*” There cannot be *agnitio* if there be not *cognitio peccati*, an acknowledging, unless there precede a knowledge of sin. David puts them together. If our sins be not before us, how can we set them before God ? And therefore, to the right exercise of this duty, there is required a previous examination of our hearts, inspection

into our lives, that we may be enabled to see our sins. He that hath not yet asked himself that question, *Quid feci?* What have I done? can never make the confession, *sic feci*, thus and thus have I done; and in this respect I would, though not require, yet advise it as a pious and prudent practice, and that which I doubt not but many Christians have found benefit by, to keep a constant daily catalogue, as of mercies received, so of sins committed.—*Nathanael Hardy*.

Verse 3.—“*I*,” “*my*,” “*my*.” David did not think it sufficient to acknowledge that the whole human race were sinners; but as if he stood alone in the world, and was the only offender in it, he says, “I acknowledge *my* transgressions; and *my* sin is ever before me.”—*Charles de Coetlogon*.

Verse 3.—“*My sin*.” David owneth his sin, and confesseth it his own. Here is our natural wealth: what can we call our own but sin? Our food and raiment, the necessaries of life, are borrowings. We came hungry and naked into the world, we brought none of these with us, and we deserved none of them here. Our sin came with us, as David after confesseth. We have right of inheritance in sin, taking it by tradition and transmission from our parents; we have right of possession. So Job: “Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth.”—*Samuel Page*.

Verse 3.—“*My sin*.” It is sin, as sin, not its punishment here, nor hereafter, not simply any of its evil consequences; but sin, the sin against God, the daring impiety of my breaking the good and holy law of this living, loving God.—*Thomas Alexander, D.D.*, in “*The Penitent's Prayer*,” 1861.

Verse 3.—“*Ever before me*.” Sorrow for sin exceeds sorrow for suffering, in the continuance and durableness thereof: the other, like a landflood, quickly come, quickly gone; this is a continual dropping or running river, keeping a constant stream. “*My sins*,” saith David, “*are ever before me*;” so also is the sorrow for sin in the soul of a child of God, morning, evening, day, night, when sick, when sound, feasting, fasting, at home, abroad, ever within him. This grief begins at his conversion, continues all his life, ends only at his death.—*Thomas Fuller*.

Verse 3.—“*Before me*.” *Coram populo*, before the people; shame to him: *coram ecclesia*, before the church; grief to them: *coram inimicis*, before the enemies; joy to them: *coram Deo*, before God; anger against him: *coram Nathane*, before Nathan; a chiding. But if any hope of repentance and amendment, it is in *peccatum meum coram me*, *my sin before me*. Here is the distress of a sinner, he never discerneth how unhappy he is, till his sin is before him.—*Samuel Page*.

Verse 4.—“*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*.” This verse is differently expounded by different persons, and it has ever been considered, that this one little point is the greatest difficulty that is met with in the whole Psalm. Although, therefore, I leave it to others to go according to their own interpretations, yet I have a good hope that I shall be enabled to give thee true and genuine meaning of the text. This, then, I would first of all advise the reader to do—to bear in mind that which I observed at the beginning of the Psalm, that David is here speaking in the person of all the saints, and not in his own person only, nor in his own person as an adulterer. Although I do not say it might not be, that it was this fall which, as a medium, brought him under the knowledge of himself and of his whole human nature, and made him think thus: “Behold! I, so holy a king, who have with so much pious devotedness observed the law and the worship of God, have been so tempted and overcome by the inbred evil and sin of my flesh, that I have murdered an innocent man, and have for adulterous purposes taken away his wife! And is not this an evident proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than ever I thought it was? I who was yesterday chaste am to-day an adulterer! I who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, am to-day a man of blood-guiltiness!” And it might be that in this way he derived the feeling sense of his entire sinfulness, from his fall into adultery and murder, and from thence drew this conclusion—that neither the tree nor the fruits of human nature were good, but that the whole was so deformed and lost by sin, that there was nothing sound left in the whole of nature. This I would have the reader bear in mind first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage. In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained, which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the *present*: “*Against thee only do I sin*;” that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner; or, before thee I do nothing but evil continually; that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee

of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character—I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 4.*—“*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.*” Is there not matter here to make us at a stand? For, to say, “*Against thee have I sinned,*” is most just and fit; but to say, “*Against THEE ONLY I have sinned,*” seems something hard. It had perhaps been a fit speech in the mouth of our first parent Adam; he might justly have said to God, “*Against thee only have I sinned,*” who never sinned against any other; but for us to say it, who commit sins daily against our neighbours, and especially for David to say it, who had committed two notorious sins against his neighbour and faithful friend Uriah, what unfitter speech could possibly be devised? But is it not that these actions of David were great wrongs indeed, and enormous iniquities against Uriah; but can we properly say they were *sins* against Uriah? For what is sin, but a transgression of God’s law? And how then can sin be committed against any but against him only whose law we transgress? Or is it, that it may justly be said, “*Against thee only have I sinned,*” because against others perhaps in a base *tenure*, yet only against God in *capite*? Or is it, that David might justly say to God, “*Against thee only have I sinned;*” because from others he might appeal, as being a king and having no superior; but no appealing from God, as being King of kings and supreme Lord over all? Or is it that we may justly say, “*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,*” seeing that Christ hath taken and still takes all our sins upon him; and every sin we commit is as a new burthen laid upon his back, and upon his back only? Or is it, lastly, that I may justly say, “*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,*” because in thy sight only I have done it? For from others, I could hide it, and did conceal it? But what can be hidden from thy All-seeing eye? And yet if this had been the worst, that I had sinned only against thee, though this had been bad enough, and infinitely too much, yet it might perhaps have admitted reconciliation; but to do this evil, “*in thy sight,*” as if I should say, I would do it though thou stand thyself and look on, and as if in defiance; what sin so formidable? what sin can be thought of so unpardonable? A sin of infirmity may admit apology; a sin of ignorance may find out excuse; but a sin of defiance can find no defence.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 4.*—“*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.*” There is a godly sorrow which leads a man to life; and this sorrow is wrought in a man by the Spirit of God, and in the heart of the godly; that he mourns for sin because it has displeased God, who is so dear and so sweet a Father to him. And suppose he had neither a heaven to lose, nor a hell to gain, yet he is sad and sorrowful in heart because he has grieved God.—*John Welch, 1576—1622.*

*Verse 4.*—“*Have I sinned.*” *Me, me, adsum, qui feci:* Here, here am I that did it. I whom thou tookest from following the ewes great with lambs, whose sheep-hook thou hast changed for a sceptre, whose sheep for thine own people Israel, upon whose head thou hast set a crown of pure gold. I whom thou didst lately invest in the full monarchy of thy people; to whom thou gavest the possession of Jerusalem from the Jebusites; I who settled peace, religion, and courts of justice in Jerusalem, that thou mightest be served and honoured, and I would fain have built thee an house there; *Ego, I,* to whom God committed the trust of government to rule others, the trust of judgment to punish others, as king over his inheritance. I, to whom God committed the care of others’ souls to guide them by his word, to direct them by good counsel, to allure them by his gracious promises, to terrify them by his threatenings, as the Lord’s holy prophet. I, who both ways as king and prophet should have been an example of holiness and righteousness to all Israel. Nathan said, *Tu es homo,* thou art the man, in just accusation, and now David saith, *Ego sum homo,* I am the man, in humble confession.—*Samuel Page.*

*Verse 4.*—“*I have done this evil.*” We may find this in experience, that there be many who will not stick at a general speech that they be sinners, and yet will scarcely be known of one special evil to account for. If you fall with them into the several commandments, they will be ready to discover a conceit that there is scarce one that they are faulty in. In the first commandment they acknowledge no God but one; in the second, they do not worship images; in the third, they swear as little as any, and never but for the truth; in the fourth they keep their church on Sundays as well as most; in the second table, there is neither treason, nor murder, nor theft, nor whoredom, nor the like gross sin, but concerning it they are ready to protest their innocency. He that shall hear them in particular, I

do not see how he shall believe them in the general, when they say they be sinners ; for when you arraign them at the several commandments they are ready to plead *not guilty* to them all. So long as men are thus without sense and apprehension of particulars, there is no hope of bringing them ever unto good. Happy is he that is pricked to the heart with the feeling of "*this evil*." The truth of repentance for that one, will bring him to a thorough repentance for his whole estate. *This one evil* thoroughly understood, brought David on his knees, brake his heart, melted his soul, made him cry for pardon, beg for purging, and importune the Lord for a free spirit to establish him.—*Samuel Hieron, in "David's Penitential Psalme opened,"* 1617.

*Verse 4.*—"In thy sight." David was so bent upon his sin, as that the majesty and presence of God did not awe him at all : this is a great aggravation of sin, and which makes it to be so much the more heinous. For a thief to steal in the very sight of the judge, is the highest piece of impudence that may be ; and thus it is for any man to offend in the sight of God and not to be moved with it.—*Thomas Horton.*

*Verse 4.*—"That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." But hath not David a defence for it here, and that a very just one ? For, in saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, *that thou mightest be justified in thy saying,*" doth he not speak as though he had sinned to do God a pleasure ? therefore sinned that God might be justified ? And what can be more said for justifying of God ? But far is it from David to have any such meaning ; his words import not a lessening but an aggravating of his sin, as spoken rather thus : Because a judge may justly be taxed of injustice if he lay a greater punishment upon an offender than the offence deserves ; therefore to clear thee, O God, from all possibility of erring in this kind, I acknowledge my sins to be so heinous, my offences so grievous, that thou canst never be unmerciful in punishing though thy punishing should be never so unmerciful. For how can a judge pass the bounds of equity where the delinquent hath passed all bounds of iniquity ? and what error can there be in thy being severe when the greatness of my fault is a justification of severity ? That thou canst not lay so heavy a doom upon me, which I have not deserved ? Thou canst not pronounce so hard a sentence against me, which I am not worthy of. If thou judge me to torture, it is but mildness ; if to die the death, it is but my due ; if to die everlastingly, I cannot say it were unjust.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 5.*—"Behold I was shapen in iniquity," etc. He said not, "Behold, this evil have I done," but "*Behold I was conceived in sin,*" etc. He says not, "Behold, I, David," a king, that have received such-and-such mercies from God, who would have given me more (as God told him), who had that entire communion with him, and graces from him, I, even I, have done this evil. No ; he keeps it in till he came to this, and then his heart could hold no longer : "*Oh, behold I was conceived in sin.*" His debasement was at his *auge* here. And to whom is it he uttered this *behold* ? What, to man ? No ; his meaning is not to call on men, *q.d.*, O ye sons of men, behold ! That is but his secondary aim, arising out of his having penned it, and delivered it unto the church ; but when he uttered it, it was to God, or rather afore God, and yet not as calling on God to behold, for that needed not. David had elsewhere said, "God looked down," etc., "and beheld the sons of men," when speaking of this very corruption. He therefore knew God beheld it sufficiently ; but he utters it afore God, or, as spoken of himself between God and himself, thereby to express his own astonishment and amazement at the sight and conviction of this corruption, and at the sight of what a monster he saw himself to be in the sight of God in respect of this sin. It was a *behold* of astonishment at himself, as before the great and holy God ; and therefore it was he seconds and follows it with another *behold* made unto God : "*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" And it is as if he had said in both, Oh, how am I in every way overwhelmed, whilst with one eye cast on myself I see how infinitely corrupt I am in the very constitution of my nature ; and with the other eye I behold and consider what an infinite holy God thou art in thy nature and being, and what an holiness it is which thou requirest. I am utterly overwhelmed in the intuition of both these, and able to behold no more, nor look up unto thee, O holy God !—*Thomas Goodwin.*

*Verse 5.*—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity," etc. We are not to suppose that David here reflects upon his parents as the medium of transmitting to him the elements of moral evil ; and that by the introduction of the doctrine of original

sin he intended to extenuate the enormity of his own crimes. On the contrary, we are to regard him as afflicting himself by the humbling consideration that his very nature was fallen, that his transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God; that he was not a sinner by accident, but by a depravity of purpose extending to the inmost desires and purposes of the soul; that there was "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death" (Rom. vii. 23); and that he was one of a race of guilty beings, none of whom could plead an exemption from an evil heart of unbelief, ready at all times to depart from the living God. Till we see sin in the fountain of the heart, we shall never truly mourn over it in the life and conversation.—*John Morison.*

*Verse 5.*—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity." He is not low enough down yet, he must come lower. It is not enough for him to confess that the water is filthy at the pool; he goes back to the source, and confesses that the whole river is polluted up to its head. The source is unclean; the very spring wells forth foul waters.—*Thomas Alexander.*

*Verse 5.*—"I was shapen in iniquity." I shall not easily be persuaded to think that parents, who are sinners themselves and too much under the influence of bad affections and passions, will be very likely to produce children without transmitting to them some of those disorders and corruptions of nature with which they themselves are infected. And if this be a difficulty, I would beg leave to observe that it is a difficulty which affects natural as well as revealed religion. Since we must take human nature as it is, and if it be really in a state of disorder and corruption, and cannot be otherwise, considering the common law of its production, the difficulty must have been as ancient as the first man that was born; and therefore can be no objection against the truth of revelation, but it must be equally so against natural religion, which must equally allow the thing, if it be in reality a fact, with revelation itself.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 5.*—Infants are no innocents, being born with original sin; the first sheet wherein they are wrapped is woven of sin, shame, blood, and filth. Ezek. xvi. 4, etc. They are said to sin as they were in the loins of Adam, just as Levi is said to pay tithes to Melchisedek, even in the loins of his forefather Abraham (Heb. vii. 9, 10); otherwise infants would not die, for death is the wages of sin (Rom. vi. 23); and the reign of death is procured by the reign of sin, which hath reigned over all mankind except Christ. All are sinners, infected with the guilt and filth of sin; the rot (according to the vulgar saying) overrunneth the whole flock. Hence David reflects upon original sin as the cause of all his actuals, saying, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Thus man's malady begins betimes, even in our conception: this subtle serpent sowed his tares very early, so that we are all "born in sin." John ix. 34.—*Christopher Ness's "Divine Legacy,"* 1700.

*Verse 5.*—Notwithstanding all that Grotius and others have said to the contrary, I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called *original sin*; the propensity to evil which every man brings into the world with him, and which is the fruitful source whence all transgression proceeds.—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 6.*—"Behold." Before he entereth on any of the parts of the verse he useth the particle of admiration, "*Behold*;" which he never useth but in some remarkable manner, thereby the more to raise us up to the contemplation of such great matters to be told.—*Archibald Symson.*

*Verse 6.*—"Thou desirest truth in the inward parts." Thou lovest truth, not shadows or images, but realities; thou lovest truth in the inward parts, inside truth, a true heart, a pure conscience: he is a Christian who is one inwardly. Rom. ii. 29.—*John Ball.*

*Verse 6.*—"Truth in the inward parts." A great French pear is called *le bon Chretien*, the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core.—*George Swinnock.*

*Verse 6.*—"In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Piscator, in his annotations on this Psalm, puts this sense upon it, that David should bless God for having made him to know this special wisdom in this hidden thing or matter, and had brought the knowledge thereof home, as a point of saving wisdom, to the hidden man of his heart, so as to see fully and clearly this native corruption as the cause of all sin, and on that account to cause him to lay it to heart.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—“*In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*” It is one thing to be wise headed and wise tongued, and another to be wise hearted, and therefore in Scripture nothing more ordinary than to set forth wisdom that is true indeed by the heart. God himself is said to be *wise of heart*. Foolish creatures are like Ephraim, “a silly dove without heart.” They may have *head* enough, notion enough, *flashing light*, appearing to others enough, but they are without a heart; they have not the great work there, a *new head* and an *old heart*, a *full head* and an *empty heart*, a *light and burning profession*, and a dark, dead, and cold heart; he that takes up in such a condition is a fool and an errant fool.—*John Murcot*, 1657.

Verse 6.—“*And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*” Some read it, “In the hidden part thou *hadst* made me to know wisdom;” *that* thou hadst done, but I have fallen from my high state, marred thy handiwork. “By one plunge into lust I have fallen and fouled myself.”—*Arthur Jackson*.

Verse 6.—The copulative particle which connects the two clauses, implies the correspondence between the revelation of the divine will on the one part and the desire and prayer of the penitent heart on the other. “*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*” “What I want thou hast promised to give.” Repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and the awakened mind is conscious that they are so.—*Thomas T. Biddulph*.

Verses 6—8.—The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works*, but also in our entire *being*.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 7.—“*Purge me with hyssop.*” Do I well to prescribe to God with that he shall purge me, as though I knew all God’s medicines as well as himself? and which is worse, I to prescribe and he to administer? But excuse me, O my soul, it is not I that prescribe it to God, it is God that prescribes it to me; for hyssop is his own receipt, and one of the ingredients prescribed by himself to make the water of separation for curing the leprosy. . . . I must confess I was glad at heart when I first heard hyssop spoken of; to think I should be purged so gently, and with a thing that may so easily be had, for hyssop grows in every garden; and then I thought I might go fetch it thence and purge myself, but now I perceive this is not the hyssop of which Solomon writ when he writ from the cedar to the hyssop; but this hyssop is rather the herb grace, which never grew in garden but in that of Paradise, and which none can fetch thence unless God himself deliver it. The truth is, this hyssop was sometimes a cedar; the highest of all trees became the lowest of all shrubs, only to be made this hyssop for us: for Christ indeed is the true hyssop, and his blood the juice of hyssop that only can purge away my sins.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 7.—“*Purge me with hyssop.*” חֲסִידִים. Properly, *expiate my sin* with hyssop. The Psalmist alludes to the purification from the leprosy (Levit. xiv. 52), or from the touch of a dead body (Num. xix. 19), both of which were to be done by the sprinkling of water and other things with hyssop.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 7.—“*Hyssop.*” The *lasaf* or *asaf*, the caper plant, the bright green creeper which climbs out of the fissures of the rocks in the Sinaitic valleys, has been identified on grounds of great probability with the “hyssop” or *ezob* of Scripture; and thus explains whence came the green branches used, even in the desert, for sprinkling the water over the tents of the Israelites.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*, in “*Sinai and Palestine.*” 1864.

Verse 7.—“*Hyssop.*” Between twenty and thirty different plants have been proposed, but no one of them comes so near the above requirements as the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*). It grows “out of the wall;” its stalks supply both bunch and rod admirably fitted for the ends indicated; and it has ever been esteemed in the East as possessing cleansing properties.—*John Duns, D.D.*, in “*Biblical Natural Science.*”

Verse 7.—“*Hyssop.*” What a pity that Solomon’s botany is lost, in which he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall! The cedar we know, but what is the “hyssop” of the royal botanist? Mr. B——, French consul of this city [Sidon], and an enthusiastic botanist, exhibited to me two varieties of hyssop; one, called *zatar* by the Arabs, having the fragrance of thyme, with a hot pungent taste, and long, slender stems. A bunch of these would answer very well for sprinkling the paschal and sacrificial blood on the lintel and posts of the doors, and over the persons and houses cleansed

from the leprosy. Mr. B——, however, thinks that a very small green plant, like a moss which covers old walls in damp places, is the “*hyssop*” of Solomon. This I doubt. The other kind also springs out of walls, those of the gardens especially, and was much more likely to attract the attention of the royal student.—*W. M. Thomson, D.D., in “The Land and the Book.”*

*Verse 7.*—The paraphrase of this verse in the *Chaldee* is: “Thou wilt sprinkle me like the priest, which sprinkleth the unclean with the purifying waters, with hyssop, with the ashes of an heifer, and I shall be clean.”—*John Morison.*

*Verse 7.*—“*I shall be whiter than snow.*” But how is this possible? All the dyes upon earth cannot dye a red into white; and how, then, is it possible that my sins which are as red as scarlet should ever be made as white as snow? Indeed such retrogradation is no work of human art; it must be only his doing who brought the sun ten degrees back in the dial of Ahaz; for God hath a nitre of grace that can bring not only the redness of scarlet sins, but even the blackness of deadly sins, into its native purity and whiteness again. But say it be possible, yet what need is there of so great a whiteness, as to be “*whiter than snow*”? seeing snow is not as *paries dealbatus*, a painted wall, white without and foul within; but it is white, *intus et in cute*, within and without, throughout and all over; and what eye so curious but such a whiteness may content? Yet such a whiteness will not serve, for I may be as white as snow and yet a leper still; as it is said of Gehazi that “he went from Elisha a leper as white as snow;” it must be therefore *whiter than snow*. And such a whiteness it is that God’s washing works upon us, makes within us; for no snow is so white in the eyes of men as a soul cleansed from sin is in the sight of God. And yet, a whiter whiteness than this too; for being purged from sin we shall, *induere stolam album*, put on the white robe; and this is a whiteness as much whiter than snow as angelical whiteness is more than elemental.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 7.*—In the Hebrew language there are two words to express the different kinds of washing, and they are always used with the strictest propriety; the one, to signify that kind of washing which *pervades the substance* of the thing washed, and cleanses it thoroughly; and the other to express that kind of washing which only *cleanses the surface* of a substance which the water cannot penetrate. The former is applied to the washing of clothes; the latter is used for washing some part of the body. By a beautiful and strong metaphor, David uses the former word in this and the second verse: “*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin;*” “*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*” So in Jer. iv. 14, the same word is applied to the heart.—*Richard Mant.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*” This is the exceeding great love of the Lord toward his children, that he hath not only provided a sure salvation for them through the remission of their sins in Christ Jesus, but also seals up in their heart the testimony thereof by his Holy Spirit of adoption, and that for their present consolation, lest they should be swallowed up of heaviness through continual temptations. Though he speak not to all his children as he did to Daniel, by an angel, “O man, greatly beloved of God,” nor as he did to the blessed Virgin Mary, “Hail, Mary, freely beloved,” yet doth he witness the same to the hearts of his children by an inward testimony: when they hear it they are alive; when they want it they are but dead; their souls refuse all other comfort whatsoever.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*” As a Christian is the most sorrowful man in the world, so there is none more glad than he. For the cause of his joy is greatest. In respect his misery was greatest, his delivery greatest, therefore his joy greatest. From hell and death is he freed, to life in heaven is he brought. . . . The person from whom he seeketh this joy is God: “*Make me to hear,*” saith he; whereby he would teach us that this joy cometh only from God; it is he who is the fountain of joy and all pleasure, for “all good things come from above.” Natural joys proceed from a natural and fleshly fountain; spiritual joys spring only from God: so he who seeketh those joys beneath seeketh hot water under cold ice.—*Archibald Symson.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Make me to hear joy and gladness.*” Another reference to the expiation of the leper, whose ear was to be touched with the blood of the trespass-offering and the oil, as well as thumb and toe, to show that his faculties were now prepared for the service of God; so David prays that his ears may be sanctified



to the hearing of joy and gladness ; this an unsanctified heart can never receive.—*W. Wilson.*

*Verse 8.*—“ *The bones which thou hast broken.*” God, in favour to his children, doth afflict them for sin ; and the very phrase of breaking his bones, though it express extremity of misery and pain, yet it hath hope in it, for broken bones by a cunning hand may be set again and return to their former use and strength ; so that a conscience distressed for sins is not out of hope ; yet upon that hope no wise man will adventure upon sin, saying, though I am wounded, yet I may be healed again ; though I am broken, I may be repaired ; for let him consider—1. Who breaks his bones—*Thou* ; he that made us our bones and put them in their several places, and tied them together with ligaments, and covered them with flesh ; he that keepeth all our bones from breaking ; it must be a great matter that must move him to break the bones of any of us. The God of all consolation, that comforteth us in all our distresses, when he cometh to distress us, this makes affliction weigh heavy. . . . 2. The pain of the affliction express so feelingly in the breaking of bones, which, as is said, is the anguish of the soul for sin, and fear of the consuming fire of God’s wrath, and the tempest, as Job calls it, of anger. 3. The pain of setting these bones again : for, though bones dislocated may be put in joint, and though bones broken may be set again, yet this is not done without pain and great extremity to the patient.

Repentance setteth all our broken, pained bones ; it recovereth the soul from the anguish thereof ; but he that once feelth the smart of a true repentance, will say, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are as hard a bargain as ever he made, and as dear bought ; they cost tears, which are *sanguis vulnerati cordis*, the blood of a wounded heart ; they cost sighs and groans which cannot be expressed ; they cost watching, fasting, taming of the body to bring it in subjection, even to the crucifying of the flesh with the lusts thereof. Therefore, let no man adventure his bones in hope of setting them again.—*Samuel Page.*

*Verse 8.*—“ *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*” The displeasure which God expressed against the sins he had been guilty of, and the deep sense he had of the aggravated nature of them, filled him with those pains and agonies of mind, as that he compares them to that exquisite torture he must have felt had all his bones been crushed, for the original word פָּרַץ, signifies more than broken, namely, being entirely mashed ; and he compares the joy that God’s declaring himself fully reconciled to him would produce in his mind, to that inconceivable pleasure, which would arise from the instantaneous restoring and healing those bones, after they had been thus broken and crushed to pieces.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 9.*—“ *Hide thy face from my sins.*” The verb פָּקַד properly signifies to veil, or hide with a veil.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 9.*—“ *Hide thy face from my sins.*” He said in the third verse, that his sin was always in his sight ; and now he prays that God would put it out of his sight. This is a very good order. If we hold our sins in our eyes to pursue them, God will cast them behind his back to pardon them : if we remember them and repent, he will forget them and forgive : otherwise, *peccatum unde homo non advertit, advertit Deus : et si advertit, animadvertit*—the sin from which man turns not, God looks to it ; and if he look to it, sure he will punish it.—*William Cowper.*

*Verse 9.*—“ *All mine iniquities.*” See how one sin calleth to mind many thousands, which though they lie asleep a long time, like a sleeping debt, yet we know not how soon they may be reckoned for. Make sure of a general pardon, and take heed of adding new sins to the old.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 10.*—“ *Create in me a clean heart, O God.*” O thou that createdst the first heaven and the first earth of nothing ! O thou that createst the *new heaven* and the *new earth* (wherein dwells righteousness), when sin had made the creature worse than nothing ! O thou that createst the *new creature*, the new man, fit to be an inhabitant of the new world, of the new Jerusalem ! O thou that hast said, “ Behold, I make all things new : ” create thou in me, even in me, “ a clean heart ; and renew a right spirit within me.”—*Matthew Lawrence.*

*Verse 10.*—“ *Create in me a clean heart, O God,*” etc. David prayeth the Lord to create in him a new heart, not to correct his old heart, but to create him a new heart ; showing that his heart was like an old garment, so rotten and tattered that he could make no good of it by patching or piecing, but even must cut it off, and

take a new. Therefore Paul saith, "Cast off the old man;" not pick him and wash him till he be clean, but cast him off and begin anew, as David did. Will ye know what this renewing is? It is the repairing of the image of God, until we be like Adam when he dwelt in Paradise. As there is a whole old man, so there must be a whole new man. The old man must change with the new man, wisdom for wisdom, love for love, fear for fear; his worldly wisdom for heavenly wisdom, his carnal love for spiritual love, his servile fear for Christian fear, his idle thoughts for holy thoughts, his vain words for wholesome words, his fleshly works for sanctified works.—*Henry Smith.*

*Verse 10.*—"Create in me a clean heart." *Creating*, to speak properly, is to make of nought, and is here used improperly. The prophet speaketh according to his own feeling and present judgment of himself, as though he had lost all, and had no goodness in himself. No doubt the prophet's heart was in part clean, though not so much as he desired. These things thus opened, here cometh a question first to be answered. *Quest.* Whether David could have lost the cleanness of heart, having once had it? *Ans.* No. The gifts and calling of God, that is (as I take it), the gifts of effectual calling, are such as God never repenteth of or taketh away. Faith, hope, and charity are abiding gifts, as sure as the election of God, which is unchangeable. Indeed, the children of God, if we only considered them in themselves with their enemies, might fall away, but being founded upon the unchangeable nature of God, and immutability of his counsel, they cannot, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them, the elect cannot be deceived or plucked out of Christ's hands. Nay, certain it is that David did not actually leave his former cleanness. For sure it is, his heart smiting him (as here it did), so doing before in less matters, it was not wholly void of cleanness. And again, it could not pray for cleanness if it were not somewhat clean. This is most sure, that by grievous sins much filthiness cometh to the soul, as by a boisterous wind a tree may lose his leaves and some branches, so as that the party sinning may be brought into as great passions almost as if he had lost all, but the desire of grace is an infallible certainty of some grace of that kind. The prophet therefore desireth not a clean heart because he had it not in any sort, but because he could not so well perceive it in himself, and take such comfort in it as he had done before, and for that he desired it a great deal more than now he had it. So learned, so rich men, think themselves not learned, not rich, in respect of that which they do desire, and when the sun is up, the moon seemeth to have no light.—*George Estey, in "Certaine Godly and Learned Expositions,"* 1603.

*Verse 10.*—"Create in me a clean heart, O God," etc. This "creation" is from nothing. David uses the same word of our creation which Moses uses of "the creation of the heaven and the earth." Our creation "in Jesus Christ" is no mere strengthening of our powers, no mere aiding of our natural weakness by the might of the grace of God, it is not a mere amendment, improvement of our moral habits; it is a creation out of nothing, of that which we had not before. There was nothing in us whereof to make it. We were decayed, corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. What is dead becometh not alive, except by the infusion of what it had not. What is corrupt receiveth not soundness, save by passing away itself and being replaced by a new production. "The old man" passeth not into the new man, but is "put off." It is not the basis of the new life, but a hindrance to it. It must be "put off" and the new man "put on," "created in Christ Jesus."—*E. B. Pusey, D.D.,* 1853.

*Verse 10 (first clause).*—He used the word *create* (Heb. *bara*), a word only used of the work of God, and showing that the change in him could be wrought only by God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

*Verse 10.*—"A clean heart." The priest was required to make a strict examination of the skin of the leper before he could pronounce him clean; David prays God to make his heart clean.—*W. Wilson.*

*Verse 10.*—"A right spirit." A *steadfast spirit, i.e.,* a mind steady in following the path of duty.—*French and Skinner.*

*Verses 10—12.*—Who was to do this work? Not *himself*; God alone. Therefore, he prays: "O God, create—O Lord, renew; uphold by thy Spirit."—*Adam Clarke.*

*Verse 11.*—"Cast me not away from thy presence." David lamented before that sin had slain him, and made him like a dead man, wanting a heart or

quickenings spirit; and now he fears lest, as the dead are abhorred by the living, so the Lord should cast him as a dead and abominable thing out of his presence. Whereof we learn this is one of the just punishments of sin; it procures the casting out of a man from the face of God; and it may let us see how dear bought are the pleasures of sin when a man to enjoy the face of the creature deprives himself of the comfortable face of the Creator; as David here, for the carnal love of the face of Bathsheba, puts himself in danger to be cast out for ever from the presence of the Lord his God. If a man could remember this in all Satan's temptations, what it is that the deceiver offers, and what it is again that he seeks, he would be loth to buy the perishing pleasures of sin upon such a price as Satan selleth them, but would answer him as the apostle did Simon Magus. "Thy money, with thyself, go into perdition;" thy gain, thy glory, thy pleasure, and whatever thou wouldst give me to offend the Lord my God, go with thyself into perdition, for what canst thou offer unto me comparable to that which thou wouldst steal from me?

But how is it that he prays, "*Cast me not out from thy presence*"? May a man be cast any way from it? Saith he not himself, "What way can I flee from thy presence?" This is soon answered by distinguishing his twofold presence—one in mercy, wherewith he refresheth and comforteth his own, and this without intermission they enjoy who are in heaven; another, in wrath, whereby he terrifies and torments without intermission the damned in hell. As to them who are upon earth, certain it is he is displeased with many, who, because they see not his angry face, regard it not, borne out with temporal recreations of the creature, which will fail them; and there are many, again, to whom he looks as a loving Father in Christ, and yet they see not his merciful face by reason of many interjected veils; but to them who once have felt the sweetness of his favourable face it is death to want it.—*William Couper.*

*Verse 11.*—"Cast me not away from thy presence." Like the leper who is banished from society till cleansed, or as Saul was rejected from being king, because he obeyed not the word of the Lord. 1 Sam. xv. 23. David could not but feel that his transgressions would have deserved a similar rejection.—*W. Wilson.*

*Verse 11.*—"Cast me not away." Lord, though I, alas! have cast thee from me, yet cast me not away: hide not thy face from me, although I so often have refused to look at thee; leave me not without help, to perish in my sins, though I have aforesaid left thee.—*Fra Thomé de Jesu.*

*Verse 11.*—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The words of this verse imply that the Spirit had not altogether been taken away from him, however much his gifts had been temporarily obscured. . . . Upon one point he had fallen into a deadly lethargy, but he was not "given over to a reprobate mind;" and it is scarcely conceivable that the rebuke of Nathan the prophet should have operated so easily and so suddenly in arousing him had there been no latent spark of godliness still remaining. . . . The truth on which we are now insisting is an important one, as many learned men have been inconsiderately drawn into the opinion that the elect, by falling into mortal sin, may lose the Spirit altogether, and be alienated from God. The contrary is clearly declared by Peter, who tells us that the word by which we are born again is an incorruptible seed (1 Peter i. 23); and John is equally explicit in informing us that the elect are preserved from falling away altogether. 1 John iii. 9. However much they may appear for a time to have been cast off by God, it is afterwards seen that grace must have been alive in their breast even during that interval when it seemed to be extinct. Nor is there any force in the objection that David speaks as if he feared that he might be deprived of the Spirit. It is natural that the saints, when they have fallen into sin, and have thus done what they could to expel the grace of God, should feel an anxiety upon this point; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth, that grace is the incorruptible seed of God, which never can perish in any heart where it has been deposited. This is the spirit displayed by David. Reflecting upon his offence, he is agitated with fears, and yet rests in the persuasion that, being a child of God, he would not be deprived of what, indeed, he had justly forfeited.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 12.*—"Restore." It is no small comfort to a man that hath lost his receipt for a debt paid when he remembers that the man he deals with is a good and just man, though his discharge is not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to deal with is very gracious; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore (the evidence of thy grace I mean). David begged this, and obtained it. Yea, saith

faith, if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true, there is mercy enough in God's heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy if thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart; and so faith persuades the soul by an act of adventure to cast itself upon God in Christ. Wilt not thou, saith faith, expect to find as much mercy at God's hands as thou canst look for at a man's? It is not beyond the line of created mercy to forgive many unkindnesses, much falseness and unfaithfulness, upon an humble, sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad but it abounds with parents who can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God's name. And so long as we have not lost sight of God's merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace.—*William Gurnall.*

*Verse 12.*—"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," etc. How can God restore that which he took not away? For, can I charge God with the taking away the joy of his salvation from me? O gracious God, I charge not thee with taking it, but myself with losing it; and such is the miserable condition of us poor wretches, that if thou shouldst restore no more to us than what thou takest from us, we should quickly be at a fault in our estates, and our ruin would be as sudden as inevitable. But why am I so earnest for restoring? for what good will restoring do me? and how shall I more keep it being restored, than I kept it before being enjoyed? and if I so enjoy it, as still to fear to lose it, what joy can there be in such enjoying? O therefore, not restore it only, but "*establish me with thy free spirit*;" that as by thy restoring I may enjoy it entirely, so by thy establishing I may enjoy it securely.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

*Verse 12.*—"Uphold me." I am tempted to think that I am now an established Christian, that I have overcome this or that lust so long that I have got into the habit of the opposite grace, so that there is no fear; I may venture very near the temptation, nearer than other men. This is a lie of Satan. I might as well speak of gunpowder getting by habit a power of resisting fire, so as not to catch the spark. As long as powder is wet it resists the spark, but when it becomes dry it is ready to explode at the first touch. As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart, he deadens me to sin, so that if lawfully called through temptation I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I am like dry gunpowder. Oh, for a sense of this!—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne.*

*Verse 12.*—"Uphold me with thy free spirit." A loving mother chooses a fitting place, and a fitting time, to let her little child fall; it is learning to walk, it is getting over confident, it may come to a dangerous place, and if possessed of all this confidence, may fall and destroy itself. So she permits it to fall at such a place, and in such a way as that it may be hurt, wholesomely hurt, but not dangerously so. It has now lost its confidence, and clings all the more fondly and trustingly to the strong hand that is able to hold up all its goings. So this David, this little child of the great God, has fallen; it is a sore fall, all his bones are broken, but it has been a precious and a profitable lesson to him; he has no confidence any longer in himself, his trust is not now in an arm of flesh. "Uphold me with thy free spirit."—*Thomas Alexander.*

*Verse 12 (last clause).*—"Let a free spirit sustain me;" that is, let me not be enslaved, as I have been, by my sinful passions.—*Henry Dimock, M.A., 1791.*

*Verse 13.*—"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways," etc. We see our duty craves that when we have received mercy from God for ourselves, we should make vantage of it for the edification of others. Every talent received from God should be put to profit, but specially the talent of mercy; as it is greatest, so the Lord requires greater fruit of it, both for his own glory and for the edification of our brethren. Seeing we are vessels of mercy, should not the scent and sweet odour of mercy go from us to others? This duty Christ craved from Peter: "And thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren." And this duty, as David here promiseth, so we may read how he did perform it: "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." The property of a Christian is, *fides per delectionem efficacis*, faith worketh by love. What availeth it to pretend faith toward God, where there is no love toward thy neighbour? and wherein can thy love be declared more than in this, to draw thy neighbour to the participation of that same merit whereunto God hath called thee? By the law a man was bound to bring home his neighbour's wandering beast if he had met with it before; how

much more, then, to turn again his neighbour himself when he wanders from the Lord his God? If two men walking on the way should both fall into one pit, and the one being relieved out of it should go his way and forget his neighbour, might it not justly be called a barbarous and inhuman cruelty? We have all fallen into one and the same mire of iniquity; since the Lord hath put out his merciful hand to draw us out of this prison of sin, shall we refuse to put out our hand to see if possibly we may draw up our brethren with us?—*William Cowper (Bishop)*.

*Verse 14 (first clause).*—“*Deliver me from bloods.*” The term *bloods* in Hebrew may denote any capital crime; and in my opinion he is here to be considered as alluding to the sentence of death, to which he felt himself to be obnoxious, and from which he requests deliverance.—*John Calvin*.

*Verse 14 (first clause).*—The Chaldee reads, “*Deliver me from the judgment of murder.*”

*Verse 14.*—“*O God, thou God of my salvation.*” “*O God,*” is a good invocation, for he heareth prayers. Yet to distinguish him from all false gods he is so particular as to single him from all other: “*Thou God.*” And to magnify him, and to reinforce his petition, he calleth him *Deum salutis*, “*the God of salvation,*” which expresseth him able to deliver him; for it is his nature, and his love, and his glory, to be a preserver of men. And to bring home this joy and comfort into his own heart, he addeth, *salutis meæ*, “*of my salvation.*” So it is *oratio fervens*, and the apostle telleth us that such a prayer prevaileth much with God. For God may be a Saviour and a deliverer, and yet we may escape his saving hand, his right hand may skip us. We can have no comfort in the favours of God, except we can apply them at home; rather we may “*think on God and be troubled.*”—*Samuel Page*.

*Verse 14.*—“*And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*” Hierom, Basil, Euthymius, and other ancient doctors observe that natural corruptions and actual sins are the very rampiers which stop the free passage of song (*verse 15*). So David himself doth expound himself: “*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*” His unthankfulness did cry, his adultery cry, his murder cry unto the Lord for revenge; but alas! himself was mute, till God in exceeding great mercy did stop the mouths of his clamorous adversaries, and gave him leave to speak.—*John Boys*.

*Verse 14.*—“*Aloud.*” This for God, for himself, for the church. 1. *For God*, that his honour may be proclaimed, therefore they borrowed the voice of still and loud instruments. . . . 2. *For himself*. Having received such a benefit, he cannot contain himself, this new wine of spiritual joy which filleth his vessel must have a vent. All passions are loud. Anger chides loud, sorrow cries loud, fear shrieks loud, and joy sings loud. So he expresseth the vehemency of his affection; for to whom much is forgiven, they love much. 3. *For others*. Iron whetteth iron—examples of zeal and devotion affect much, and therefore solemn and public assemblies do generally tender the best service to God, because one provoketh another.—*Samuel Page*.

*Verse 15.*—“*O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*” As man is a little world in the great, so the tongue is a great world in the little. *Nihil habet medium; aut grande malum est, aut grande bonum.*\* It has no mean; it is either a great evil, or a great good. If good (as Eunapius said of that famous rhetorician), a *walking library*, a whole university of edifying knowledge; but if bad (as St. James doth tell us, ch. iii. 6), “*a world of wickedness.*” No better dish for God’s public service, when it is well seasoned; again, none worse, when ill handled. So that if we desire to be doorkeepers in God’s house, let us entreat God first to be a doorkeeper in our house, that he would shut the wicket of our mouth against unsavoury speeches, and open the door of our lips, “*that our mouth may shew forth his praise.*” This was David’s prayer, and ought to be thy practice, wherein observe three points especially; who, *the Lord*; what, *open my lips*; why, *that my mouth shall shew forth thy praise*. For the first—man of himself cannot untie the strings of his own stammering tongue, but it is God only which openeth “*a door of utterance.*” Col. iv. 3. When we have a good thought, it is (as the school doth speak) *gratia infusa*; when a good word, *gratia effusa*; when a good work, *gratia diffusa*. Man is a lock, the Spirit of God has a key, “*which*

\* Jerome.

openeth, and no man shutteth ;” again, “shutteth, and no man openeth.” Rev. iii. 7. He did open the heart of Lydia to conceive well, the ears of the prophet to hear well, the eyes of Elisha’s servant to see well, and here the lips of David to speak well. Acts xvi. ; Isai. l. ; 2 Kings vi. And therefore, whereas in the former verse he might seem too peremptory, saying, “*My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness ;*” he doth, as it were, correct himself by this latter edition and second speech : O Lord, I find myself most unable to sing or say, but “*open thou my lips,*” and touch thou my tongue, and then I am sure “*my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*”—*John Boys.*

Verse 15.—“*O Lord, open thou my lips,*” etc. Again he seems to have the case of the leper before his mind, with the upper lip covered, and only crying unclean, unclean ; and he prays as a spiritual leper to be enabled, with freedom and fulness, to publish abroad the praise of his God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 15 (*first clause*).—He prays that *his lips may be opened* ; in other words, that God would afford him matter of praise. The meaning usually attached to the expression is, that God would so direct his tongue by the Spirit as to fit him for singing his praises. But though it is true that God must supply us with words, and that if he do not, we cannot fail to be silent in his praise, David seems rather to intimate that his mouth must be shut until God called him to the exercise of thanksgiving by extending pardon.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—“*For thou desirest not sacrifice ;*” etc. There may be another reason why David here affirms that God would not accept of a sacrifice, nor be pleased with a burnt-offering. No particular sacrifices were appointed by the law of Moses to expiate the guilt of murder and adultery. The person who had perpetrated these crimes was, according to the divine law, to be punished with death. David therefore may be understood as declaring, that it was utterly vain for him to think of resorting to sacrifices and burnt-offerings with a view to the expiation of his guilt ; that his criminality was of such a character, that the ceremonial law made no provision for his deliverance from the doom which his deeds of horror deserved ; and that the only sacrifices which would avail were those mentioned in the succeeding verse, “*The sacrifices of a broken heart.*”—*John Calvin.*

Verse 16.—“*Else would I give it thee.*” And good reason it is, that we who lie daily at the beautiful gate of the temple begging alms of him, and receiving from his open hand, who openeth his hand, and filleth with his plenty every living thing, should not think much to return to him such offerings of our goods as his law requireth.—*Samuel Page.*

Verses 16, 17.—And now I was thinking what were fit to offer to God for all his lovingkindness he has showed me ; and I thought upon *sacrifices*, for they have sometimes been pleasing to him, and he hath oftentimes smelt a sweet odour from them ; but I considered that sacrifices were but shadows of things to come, and are not now in that grace they have been ; for *old things are past, and new are now come* ; the shadows are gone, the substances are come in place. The bullocks that are to be sacrificed now are our hearts ; it were easier for me to give him bullocks for sacrifice, than to give him my heart. But why should I offer him that he cares not for ? my heart, I know, he cares for ; and if it be broken, and offered up by penitence and contrition, it is the only sacrifice that now he delights in. But can we think God to be so indifferent that he will accept of a broken heart ? Is a thing that is broken good for anything ? Can we drink in a broken glass ? Or can we lean upon a broken staff ? But though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken ; for till it be broken we cannot see what is in it ; till it be broken, it cannot send forth its sweetest odour ; and therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet he loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, indeed, seeing it is he himself that breaks it ; for as nothing but goat’s blood can break the adamant, so nothing but the blood of our scape-goat, Jesus Christ, is able to break our adamantine hearts. Therefore, accept, O God, my broken heart, which I offer thee with a whole heart ; seeing thou canst neither except against it for being whole, which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against it for being broken, which is whole in affection.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 17.—“*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart,*” etc. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, “*a joyful heart, or a thankful heart,*” but instead of that he says, “*a contrite heart.*”

For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin: this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart, is therefore the best thank-offering.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

*Verse 17.*—It may be observed that the second word, כָּרַח, which we render *contrite*, denotes the being bruised and broken to pieces, as a thing is bruised in a mortar (See Numbers xi. 8), and therefore, in a moral sense, signifies such a weight of sorrow as must wholly crush the mind without some powerful and seasonable relief.—*Samuel Chandler.*

*Verse 18.*—“*In thy good pleasure.*” Whatever we seek must ever be sought under this restriction, “*Thy good pleasure.*” Build thou, but do it in thine own wise time, in thine own good way. Build thou the walls of separation that divide the church from the world; let them be *in* it, not *of* it; keep them from its evil. Build thou the walls that bind, that unite thy people into one city, under one polity, that they all may be one. Build thou, and raze thou; raze all the inner walls that divide thy people from thy people; hasten that day when, as there is but one Shepherd, so shall there be but one sheep-fold.—*Thomas Alexander.*

*Verses 18, 19.*—Some learned Jewish interpreters, while they assign the Psalm to the occasion mentioned in the title, conjecture that the 18th and 19th verses were added by some Jewish bard, in the time of the Babylonish captivity. This opinion is also held by Venema, Green, Street, French and Skinner. There does not, however, seem to be any sufficient ground for referring the poem, either in whole or in part, to that period. Neither the walls of Jerusalem, nor the buildings of Zion, as the royal palace and the magnificent structure of the temple, which we know David had already contemplated for the worship of God (2 Samuel vii. 1, etc.), were completed during his reign. This was only effected under the reign of his son Solomon. 1 Kings iii. 1.

The prayer, then, in the 18th verse might have a particular reference to the completion of these buildings, and especially to the rearing of the temple, in which sacrifices of unprecedented magnitude were to be offered. David's fears might easily suggest to him that his crimes might prevent the building of the temple, which God had promised should be erected. 2 Samuel vii. 13. “The king forgets not,” observes Bishop Horne, “to ask mercy for his people as well as for himself; that so neither his own nor their sins might prevent either the building and flourishing of the earthly Jerusalem, or, what was of infinitely greater importance, the promised blessing of Messiah, who was to descend from him, and to rear the walls of the New Jerusalem.”—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin, in loc.*

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

[*The Psalm is upon its surface so full of suggestions for sermons that I have not attempted to offer any of my own, but have merely inserted a selection from Mr. G. Rogers and others.*]

*Verse 1.*—1. The Prayer. 1. For mercy, not justice, Mercy is the sinner's attribute—as much a part of the divine nature as justice. The possibility of sin is implied in its existence. The actual commission of sin is implied in its display. 2. For pardon, not pity merely, but forgiveness. II. The plea. 1. For the pardon of great sins on account of great mercies, and lovingkindness. 2. Many sins on account of multitude of mercies. 3. Hell-deserving sins on account of tender mercies. We who have sinned are human, he who pardons is divine.

“Great God, thy *nature* hath no bound,  
So let thy pardoning love be found.”

*Verse 3.*—I. Confession. “I acknowledge,” etc. II. Humiliation, not a mere confession with the lips, but ever before me—in its guilt—defilement—consequences in this life and hereafter.

Verses 3, 4, 11, 12, 17.—I. Scripture estimate of sin. 1. Personal accountability—"My sin." 2. Estimated as hateful to God—"Against thee," etc. 3. Sin estimated as separation from God. II. Spiritual restoration. First step—Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step—Spirit of liberty. "*Thy free spirit.*"—F. W. Robertson.

Verse 4.—1. The person—"I." 2. The commission—"done." 3. The trespass—"evil." 4. The particularity—"this." 5. The daring of it—"in thy sight."—Samuel Page.

Verse 4.—"Against thee." 1. Thee, an *holy* God—a God of pure eyes, and that cannot endure to behold iniquity. 2. Thee, a *just* God—who will punish sin. 3. Thee, an *Almighty* God. 4. Thee, a *gracious* God.—T. Horton.

Verse 4.—I. Self-condemnation. 1. For the greatness of sin. Not against self merely, or fellow men, but God. This includes all guilt, for all is against him. 2. Its effrontery, "in thy sight." II. Divine justification. 1. In the permission of sin. 2. In its punishment. 3. In its forgiveness. God must be justified when he justifies the ungodly.

Verse 6.—See T. Goodwin's Treatise, entitled, "An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness before God, in respect of Sin and Punishment." Bk. ix. cap. i. ii. [Nichol's edition, Vol. X., p. 324 *et seq.*]

Verse 7.—Here is, I. Faith in the fact of an atonement for sin. "I shall be clean." II. Faith in the method of its application. "Purge me," etc. Sprinkled as the blood of sacrifices. III. Faith in its efficacy. "I shall be whiter," etc.

Verse 10.—I. The change to be effected. 1. A clean heart. 2. A right spirit. II. The power by which it is accomplished. 1. A creative power, such as created the world at first. 2. A renewing power, such as continually renews the face of the earth. III. The acquirement of these blessings. The prayer, "Create," etc.

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—I am not cast away, and would be thankful. I deserve to be cast away, and ought to be penitential. I am afraid of being cast away, and must be prayerful. "Cast me not away." 1. From thy *protecting* presence into *danger*. 2. From thy *loving* presence into *wrath*. 3. From thy *joyous* presence into *distress*. 4. From thy *affluent* presence into *destitution*. 5. From thy *gracious* presence into *despair*. Sin hurries us away from God; grace hastens us into his embrace: the former severs, and the latter unites, God and the soul.—W. Jackson.

Verse 11.—I. There is often much comfort in much grief. "Cast me not," etc. A consciousness of still having the divine presence and a dread of losing it, prompts the prayer. II. There is often much faith in much fear. "Take not," etc. Faith in the spirit works within him while he fears.

Verses 12—13.—A threefold desire: 1. To be *happy*—"Restore," etc. 2. To be *consistent*—"Uphold," etc. 3. To be *useful*—"Then will I teach," etc.—W. Jackson.

Verse 13.—I. It is not our duty to seek the conversion of others until we are converted ourselves. II. The greater enjoyment we have in the ways of God, the more faithfully and earnestly we shall make them known to others. III. The more faithfully and earnestly we make them known to others the more they will be influenced by them.

Verse 15.—I. Confession. His lips are sealed on account—1. Of his fall—and well they might be. 2. Of natural timidity. 3. Of want of zeal. II. Petition. "Open thou," etc. Not my understanding merely and heart, but "lips." III. Resolution. Then he would speak freely in God's praise.

Verse 15.—I. When God does not open our lips we had better keep them closed. II. When he does open them we ought not to close them. III. When he opens them it is not to speak in our own praise, and seldom in praise of others, but always in his own praise. IV. We should use this prayer whenever we are about to speak in his name. "O Lord, open," etc.

Verses 16—17.—I. Men would gladly do something towards their own salvation if they could. "Thou desirest not," etc., else would I give it. II. All that they can do is not of the least avail. All the ceremonial observances of Jewish or Gentile churches could not procure pardon for the least transgression of the moral law. III. The only offering of man which God will not despise is a broken and a contrite heart. IV. All other requirement for his salvation God himself will provide.

Verse 18.—I. For whom is the prayer offered—for the church or Zion? 1. Next to our own welfare we should seek the welfare of Zion. 2. All should seek it by prayer. II. For what is the prayer offered? 1. The kind of good, not worldly



or ecclesiastical, but spiritual. 2. The measure of good. "In thy good pleasure. Thine own love to it, and what thou hast already done for it. 3. The continuance of good. "Build," etc. Its doctrines, graces, zeal.

*Verse 19.*—I. When we are accepted of God our offerings are accepted. "Then," etc. II. We should then make the richest offerings in our power, our time, talents, influence, etc. 1. Holy obedience. 2. Self-sacrifices, not half offerings, but whole "burnt-offerings;" not lambs merely, but "bullocks." 3. Zeal for divine ordinances. "Upon thine altar." III. God will take pleasure in such services. "Then shalt thou be pleased." 1. Because from his own redeemed. 2. Because given in the name of the Redeemer. With such sacrifices God is well pleased.

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