

PSALM LVII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*So glad a song as this becomes ere it closes, should be in the keeping of the most skilled of all the temple minstrels.* Al-taschith, i.e., DESTROY NOT. *This petition is a very sententious prayer, as full as it is brief, and well worthy to be the motto for a sacred song. David had said, "destroy not," in reference to Saul, when he had him in his power and now he takes pleasure in employing the same words in supplication to God. We may infer from the spirit of the Lord's prayer, that the Lord will spare us as we spare our foes. There are four of these "Destroy not" Psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous, and they all have probably a reference to the overthrow of the Jews, on account of their persecution of the great Son of David : they will endure heavy chastisement, but concerning them it is written in the divine decree, "Destroy them not."* Michtam of David. *For quality this Psalm is called golden, or a secret, and it well deserves the name. We may read the words and yet not know the secret joy of David, which he has locked up in this golden casket. When he fled from Saul in the cave. This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein.*

DIVISIONS.—*We have here prayer, 1—6, and praise, 7—11. The hunted one takes a long breath of prayer, and when he is fully inspired, he breathes out his soul in jubilant song.*

EXPOSITION.

BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me : for my soul trusteth in thee : yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

2 I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

4 My soul *is* among lions : *and* I lie *even* among them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps ; my soul is bowed down : they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.

1. "*Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.*" Urgent need suggests the repetition of the cry, for thus intense urgency of desire is expressed. If "he gives twice who gives quickly," so he who would receive quickly must ask twice. For mercy the Psalmist pleads at first, and he feels he cannot improve upon his plea, and therefore returns to it. God is the God of mercy, and the Father of mercies, it is most fit therefore that in distress we should seek mercy from him in whom it dwells. "*For my soul trusteth in thee.*" Faith urges her suit right well. How can the Lord be unmerciful to a trustful soul ? Our faith does not deserve mercy, but it always wins it from the sovereign grace of God when it is sincere, as in this case where *the soul* of the man believed. "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*" "*Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.*" Not in the cave alone would he hide, but in the cleft of the Rock of ages. As the little birds find ample shelter beneath the parental wing, even so would the fugitive place

himself beneath the secure protection of the divine power. The emblem is delightfully familiar and suggestive. May we all experimentally know its meaning. When we cannot see the sunshine of God's face, it is blessed to cower down beneath the shadow of his wings. "*Until these calamities be overpast.*" Evil will pass away, and the eternal wings will abide over us till then. Blessed be God, our calamities are matters of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity. When we are under the divine shadow, the passing over of trouble cannot harm us; the hawk flies across the sky, but this is no evil to the chicks when they are safely nestling beneath the hen.

2. "*I will cry.*" He is quite safe, but yet he prays, for faith is never dumb. We pray because we believe. We exercise by faith the spirit of adoption whereby we cry. He says not, I do cry, or I have cried, but I will cry, and indeed, this resolution may stand with all of us until we pass through the gates of pearl; for while we are here below we shall still have need to cry. "*Unto God most high*"—Prayers are for God only; the greatness and sublimity of his person and character suggest and encourage prayer: however high our enemies, our heavenly Friend is higher, for he is "*Most high,*" and he can readily send from the height of his power the succour which we need. "*Unto God that performeth all things for me.*" He has cogent reason for praying, for he sees God performing. The believer waits and God works. The Lord has undertaken for us, and he will not draw back, he will go through with his covenant engagements. Our translators have very properly inserted the words, "all things," for there is a blank in the Hebrew, as if it were a *carte blanche*, and you might write therein that the Lord would finish anything and everything which he has begun. Whatsoever the Lord takes in hand he will accomplish; hence past mercies are guarantees for the future, and admirable reasons for continuing to cry unto him.

3. "*He shall send from heaven.*" If there be no fit instruments on earth, heaven shall yield up its legions of angels for the succour of the saints. We may in times of great straits expect mercies of a remarkable kind; like the Israelites in the wilderness, we shall have our bread hot from heaven, new every morning; and for the overthrow of our enemies God shall open his celestial batteries, and put them to utter confusion. Wherever the battle is more fierce than ordinary, there shall come succours from headquarters, for the Commander-in-chief sees all. "*And save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.*" He will be in time, not only to rescue his servants from being swallowed up, but even from being reproached. Not only shall they escape the flames, but not even the smell of fire shall pass upon them. O dog of hell, I am not only delivered from thy bite, but even from thy bark. Our foes shall not have the power to sneer at us, their cruel jests and taunting gibes shall be ended by the message from heaven, which shall for ever save us. "*Selah.*" Such mercy may well make us pause to meditate and give thanks. Rest, singer, for God has given thee rest! "*God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.*" He asked for mercy, and truth came with it. Thus evermore doth God give us more than we ask or think. His attributes, like angels on the wing, are ever ready to come to the rescue of his chosen.

4. "*My soul is among lions.*" He was a very Daniel. Howled at, hunted, wounded, but not slain. His place was in itself one of extreme peril, and yet faith made him feel himself secure, so that he could lie down. The cave may have reminded him of a lion's den, and Saul and his band shouting and yelling in their disappointment at missing him, were the lions; yet beneath the divine shelter he felt himself safe. "*And I lie even among them that are set on fire.*" Perhaps Saul and his band kindled a fire in the cavern while they halted in it, and David was thus reminded of the fiercer fire of their hate which burned within their hearts. Like the bush in Horeb, the believer is often in the midst of flames, but never consumed. It is a mighty triumph of faith when we can lie down even among firebrands and find rest, because God is our defence. "*Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.*" Malicious men carry a whole armoury in their mouths; they have not harmless mouths, whose teeth grind their own food as in a mill, but their jaws are as mischievous as if every tooth were a javelin or an arrow. They have no molars, all their teeth are canine, and their nature is canine, leonine, wolfish, devilish. As for that busy member the tongue, in the case of the malicious, it is a two-edged, keen, cutting, killing sword. The tongue, which is here compared to a sword, has the adjective *sharp* added to it, which is not used in reference to the teeth, which are compared to spears, as if to show

that if men were actually to tear us with their teeth, like wild beasts, they could not thereby wound us so severely as they can do with their tongues. No weapon is so terrible as a tongue sharpened on the devil's grindstone; yet even this we need not fear, for "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

5. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.*" This is the chorus of the Psalm. Before he has quite concluded his prayer the good man interjects a verse of praise; and glorious praise too, seeing it comes up from the lion's den and from amid the coals of fire. Higher than the heavens is the Most High, and so high ought our praises to rise. Above even the power of cherubim and seraphim to express it, the glory of God is revealed and is to be acknowledged by us. "*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*" As above, so below, let thy praises, O thou great Jehovah, be universally proclaimed. As the air surrounds all nature, so let thy praises gird the earth with a zone of song.

6. "*They have prepared a net for my steps.*" The enemies of the godly spare no pains, but go about their wicked work with the coolest deliberation. As for each sort of fish, or bird, or beast, a fitting net is needed, so do the ungodly suit their net to their victim's circumstances and character with a careful craftiness of malice. Whatever David might do, and whichever way he might turn, his enemies were ready to entrap him in some way or other. "*My soul is bowed down.*" He was held down like a bird in a trap; his enemies took care to leave him no chance of comfort. "*They have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.*" He likens the designs of his persecutors to pits, which were commonly dug by hunters to entrap their prey; these were made in the usual path of the victim, and in this case David says, "*before me,*" i.e., in my ordinary way. He rejoices because these devices had recoiled upon themselves. Saul hunted David, but David caught him more than once and might have slain him on the spot. Evil is a stream which one day flows back to its source. "*Selah.*" We may sit down at the pit's mouth and view with wonder the just retaliations of providence.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing and give praise.

8 Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp : I *myself* will awake early.

9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people : I will sing unto thee among the nations.

10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens : *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

7. "*My heart is fixed.*" One would have thought he would have said, "*My heart is fluttered;*" but no, he is calm, firm, happy, resolute, established. When the central axle is secure, the whole wheel is right. If our great bower anchor holds, the ship cannot drive. "*O God, my heart is fixed.*" I am resolved to trust thee, to serve thee, and to praise thee. Twice does he declare this to the glory of God who thus comforts the souls of his servants. Reader, it is surely well with thee, if thy once roving heart is now firmly fixed upon God and the proclamation of his glory. "*I will sing and give praise.*" Vocally and instrumentally will I celebrate thy worship. With lip and with heart will I ascribe honour to thee. Satan shall not stop me, nor Saul, nor the Philistines. I will make Adullam ring with music, and all the caverns thereof echo with joyous song. Believer, make a firm decree that your soul in all seasons shall magnify the Lord.

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Fain would stop the joyful song :
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."

8. "*Awake up, my glory.*" Let the noblest powers of my nature bestir themselves: the intellect which conceives thought, the tongue which expresses it, and the inspired imagination which beautifies it—let all be on the alert now that the hour for praise has come. "*Awake, Psaltery and harp.*" Let all the music with which I am familiar be well attuned for the hallowed service of praise. "*I myself will awake early.*" I will awake the dawn with my joyous notes. No sleepy verses and weary notes shall be heard from me; I will thoroughly arouse myself for this

high employ. When we are at our best we fall far short of the Lord's deserts, let us, therefore, make sure that what we bring him is our best, and, if marred with infirmity, at least let it not be deteriorated by indolence. Three times the Psalmist calls upon himself to awake. Do we need so much arousing, and for such work? Then let us not spare it, for the engagement is too honourable, too needful to be left undone or ill done for want of arousing ourselves.

9. "*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.*" Gentiles shall hear my praise. Here is an instance of the way in which the truly devout evangelic spirit o'erleaps the boundaries which bigotry sets up. The ordinary Jew would never wish the Gentile dogs to hear Jehovah's name, except to tremble at it; but this grace-taught Psalmist has a missionary spirit, and would spread the praise and fame of his God. "*I will sing unto thee among the nations.*" However far off they may be, I would make them hear of thee through my glad Psalmody.

10. "*For thy mercy is great unto the heavens.*" Right up from man's lowliness to heaven's loftiness mercy reaches. Imagination fails to guess the height of heaven, and even thus the riches of mercy exceed our highest thoughts. The Psalmist, as he sits at the cave's mouth and looks up to the firmament, rejoices that God's goodness is vaster and sublimer than even the vaulted skies. "*And thy truth unto the clouds.*" Upon the cloud he sets the seal of his truth, the rainbow, which ratifies his covenant; in the cloud he hides his rain and snow, which prove his truth by bringing to us seedtime and harvest, cold and heat. Creation is great, but the Creator greater far. Heaven cannot contain him; above clouds and stars his goodness far exceeds.

11. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.*" A grand chorus. Take it up, ye angels and ye spirits made perfect, and join in it, ye sons of men below, as ye say, "*Let thy glory be above all the earth.*" The prophet in the previous verse spoke of mercy "unto the heavens," but here his song flies "above the heavens;" praise rises higher and higher, and knows no bound.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS.

Title.—This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer-wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Al-taschith, Michtam of David*. *Al-taschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject-matter. The former signifies *destroy not*, or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathological ejaculation; *Al-taschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did.—*John Flavel* (1627—1691), in "*Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence.*"

Title.—A Psalm composed when David fled from Saul in the cave, which is referred to in Ps. cxlii., and which, because it is without any other distinction called "the cave," is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights—"to the sheep-cotes," where the cattle were driven in the hottest summer months only—to hunt him in every hiding-place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (ver. 2); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (ver. 8). His life was really suspended by a hair if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him!—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, 1856.

Title.—"The cave." There appear good grounds for the local tradition which fixes the cave on the borders of the Dead Sea, although there is no certainty with

regard to the particular cave pointed out. The cave so designated is at a point to which David was far more likely to summon his parents, whom he intended to take from Bethlehem into Moab, than to any place in the western plains. It is an immense natural cavern, the mouth of which can be approached only on foot along the side of the cliff. Irby and Mangles, who visited it without being aware that it was the reputed Cave of Adullam, state that it "runs in by a long winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. We soon came to a large chamber with natural arches of great height; from this last there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which our guides assured us had never been perfectly explored—the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high by three feet wide, and were all on a level with each other." It seems probable that David as a native of Bethlehem, must have been well acquainted with this remarkable spot, and had probably often availed himself of its shelter, when out with his father's flocks. It would, therefore, naturally occur to him as a place of refuge when he fled from Gath.—*John Kitto* (1804—1854), in "A *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*."

Whole Psalm.—Mystically this hymn may be construed of Christ, who was in the days of his flesh assaulted by the tyranny both of spiritual and temporal enemies. His temporal enemies, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, furiously raged and took counsel together against him. The chief priests and princes were, saith Hierome, like *lions*, and the people like the *whelps of lions*, all of them in a readiness to devour his soul. The rulers *laid a net for his feet* in their captious interrogatories, asking (Matt. xxii. 17), "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" and (John viii. 5) whether the woman taken in the very act of adultery should be stoned to death or no. The people were "*set on fire*," when as they raged against him, and *their teeth and tongues were spears and swords*, in crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." His spiritual enemies also sought to *swallow him up*; his *soul was among lions* all the days of his life, at the hour of his death especially. The devil in tempting and troubling him, had *laid a snare for his feet*; and death, in *digging a pit* for him, had thought to *devour* him. As David was in the *cave*, so Christ the Son of David was in the *grave*.—*John Boys*, 1571—1625.

Verse 1.—"Be merciful unto me, O God," etc. This excellent Psalm was composed by David when there was enough to discompose the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the arduousness of the supplicant. *Mercy! Mercy! Nothing but mercy*, and that exerting itself in an extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress are very considerable. 1. He pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. "*My soul trusteth in thee*," etc. This his trust and dependence upon God, though it be not argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *act*; yet it is so in respect both of the nature of the *object*, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings, and in respect of the *promise*, whereby protection is assured to them that fly to him for sanctuary. Isa. xxvi. 3. 2. He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait (ver. 2).—*John Flavel*.

Verse 1.—"Be merciful unto me." According to the weight of the burden that grieveth us, is the cry that comes from us. How do poor condemned prisoners cry to their judges, "Have pity upon us, have pity upon us!" David, in the day of his calamities doubles his prayer for mercy: "*Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee*," etc. "*Until these calamities be overpast*." It was not a single calamity, but a multitude of calamities which compassed David, and therefore he compasseth the Lord about with petitions. His spirit being up in prayer, like a bell that rings out, he strikes on both sides, "*Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me*."—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 1.—"Be merciful unto me." The first clause contains the prayer itself in a very forcible word *trusteth*, properly, "Show thy most tender affection to me," such as animals, with a humming sound, show to their young.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 1.—"For my soul trusteth in thee." The best reason with God, who "taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy." Ps. cxlvii. 11.—*Pool's Synopsis*.

Verse 1.—"Soul." His *soul* trusted in God; and this is a form of expression

the force of which is not to be overlooked; for it implies that the trust which he exercised proceeded from his very innermost affections—that it was of no volatile character, but deeply and strongly rooted. He declares the same truth in figurative terms, when he adds his persuasion that God would cover him with the shadow of his wings.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 1.—“*In the shadow of thy wings I will trust;*” properly, I will seek for protection. The very delightful figure here employed, is taken from the chicken lying safely hid under the mother’s wings: at the same time it seems to have reference to the wings of the cherubim, by which the mercy-seat was covered.—*Simon de Muis*, 1587—1644.

Verse 1.—“*The shadow of thy wings.*” Compare Psalm xvii. 8; lxi. 4; and Matthew xxiii. 37; and the Apocalyptic imagery, describing the church fleeing from the dragon in the wilderness; and “to her are given the two wings of the great eagle,” and she is delivered from the dragon, who desires to *swallow her up*. See Rev. xii. 6, 15, 16.—*Christopher Wordsworth*, 1868.

Verse 1.—“*Until these calamities be overpast.*” He compareth his affliction and calamity to a storm that cometh and goeth: as it is not always fair weather with us in this life, so not always foul. Athanasius said of Julian furiously raging against the Lord’s Anointed, “*Nubecula est, cito transibit,*” he is a little cloud; he will soon pass away. Man is born to labour and dolor, to travail and trouble; to labour in his actions, to dolor in his passions; and so, “Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all.” If we put our trust in him and cast all our care upon him, he will in his good time bring it to pass, that all our afflictions shall overpass. He will either take them from us or us from them, and then we shall assuredly know that the troubles of this life present are not worthy of the glory which in the life to come shall be showed unto us. For as the globe of the earth, which improperly for his show of bigness we term the world, and is, after the mathematician’s account, many thousand miles in compass; yet, being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky’s circumference, is but a centre or little prick: so the travail and affliction in this life temporal, in respect of the joys eternal in the world to come, bear not any proportion, but are to be reputed in comparison a very nothing, as a dark cloud that cometh and goeth in a moment.—*John Boys*.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—“*In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*” etc. As if he said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the hold, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, verse 2. “I will cry unto God most high,” I will by prayer put myself under the shadow of God’s wings; and mark what success should follow, verse 3, “He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.” When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for.—*Jeremiah Dyke*, 1620.

Verse 2.—“*Unto God that performeth all things for me.*” God’s favours already received are a pledge that he will complete his work of love “*upon (x) me.*” The beginning is the earnest of the completion. His *word* is a guarantee for the *performance* of “all things” that I need. (Compare verse 3; Psalm lvi. 4; 1 Samuel ii. 9; iii. 12; xxiii. 17; xxiv. 21; Psalm cxxviii. 8; Job x. 3, 8; xiv. 15; Philippians i. 6; Isaiah xxvi. 12).—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 2.—“*God that performeth all things for me.*” Heb. *that performeth* (or *perfecteth*, or *finisheth*, as this word is rendered, Psalm cxxxviii. 8 *i.e.*, will certainly perform or finish), *for*, or *towards*, or *concerning me*. He doth not express what he performeth, or perfecteth, or fulfilleth, but leaveth it to be understood, as being easy to be understood. “*He performeth*” or *perfecteth*, to wit, all that he hath promised; engaged himself to perform what he hath begun to do, or what is yet to be performed; it being usual in the Hebrew language to understand a verbal noun after the verb. He implies that God is not like men, who make large promises, but either through inability, or carelessness, or unfaithfulness, do not perform them, but will certainly be as good as his word.—*Matthew Pool*, 1624—1679.

Verse 2 (last clause).—The word which we translate “*performeth*” comes from a

root that signifies both to *perfect* and to *desist* or *cease*. For when a business is performed and perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working: he puts to the last hand when he finishes the work. To such a happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psalm cxxxviii. 8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." The Septuagint renders it by τὸν ἐνεργητὴν σουτὰ με, who *profiteth* or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain truth, that all the results and issues of providence are profitable and beneficial to the saints. But the supplement in our translation well conveys the importance of the place: "who performeth *all things*;" and it involves the most strict and proper notion of providence, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes and promises to his people. And therefore Vatablus and Muis supply and fill up the room which the conciseness of the original leaves, with *quæ promisit*: "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promised*." Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and providence the payment. Piscator fills it with *benignitatem et misericordiam suam*; "unto God that performeth *his kindness and mercy*." But still it supposes the mercy performed to be contained in the promise, and much more so in the providential performance of it to us.—*John Flavel*.

Verse 2 (last clause).—David even then when he fled from Saul in the cave he looks upon God as having *performed all things for him*. The word is, he hath *perfected all things*; and it is observable that David uses the same expression of praising God here when he was in the cave, hiding himself to save his life as he did when he triumphed over his enemies.—Ps. vi. and Ps. cviii.—*Jeremiah Burroughs*, 1599—1646.

Verse 2 (last clause).—The Targum curiously paraphrases this clause: "Who ordered the spider that wrought the web, on my account, at the mouth of the cave;" applying a later historical fact, which, however, may have had its prototype in David's history.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, in "*Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms*," 1859.

Verse 3.—"Him that would swallow me up." If I were to take you to my house, and say that I had an exquisitely fat man, and wished you to join me in eating him, your indignation could be restrained by nothing. You would pronounce me to be crazy. There is not in New York a man so mean that he would not put down a man who should propose to have a banquet off from a fellow man, cutting steaks out of him, and eating them. And that is nothing but feasting on the human body, while they all will sit down, and take a man's soul, and look for the tender loins, and invite their neighbours in to partake of the little titbits. They will take a man's honour and name, and broil them over the coals of their indignation, and fill the whole room with the aroma thereof, and give their neighbour a piece, and watch him, and wink as he tastes it. You all eat men up. . . . You eat the souls, the finest elements of men. You are more than glad if you can whisper a word that is derogatory to a neighbour, or his wife, or his daughter. . . . The morsel is too exquisite to be lost. Here is the soul of a person, here is a person's hope for this world and the world to come, and you have it on your fork, and you cannot refrain from tasting it, and give it to some one else to taste. You are cannibals, eating men's honour and name and rejoicing in it—and that, too, when you do not always know that the things charged against them are true; when in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the probabilities are that they are not true.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1870.

Verse 3.—"God shall send forth his mercy and his truth," viz., to save me. That is to say, God, to manifest his mercy, and vindicate the truth of his promises, will save me. The reader will observe, that mercy and truth are here poetically represented as ministers of God, standing in his presence, ready to execute his pleasure, and employed by him in the salvation of his people.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 3.—"His mercy and his truth." He need not send down angels, he need send but "*mercy and truth*" down, which elsewhere it is said he prepares in the heavens. Ps. lxi. 7. He prepares commissions for them, and sends them down with them for execution.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 4.—"My soul is among lions." This may also be construed of the church and that both in respect of her spiritual enemies and temporal. As for her ghostly

foes, the devil is a *roaring lion* (1 Pet. v. 8), and our sins are the *whelps of lions*, ready to devour us. And concerning outward enemies, the church in this world is like Daniel in the lion's den, or as "the sucking child playing upon the hole of the asp." Isa. xi. 8. She hath here no visible power or outward help to fly to for succour, all her trust is in the Lord, and "under the shadow of his wings is her refuge, till this evil is overpast." . . . And surely, beloved, if the church had not any other enemies, but only these monstrous Antichrists of Rome, yet she might truly complain with our prophet here, "*My soul is among lions.*" Eleven popes had that name, whereof all, excepting two or three, were roaring lions in their Bulls, and ravening lions in seeking after their prey. *Leo* the tenth so pilled* and polled† the goodly nations of Germany with his impardonable pardons and merciless indulgences, as that his insupportable cruelty gave the first occasion of the Reformation of religion in that country.—*John Boys.*

Verse 4 (first clause).—"Mudge translates literally, 'I lie with my soul amidst lionesses.'" This agrees with the opinion of Bochart, who thinks that the animals here intended are lionesses, properly, when giving suck to their young, a time when they are peculiarly fierce and dangerous, "nor need we wonder," he observes, "that the lioness is reckoned among the fiercest lions; for the lioness equals, or even exceeds, the lion in strength and fierceness;" and this he proves from the testimonies of ancient writers.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*, 1846.

Verse 4.—"And I lie even among them that are set on fire." The whole pith lies in the word אֶשְׁכֵּנִי, *I will recline*, which denotes a tranquil and secure condition of body and mind, like a man *reclining* and sleeping, as Ps. iii. 5: "*I laid me down and slept, I awaked;*" and lived composedly; Ps. iv. 9; "*I will both lay me down in peace,*" etc.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—The horrors of a lion's den, the burning of a fiery furnace, and the cruel onset of war, are the striking images by which David here describes the peril and wretchedness of his present condition.—*John Morison.*

Verse 6.—"Net." Not having fire-arms, the ancients were much more skilful than the moderns in the use of snares, nets, and pits for capturing wild animals. A large class of Biblical figures and allusions necessarily presupposes this state of things.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 7.—"My heart is fixed, O God," etc. The Psalmist, knowing that it is the order and work of God, first to prepare the heart for communion, and then to incline his own ear to hear his people, and to entertain communion with them in ordinances, he doth observe this order, and follow it with a practise suitable to it in his daily addresses to God, that is thus, wheresoever he doth find his heart put into a fitted and prepared frame for communion with God, he doth not let it die again, and go out of frame by a slothful neglect of such a disposition of heart. No, but he immediately sets himself to duty, to worship God, and to the acts of his worship, in his ordinances, as he expresseth himself in Ps. lvii, 7: viz., thus—נָחַן לִבִּי אֵלֹהִים נָחַן לִבִּי אֵלֹהִים נָחַן לִבִּי, *Nachon libbi Elohim, nachon libbi* (there is the first; he finds his heart fitted and prepared for communion with God): "My heart," saith he, "is fitted or prepared" (for the word נָחַן, *nachon* is the passive conjugation *niphal*, signifying, he is fitted or prepared, from the root נָחַן, *chun*, he fitted or prepared, in the active; and so it is rather to be rendered prepared or fitted, than "fixed," thus: לִבִּי, *libbi*, my heart; נָחַן, *nachon*, is fitted or prepared). "O God, my heart is fitted or prepared" for communion with thee. Well, what follows? He presently sets himself upon that great duty and ordinance of communion with God, in the praising of his name and singing forth those praises, as in the words immediately following in the same verse, thus: "My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared:" therefore, אֲשִׁירָה, *ashidah va-azamerah*, "*I will sing and give praise.*"—*William Strong, in "Communion with God,"* 1656.

Verse 7.—"My heart is fixed, O God," etc. Fitness for duty lies in the orderly temper of body and mind, making a man willing to undertake, and able to finish his work with comfortable satisfaction. If either the body or mind be distempered, a man is unfit for such an undertaking; both must be in a suitable frame, like a well-tuned instrument, else there will be no melody: hence when David prepared himself for praises and worship, he tells us *his heart was ready and fixed*, and then, *his tongue*

* Pill=peel, to pillage, plunder, strip.

† Poll, used synonymously with peel.

was ready also (Psalm xlv. 1.), so was his hand with Psaltery and harp; all these were awakened into a suitable posture. That a man is or hath been in a fit order for service may be concluded from (1.) His alacrity to undertake a duty. (2.) His activity in the prosecution. (3.) His satisfaction afterward. Right grounds and principles in these things being still pre-supposed.—*Richard Gilpin*, (1625—1699, 1700) in "*Dæmonologia Sacra*."

Verse 7.—"I will sing." It should alarm the wicked that they are contending with a people who sing and shout on the battle-field. Yea, they never sing louder than when most distressed and afflicted. Whether saints conquer or are conquered they still sing on. Blessed be God for that. Let sinners tremble at contending with men of a spirit so heavenly.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 7.—Sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper, David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier: his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did.—*William Gurnall*.

Verses 7, 8.—That worship that is performed with a sleepy, drowsy body, is a weak worship, but the Psalmist here makes the awaking of the body to be the fruit and effect of the preparation of the heart; "*Awake up, my glory; awake, Psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*" Why so? My heart is prepared. The heart prepared and thereby awakened, will awake the body. To worship God therefore without a prepared heart, is to worship him with a drowsy body, because with a drowsy heart, and therefore weakly.—*John Angier*, in "*An Help to better Hearts, for better Times*," 1647.

Verse 8.—"Awake up, my glory; awake, Psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early." We must prevent God by early praise as well as prayer; "The God of my mercy shall prevent me," sings David; and every child of David must prevent God again with his songs. Jehoshaphat delighted God with instruments of music before his deliverance. Faith must tune an *επιπικιον*, a psalm of victory before the triumph. Praise is the ingenious mother of future mercies; as the Virgin Mary sang at Hebron before the birth of her son at Bethlehem. Oh, heavenly contention between mercy and duty!—*Samuel Lee*, 1625—1691.

Verse 8.—"Awake up, my glory," etc. We must sing with excited grace. Not only with grace habitual, but with excited and actual: the musical instrument delights not but when it is played upon. In this duty we must follow Paul's advice to Timothy (2 Tim. i. 6), *ἀναζωπυρέειν*, stir up the grace that is in us, and cry out as David, "*Awake love, awake delight.*" Ps. lvii. 8. The clock must be wound up before it can guide our time; the bird pleaseth not in her nest, but in her notes; the chimes only make music while they are going. Let us therefore beg the Spirit to blow upon our garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, when we set upon this joyous service. God loves active grace in duty, that the soul should be ready trimmed when it presents itself to Christ in any worship.—*John Wells*, in "*Morning Exercises*," 1674.

Verse 8.—"I will awake early." Literally, "I will awake the dawn," a bold figure of poetry, as if the writer had said—The morning shall not awake me to praise; but in my songs I will anticipate the dawn.—*R. T. Society's Notes*.

Verse 8.—It will answer our purpose to take notice, first, of the terms David uses, and then, secondly, press the *exhortation*. Of the terms he uses: 1. *My glory*. That is my *soul* (say some) because the spirit of a man is the glory of a man, whereby he is dignified and raised so much above the *brutes*, as to be but a "little lower than the angels," nay, to be akin to God himself, "the Father of spirits." My *musical skill*, say others, the glory of the artist above the unskilful; and that wherein David had the glory of excelling, as Jubal had of the first invention. My *tongue*, say others; for this is also the glory of a man above dumb creatures, and the glory of a wise man above a fool. And as the tongue is the glory of a man, so the glory of the tongue is to glorify God. Praise is the glory of all other uses to which the tongue is employed; and the tongue is, in the body, that "temple of the Holy Ghost," what the silver trumpet was in the temple of Solomon; to sound the high praises of God, and express the raised affections of our souls.

2. "*Awake Psaltery and harp.*" The one for a Psalm, the other for a spiritual song or hymn; that is to say, all my musical instruments and skill I will employ in, and consecrate to the glory of him who "puts new songs into my mouth." He first teaches my fingers to fight, and then to play the *epinikion*, or song of triumph. Sound, then, my Psaltery and harp, emulous of those that are around the throne

above; your melody can soften my cares, lay my fears, and turn my *cave* into a *choir*. As to these instruments in the worship of God, they were doubtless allowed to David, and to the church in his time. They were agreeable to the state of that church and people, who were led very much by their senses; and whose infant and less discerning condition made it needful for the natural man to have something to fasten upon and be entertained with in the worship of God, and to sweeten and take off from the labour and burden of that service. But as the gospel worship and appointments are a more spiritual, pleasant, and reasonable service, and need them less, so in the gospel institution we find no footsteps of them; and we know who first brought them into the church, as well as who first brought them into the world. It is not my business here to dispute this matter; and he must at any time do it but indifferently, whose inclination is against him all the while, and whose genius tempts him to wish himself solidly confuted in all he can advance. But since I find these instruments in my text, and since the sound of such texts as these is made use of to turn the public worship so frequently into concerts of music, I shall leave them with this remark: that to let them alone, especially in public worship, though one thought them tolerable, has a much better grace with it than to declare them "sorely displeasing to God, and that they filthily defile his holy house and place of prayer."

3. "*I myself will awake early.*" And without this, all the rest had been an empty sound; there would have been no melody to the Lord, whatsoever good music he might have made to himself. He would not put God off with a sacrifice of mere air. He summons the attendance of all his powers. Himself is the offering; and his music plays to the sacrifice, as it goes up in holy affections and spiritual joys; and unless these accompany the song, the mere breath of an organ, or the trembling of the strings of an harp is as good devotion and less offensive to God. Consider the *nature and excellency of the duty*. Singing Psalms is a compound of several other duties. It contains prayer to a very great advantage: the stretch of the voice does humour and lead on the earnest reaching of the mind after the desired blessing. It is the very element and breath of praise; and the apostle tells us that "teaching and admonishing one another" is performed in singing "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." For when we sing of *judgment*, it is awakening to sinners; and when we sing of *mercy*, it is comforting to all. Meditation cannot have a better help. The solemn movement of the time gives room for the mind to compass the full sense of the matter, and to impress it deep; and while the tongue is making the *pause*, the heart may make *elevation*. In short, it gives an accent to all duty; it is the music of all other ordinances; it is adapted and suited to all circumstances; as appears from the Psalms composed upon all occasions and subjects, doctrinal, prophetic, hortatory, and historical; of praise and prayer, of grief and joy, in the penitential and complaining, in the triumphal and rejoicing; as if singing of psalms could stand for everything, and, like the manna in the wilderness, gives a taste of all the other food we enjoy in the house of God.—*Benjamin Grosvenor, D.D.* (1675—1758), in "*An Exhortation to the Duty of Singing.*" *Eastcheap Lectures*, 1810.

Verse 8.—The *Psaltery* was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 9.—"I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people." The Spirit of God who indited this scripture, made his penman know that the Gentiles should have the use of his Psalms.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 9.—"The people"—"the nations." The Hebrew church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society, but it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the Psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim, "*I will sing unto thee among the nations.*" In the same spirit, a later Psalmist summons the church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord's mighty acts: "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people." Ps. cv. 1. The full import of this class of texts is often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples*;

everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers ; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms, in particular, the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction, the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious Psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of inspired Psalmody, did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world-embracing hopes.—*William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use," 1870.*

Verses 10, 11.—A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in prosperity only isolated drops of divine grace ; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors, and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 11.—" *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens,*" etc. Greater words of prayer than these never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have as they imply, a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both.—*Franz Delitzsch, 1869.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (first clause).—*Repetition in prayer.* I. Its dangers. May degenerate into "vain repetitions." Carried to excess painfully suggests the idea, God is unwilling. II. Its uses. Eases the soul like tears. Manifests intense emotion. Enables those of less mental activity to join in a general supplication.—*R. A. Griffin.*

Verse 1.—Here are—I. Calamities. 1. War. 2. Pestilence. 3. Privations. 4. Sin, greatest of all. 5. Death. 6. Curse of a broken law. II. Here is a refuge from these calamities. 1. In God. 2. Specially in the mercy of God. III. There is flying to that refuge. 1. By faith ; " *My soul trusteth in thee ;*" " *Under the shadow,*" etc. 2. By prayer ; " *Be,*" etc. IV. Here is continuance both in faith and prayer ; " *until,*" etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 4, 6, 7.—Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. " *My soul trusteth in thee.*" " *My soul is among lions.*" " *My soul is bowed down.*" " *My heart is fixed.*"

Verse 2.—Prayer to the performing God. He performs all his promises, all my salvation, all my preservation, all needed between here and heaven. Here he reveals his omnipotence, his grace, his faithfulness, his immutability ; and we are bound to show our faith, patience, joy, and gratitude.

Verse 2.—Strange reasons. I. The Psalmist, in the depths of distress, cries to God, because he is most high in glory. Surely this thought might well paralyse him with the fear of divine inaccessibility, but the soul quickened with suffering, sees through and beyond the metaphor, rejoices in the truth, " *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.*" II. He cries to God for help, because God is performing all things for him. Why urge him then ? Prayer is the music to which " *the mighty man of war*" goes forth to battle.—*R. A. G.*

Verse 3.—The saint's comfort in adversity. I. All contingencies are provided for : " *He shall (or will) send.*" II. The highest resources are available : " *from heaven.*" III. The worst foes will be overcome in the end : " *him that would swallow me up.*" IV. By the holiest means : " *mercy and truth.*"—*R. A. G.*

Verse 3.—The celestial messengers. What they are. The certainty of their being sent. Their effectual operation. The grateful receiver.

Verse 3 (last clause).—The harmony of the divine attributes in salvation. Mercy

founded on truth, truth vindicating mercy. Mercy without injustice, justice honoured in mercy.

Verse 4.—“*My soul is among lions.*” How came I there? If for God’s sake, then I may remember—1. So was my Lord in the wilderness. 2. The lions are chained. 3. Their howling is all they can do. 4. I shall come out of their den alive, unhurt, honoured. 5. The Lion of Judah is with me. 6. I shall soon be among the angels.

Verse 5.—I. The end which God has in view, both in heaven and earth, in a sinful and in sinless worlds—his own glory. II. Our duty to acquiesce in that end: “*Be thou,*” etc.—not self, not men, not angels—“*Be thou exalted,*” etc. In this we would acquiesce—1. Actively, by seeking that end. 2. Passively, by submission to his will.—*G. R.*

Verse 6 (first clause).—I. Who are they? 1. Those who lead us into sin. 2. Who argue from worldly philosophy. 3. Who proclaim priestly and sacramental superstition. 4. Who decoy us from the church of God. 5. Who teach Antinomian doctrine. II. How shall we escape them? 1. Keep out of their way. 2. Keep to God’s way. 3. Trust daily in the Lord.

Verse 6.—“*My soul is bowed down.*” I. *The prostration.* 1. Caused by enemies, weakness, fear, pain. 2. Deep, agonising, self-revealing. 3. Common to the Head and the members. II. *The consolation.* 1. Bowed down, but not condemned. 2. Hoping in the promise. 3. Trusting in God. 4. Expecting a blessing from the trial.

Verse 7 (first clause).—It is implied that the “*heart*” is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be “*fixed* ;” fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; attending on the Lord without distraction.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—I. What is fixed? the heart, not the mind merely, but the will, the conscience, the affections, which draw the mind after them: “*My heart is fixed*” —found an anchorage, a resting-place, not therefore at the mercy of every gale, etc. II. The objects upon which it is fixed. 1. Upon God. 2. Upon his word. 3. Upon his salvation. 4. Upon heaven. III. The fixedness of the heart upon these objects, denotes—1. Singleness of aim. 2. Uniformity of action. 3. Perseverance to the end.—*G. R.*

Verses 7, 8, 9.—1. He that will be thankful must treasure up in his heart and memory the courtesy that is done him; so had David done, and therefore he mentions *his heart*; and to make it more emphatical, he names it again, “*My heart.*” 2. After he remembers it, he must be affected with it, and resolve upon it; so doth David: “*My heart is ready,*” or else, “*My heart is fixed* ;” confirmed I am in it to be thankful, and I cannot be altered. 3. ’Tis not enough that a man carry about with him a thankful heart; he must *annunciare*, tell it abroad, and make it known publicly what God hath done for him; yea, and do it joyfully too: “*I will,*” saith David, “*sing and give praise.*” 4. He must use all means he can to make it known—“*tongue,*” “*psaltery,*” and “*harp,*” all are little enough. Whence, by an apostrophe, David turns to these. “*Awake, my glory:*” i.e. *Tongue, awake; lute and harp, awake; I myself will awake.* 5. He must not do it in a sleepy manner, but with intention and earnestness of spirit: “*Awake, awake, I will awake.*” 6. He must take the first opportunity to do it, and not hang off and delay it: “*I will awake early.*” 7. He must do it in such a place, and such an assembly as may most redound to God’s honour: “*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*”—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 8.—“*I myself will wake early.*” I will sleep lightly, for I am in an enemy’s country; I will ask God to arouse me; I will set the alarum of watchfulness; I will hear the cock of providential warning; the light of the Sun shall arouse me; the activities of the church, the trumpet of my foes, and the bell of duty shall combine to awaken me.

Verse 9.—Who? “*I.*” What? “*Will praise.*” Whom? “*Thee, O Lord.*” Where? “*Among the people.*” Why?

Verse 9.—Public profession. I. A necessity. II. A privilege. III. A duty.—*R. A. G.*

Verse 10.—The mercy of God reaches to the heavens—I. As a throne. God is exalted in our eyes by his mercy. II. As a ladder. By mercy we ascend from earth to heaven. III. As a rainbow. Present and past mercies argue exemption

for the saints from the wrath of heaven. IV. As a mountain. Its base is on the earth though its summit is lost in clouds. The influence of the cross towers to the heaven of heavens. Who can tell the glory of the summit of this mountain, whose base is refulgent with glory!—R. A. G.

Verse 10.—The amazing greatness of mercy. It is not said merely that it is high as heaven, but great unto the heavens. It is *high* as the heavens, over-topping the greatest sin, and highest thought of man. II. It is *wide* as the far-reaching sky, compassing men of all ages, countries, classes, etc. III. It is *deep*. Everything of God is proportionate; this, therefore, is deep in abiding foundation, and infinite wisdom.

