

PSALM LXIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.—*This was probably written while David was fleeing from Absalom ; certainly at the time he wrote it he was king (verse 11), and hard pressed by those who sought his life. David did not leave off singing because he was in the wilderness, neither did he in slovenly idleness go on repeating Psalms intended for other occasions ; but he carefully made his worship suitable to his circumstances, and presented to his God a wilderness hymn when he was in the wilderness. There was no desert in his heart, though there was a desert around him. We too may expect to be cast into rough places ere we go hence. In such seasons, may the Eternal Comforter abide with us, and cause us to bless the Lord at all times, making even the solitary place to become a temple for Jehovah.*

The distinguishing word of this Psalm is "EARLY." When the bed is softest we are most tempted to rise at lazy hours ; but when comfort is gone, and the couch is hard, if we rise the earlier to seek the Lord, we have much for which to thank the wilderness.

DIVISION.—In the first eight verses the writer expresses his holy desires after God, and his confidence in him, and then in the remaining three verses he prophesies the overthrow of all his enemies. The Psalm is peculiarly suitable for the bed of sickness, or in any constrained absence from public worship.

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, thou *art* my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ;

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live : I will lift up my hands in thy name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness ; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips :

6 When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee : thy right hand upholdeth me.

1. "*O God, thou art my God ;*" or, O God, thou art my Mighty One. The last Psalm left the echo of *power* ringing in the ear, and it is here remembered. Strong alliance bids the fugitive poet confess his allegiance to the only living God ; and firm faith enables him to claim him as his own. He has no doubts about his possession of his God ; and why should other believers have any ? The straightforward, clear language of this opening sentence would be far more becoming in Christians than the timorous and doubtful expressions so usual among professors. How sweet is such language ! Is there any other word comparable to it for delights ? *Meus Deus*. Can angels say more ? "*Early will I seek thee.*" Possession breeds desire. Full assurance is no hindrance to diligence, but is the mainspring of it. How can I seek another man's God ? but it is with ardent desire that I seek after him whom I know to be my own. Observe the eagerness implied in the time mentioned ; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide ; he is up at cockcrow to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised. The morning is the time for dew and freshness, and the Psalmist consecrates it to prayer and devout fellowship. The best of men have been betimes on their knees. The word "*early*" has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness.

He who truly longs for God longs for him now. Holy desires are among the most powerful influences that stir our inner nature; hence the next sentence, "*My soul thirsteth for thee.*" Thirst is an insatiable longing after that which is one of the most essential supports of life; there is no reasoning with it, no forgetting it, no despising it, no overcoming it by stoical indifference. Thirst will be heard; the whole man must yield to its power: even thus is it with that divine desire which the grace of God creates in regenerate men; only God himself can satisfy the craving of a soul really aroused by the Holy Spirit. "*My flesh longeth for thee;*" by the two words "*soul*" and "*flesh*," he denotes the whole of his being. "*The flesh*," in the New Testament sense of it, never longs after the Lord, but rather it lusteth against the spirit; David only refers to that sympathy which is sometimes created in our bodily frame by vehement emotions of the soul. Our corporeal nature usually tugs in the other direction, but the spirit when ardent can compel it to throw in what power it has upon the other side. When the wilderness caused David weariness, discomfort, and thirst, his flesh cried out in unison with the desire of his soul. "*In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*" A weary place and a weary heart make the presence of God the more desirable; if there be nothing below and nothing within to cheer, it is a thousand mercies that we may look up and find all we need. How frequently have believers traversed in their experience this "*dry and thirsty land*," where spiritual joys are things forgotten! and how truly can they testify that the only true necessity of that country is the near presence of their God! The absence of outward comforts can be borne with serenity when we walk with God; and the most lavish multiplication of them avails not when he withdraws. Only after God, therefore, let us pant. Let all desires be gathered into one. Seeking first the kingdom of God—all else shall be added unto us.

2. "*To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" He longed not so much to see the sanctuary as to see his God; he looked through the veil of ceremonies to the invisible One. Often had his heart been gladdened by communion with God in the outward ordinances, and for this great blessing he sighs again; as well he might, for it is the weightiest of all earth's sorrows for a Christian man to lose the conscious presence of his covenant God. He remembers and mentions the two attributes which had most impressed themselves upon his mind when he had been rapt in adoration in the holy place; upon these his mind had dwelt in the preceding Psalm, and the savour of that contemplation is evidently upon his heart when in the wilderness: these he desires to behold again in the place of his banishment. It is a precious thought that the divine power and glory are not confined in their manifestation to any places or localities; they are to be heard above the roaring of the sea, seen amid the glare of the tempest, felt in the forest and the prairie, and enjoyed wherever there is a heart that longs and thirsts to behold them. Our misery is that we thirst so little for these sublime things, and so much for the mocking trifles of time and sense. We are in very truth always in a weary land, for this is not our rest; and it is marvellous that believers do not more continuously thirst after their portion far beyond the river where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; but shall see the face of their God, and his name shall be in their foreheads. David did not thirst for water or any earthly thing, but only for spiritual manifestations. The sight of God was enough for him, but nothing short of that would content him. How great a friend is he, the very sight of whom is consolation. Oh, my soul, imitate the Psalmist, and let all thy desires ascend towards the highest good; longing here to see God, and having no higher joy even for eternity.

3. "*Because thy lovingkindness is better than life.*" A reason for that which went before, as well as for that which follows. Life is dear, but God's love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honour, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile. In him we truly live, and move, and have our being; the withdrawal of the light of his countenance is as the shadow of death to us; hence we cannot but long after the Lord's gracious appearing. Life is to many men a doubtful good; lovingkindness is an unquestioned boon: life is but transient, mercy is everlasting: life is shared in by the lowest animals, but the lovingkindness of the Lord is the peculiar portion of the chosen. "*My lips shall praise thee.*" Openly, so that thy glory shall be made known, I will tell of thy goodness. Even when our heart is rather desiring than enjoying we should still continue to magnify the Most High, for his love is truly precious; even if we do

not personally, for the time being, happen to be rejoicing in it. We ought not to make our praises of God to depend upon our own personal and present reception of benefits; this would be mere selfishness: even publicans and sinners have a good word for those whose hands are enriching them with gifts; it is the true believer only who will bless the Lord when he takes away his gifts or hides his face.

4. "*Thus will I bless thee while I live.*" As I now bless thee so will I ever do; or rather, so as thou shalt reveal thy lovingkindness to me, I will in return continue to extol thee. While we live we will love. If we see no cause to rejoice in our estate, we shall always have reason for rejoicing in the Lord. If none others bless God, yet his people will; his very nature, as being the infinitely good God, is a sufficient argument for our praising him as long as we exist. "*I will lift up my hands in thy name.*" For worship the hands were uplifted, as also in joy, in thanksgiving, in labour, in confidence; in all these senses we would lift up our hands in Jehovah's name alone. No hands need hang down when God draws near in love. The name of Jesus has often made lame men leap as a hart, and it has made sad men clap their hands for joy.

5. "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.*" Though unable to feast on the sacrifice at thine altar, my soul shall even here be filled with spiritual joys, and shall possess a complete, a double contentment. There is in the love of God a richness, a sumptuousness, a fulness of soul-filling joy, comparable to the richest food with which the body can be nourished. The Hebrews were more fond of fat than we are, and their highest idea of festive provision is embodied in the two words, "*marrow and fatness*:" a soul hopeful in God and full of his favour is thus represented as feeding upon the best of the best, the dainties of a royal banquet. "*And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*" More joy, more praise. When the mouth is full of mercy, it should be also full of thanksgiving. When God gives us the marrow of his love, we must present to him the marrow of our hearts. Vocal praise should be rendered to God as well as mental adoration; others see our mercies, let them also hear our thanks.

6. "*When I remember thee upon my bed.*" Lying awake, the good man betook himself to meditation, and then began to sing. He had a feast in the night, and a song in the night. He turned his bedchamber into an oratory, he consecrated his pillow, his praise anticipated the place of which it is written, "*There is no night there.*" Perhaps the wilderness helped to keep him awake; and if so, all the ages are debtors to it for this delightful hymn. If day's cares tempt us to forget God, it is well that night's quiet should lead us to remember him. We see best in the dark if we there see God best. "*And meditate on thee in the night watches.*" Keeping up sacred worship in my heart as the priests and Levites celebrated it in the sanctuary. Perhaps David had formerly united with those "*who by night stand in the house of the Lord,*" and now as he could not be with them in person, he remembers the hours as they pass, and unites with the choristers in spirit, blessing Jehovah as they did. It may be, moreover, that the king heard the voices of the sentries as they relieved guard, and each time he returned with renewed solemnity to his meditations upon his God. Night is congenial, in its silence and darkness, to a soul which would forget the world, and rise into a higher sphere. Absorption in the most hallowed of all themes makes watches, which else would be weary, glide away all too rapidly; it causes the lonely and hard couch to yield the most delightful repose—repose more restful than even sleep itself. We read of beds of ivory, but beds of piety are better far. Some revel in the night, but they are not a tithe so happy as those who meditate in God.

7. "*Because thou hast been my help.*" Meditation had refreshed his memory and recalled to him his past deliverances. It were well if we oftener read our own diaries, especially noting the hand of the Lord in helping us in suffering, want, labour, or dilemma. This is the grand use of memory, to furnish us with proofs of the Lord's faithfulness, and lead us onward to a growing confidence in him. "*Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*" The very shade of God is sweet to a believer. Under the eagle wings of Jehovah we hide from all fear, and we do this naturally and at once, because we have aforetime tried and proved both his love and his power. We are not only safe, but happy in God; we "*rejoice*" as well as repose.

8. "*My soul followeth hard after thee,*" or is glued to thee. We follow close at the Lord's heel, because we are one with him. Who shall divide us from his love? If we cannot walk with him with equal footsteps, we will at least follow after with

all the strength he lends us, earnestly panting to reach him and abide in his fellowship. When professors follow hard after the world, they will fall into the ditch; but none are ever too eager after communion with the Lord. "*Thy right hand upholdeth me.*" Else he would not have followed the Lord with constancy, or even have longed after him. The divine power, which has so often been dwelt upon in this and the preceding Psalms, is here mentioned as the source of man's attachment to God. How strong are we when the Lord works in us by his own right hand, and how utterly helpless if he withhold his aid!

9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

9. As David earnestly sought for God, so there were men of another order who as eagerly sought after his blood; of these he speaks: "*But those that seek my soul, to destroy it.*" At his life they aimed, at his honour, his best welfare; and this they would not merely injure but utterly ruin. The devil is a destroyer, and all his seed are greedy to do the same mischief; and as he has ruined himself by his crafty devices, so also shall they. Destroyers shall be destroyed. Those who hunt souls shall be themselves the victims. "*Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.*" Into the pits which they digged for others they shall fall themselves. The slayers shall be slain, and the grave shall cover them. The hell which they in their curse invoked for others, shall shut its mouth upon them. Every blow aimed against the godly will recoil on the persecutor; he who smites a believer drives a nail in his own coffin.

10. "*They shall fall by the sword.*" So David's enemies did. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword; bloody men shall feel their own life gushing forth from them, when their evil day shall at last come, and they shall be given up to feel in their own persons the horrors of death. "*They shall be a portion for foxes.*" Too mean to be fit food for the lions, the foxes shall sniff around their corpses, and the jackals shall hold carnival over their carcasses. Unburied and unhonoured they shall be meat for the dogs of war. Frequently have malicious men met with a fate so dire as to be evidently the award of retributive justice. Although the great assize is reserved for another world, yet even here, at the common sessions of providence, justice often bears her avenging sword in the eyes of all the people.

11. "*But the king shall rejoice in God.*" Usurpers shall fade, but he shall flourish; and his prosperity shall be publicly acknowledged as the gift of God. The Lord's anointed shall not fail to offer his joyful thanksgiving: his well-established throne shall own the superior lordship of the King of kings; his rejoicing shall be alone in God. When his subjects sing, "*To triumphe,*" he will bid them chant, "*Te Deum.*" "*Every one that sweareth by him shall glory.*" His faithful followers shall have occasion for triumph: they shall never need to blush for the oath of their allegiance. Or, "swearing by him," may signify adherence to God, and worship paid to him. The heathen swore by their gods, and the Israelite called Jehovah to witness to his asseveration; those, therefore, who owned the Lord as their God should have reason to glory when he proved himself the defender of the king's righteous cause, and the destroyer of traitors. "*But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*" And the sooner the better. If shame will not do it, nor fear, nor reason, then let them be stopped with the sexton's shovel-full of earth; for a liar is a human devil, he is the curse of men, and accursed of God, who has comprehensively said, "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." See the difference between the mouth that praises God, and the mouth that forges lies: the first shall never be stopped, but shall sing on for ever; the second shall be made speechless at the bar of God.

O Lord, we seek thee and thy truth; deliver us from all malice and slander, and reveal to us thine own self, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS.

Title.—"When he was in the wilderness of Judah." Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses. . . . It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven. . . . All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are Psalms proper for a wilderness; and we have reason to thank God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.—*Matthew Henry*.

Title.—"The Wilderness of Judah" is the whole wilderness towards the east of the tribe of Judah, bounded on the north by the tribe of Benjamin, stretching southward to the south-west end of the Dead Sea; westward, to the Dead Sea and the Jordan; and eastward, to the mountains of Judah.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Title.—The term "wilderness" (מִדְבָּר, as distinguished from מִדְבָּרָה, a *steppe*) was given to a district which was not regularly cultivated and inhabited, but used for pasturage (from נָדַב, to *drive*), being generally without wood and defective in water, but not entirely destitute of vegetation.—*J. P. Lange*.

Title.—Hagar saw God in the wilderness, and called a well by the name derived from that vision, *Beer-lahai-roi*. Gen. xvi. 13, 14. Moses saw God in the wilderness. Exod. iii. 1—4. Elijah saw God in the wilderness. 1 Kings xix. 4—18. David saw God in the wilderness. The Christian church will see God in the wilderness. Rev. xii. 6—14. Every devout soul which has loved to see God in his house will be refreshed by visions of God in the wilderness of solitude, sorrow, sickness, and death.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Whole Psalm.—This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psalter. Donne says of it: "As the whole Book of Psalms is, *oleum effusum* (as the spouse speaks of the name of Christ), an ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a cerecloth that supple all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds; so are there some certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command over all our affections, and spread themselves over all occasions—catholic, universal Psalms, that apply themselves to all necessities. This is one of these; for of those constitutions which are called apostolical, one is that the church should meet every day to sing this Psalm. And, accordingly, St. Chrysostom testifies 'That it was decreed and ordained by the primitive Fathers, that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm.'"—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is aptly described by Clauss as "A precious confession of a soul thirsting after God and his grace, and finding itself quickened through inward communion with him, and which knows how to commit its outward lot also into his hand." Its lesson is, that the consciousness of communion with God in trouble is the sure pledge of deliverance. This is the peculiar fountain of consolation which is opened up to the sufferer in the Psalm. The Berleb Bible describes it as a Psalm "which proceeds from a spirit really in earnest. It was the favourite Psalm of M. Schade, the famous preacher in Berlin, which he daily prayed with such earnestness and appropriation to himself, that it was impossible to hear it without emotion."—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 1.—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee" (or, I will diligently seek thee, as merchants precious stones that are of greatest value): "*my soul thirsteth for thee.*" He doth not say my soul thirsteth for water, but my soul thirsteth for thee; nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for the blood of my enemies, but my soul thirsteth for thee; nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for deliverance out of this dry and barren wilderness, but my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; nor he doth not say my soul thirsteth for a crown, a kingdom, but my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee. These words are a notable metaphor, taken from women with child, to note his earnest, ardent, and strong affections towards God.—*Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 1.—"O God." This is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 1.—"My God" in Hebrew is the same word with which the Lord cried out upon the cross to the Father about the ninth hour: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For in Hebrew this Psalm begins *Elohim, Eli*. Now, *Elohim* is plural, and *Eli* is singular, to express the mystery of the Trinity, the

mystery of the Unity, the distinct subsistence of the (three) hypostases, and their consubstantiality.—*Psalterium Quin. Fabri stapulensis*, 1513.

Verse 1 (first clause).—In David we have a notable example of a sensitive, tender, self-analyzing soul, living in sustained communion with God, while deeply sensible of the claims of the civil and religious polity of Israel, and, moreover, while externally devoted to a large round of exacting public duties. And in this Psalm public misfortunes do but force him back upon the central strength of the life of his spirit. For the time his crown, his palace, his honours, the hearts of his people, the love of his child, whom he loved, as we know, with such passing tenderness, are forfeited. The Psalmist is alone with God. In his hour of desolation he looks up from the desert to heaven. “*O God,*” he cries, “*thou art my God.*” In the original language he does not repeat the word which is translated “*God.*” In *Elohim*, the true idea of the root is that of awe, while the adjectival form implies permanency. In *Eli*, the second word employed, the etymological idea is that of might, strength. We might paraphrase, “*O thou Ever-awful One, my Strength, or my Strong-God art thou.*” But the second word, *Eli*, is in itself nothing less than a separate revelation of an entire aspect of the Being of God. It is, indeed, used as a proper and distinct name of God. The pronominal suffixes for the second and third persons are, as Gesenius has remarked, never once found with this name *El*; whereas *Eli*, the first person, occurs very frequently in the Psalter alone. We all of us remember it in the words actually uttered by our Lord upon the cross, and which he took from the Syriacised version of Psalm xxii. The word unveils a truth unknown beyond the precincts of revelation. It teaches us that the Almighty and Eternal gives himself in the fulness of his Being to the soul that seeks him. Heathenism, indeed, in its cultus of domestic and local deities, of its penates, of its *θεοὶ ἐπιχωριοί*, bore witness by these superstitions to the deep yearning of the human heart for the individualizing love of a higher power. To know the true God was to know that such a craving was satisfied. “*My God.*” The word represents not a human impression, or desire, or conceit, but an aspect, a truth, a necessity of the divine nature. Man can, indeed, give himself by halves; he can bestow a little of his thought, of his heart, of his endeavour, upon his brother man. In other words, man can be imperfect in his acts as he is imperfect and finite in his nature. But when God, the Perfect Being, loves the creature of his hand, he cannot thus divide his love. He must perforce love with the whole directness, and strength, and intensity of his Being; for he is God, and therefore incapable of partial and imperfect action. He must give himself to the single soul with as absolute a completeness as if there were no other being besides it, and, on his side, man knows that this gift of himself by God is thus entire; and in no narrow spirit of ambitious egotism, but as grasping and representing the literal fact, he cries, “*My God.*” Therefore does this word enter so largely into the composition of Hebrew names. Men loved to dwell upon that wondrous relation of the Creator to their personal life which is so strikingly manifested. Therefore, when God had “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” we find St. Paul writing to the Galatians as if his own single soul had been redeemed by the sacrifice of Calvary: “He loved me, and gave himself for me.”—*Henry Parry Liddon*, in “*Some Words for God: being Sermons preached before the University of Oxford*, 1863—1865.”

Verse 1 (first clause).—There is a great deal more in it than men of the world are aware of; to say, “*O God, thou art my God,*” in this connection and conjunction: there is more in it in regard of excellency, and there is more in it in regard of difficulty likewise. It is not an unfruitful thing to say it, and it is not an easy thing to say it neither. It confers a great deal of benefit, and requires a great deal of grace, which belongs unto it, in the truth and reality of it. The benefit of it, first, is very great; yea, in effect all things else. To say God is ours, is to say the whole world is ours, and a great deal more; it is to give us title to everything which may be requisite or convenient for us. Whatever we can desire or stand in need of, it is all wrapt up in this, “*Thou art my God.*” But then, again, it is a matter of difficulty (as those things which are excellent are). It is a thing which is not so easily said as the world imagines it and thinks it to be. Indeed, it is easy to the mouth, but it is not easy to the heart. It is easy to have a fancy to say it, but it is not to have a faith to say it: this carries some kind of hardship with it, and it is not presently attained unto; but the mind of man withdraws from it. There are two states and conditions in which it is very difficult to say, “*O God, thou art my God:*” the one

is the state of nature and unregeneracy; and the other is the state of desertion, and the hiding of God's face from the soul.—*Thomas Horton* (—1673).

Verse 1 (second clause).—The relations of God to his people are not bare and empty titles, but they carry some activity with them, both from him towards them, and from them also answerably towards him. Those whom God is a God to, he bestows special favours upon them; and those to whom God is a God, they return special services to him. And so we shall find it to be all along in Scripture, as this David in another place: "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee." Ps. cxviii. 28. And so here: "*Thou art my God; early will I seek thee.*" While the servants of God have claimed any interest in him, they have also exhibited duty to him. The text is an expression not only of faith, but likewise of obedience, and so to be looked upon by us.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 1.—"Early;" in the morning, before all things, God is to be sought, otherwise he is sought in vain: as the manna, unless collected at early dawn, dissolves.—*Simon de Muis*.

Verse 1.—"My soul thirsteth for thee." Oh that Christ would come near, and stand still, and give me leave to look upon him! for to look seemeth the poor man's privilege, since he may, for nothing and without hire, behold the sun. I should have a king's life, if I had no other thing to do than for evermore to behold and eye my fair Lord Jesus: nay, suppose I were holden out at heaven's fair entry, I should be happy for evermore, to look through a hole in the door, and see my dearest and fairest Lord's face. O great King! why standest thou aloof? Why remainest thou beyond the mountains? O Well-beloved, why dost thou pain a poor soul with delays? A long time out of thy glorious presence is two deaths and two hells to me. We must meet. I must see him, I dow* not want him. Hunger and longing for Christ hath brought on such a necessity of enjoying Christ, that, cost me what it will, I cannot but assure Christ that I will not, I dow not want him; for I cannot master nor command Christ's love.—*Samuel Rutherford* (1600—1661).

Verse 1.—"My flesh," that is, my bodily sensitive appetite, which thirsts, ardently longs for consolation, which it receives from the abounding of spiritual consolation to the soul. This meaning greatly pleases me. God giveth the upper and the nether springs. Rebekah, after drawing water in her pitcher, for Eliezer, Abraham's servant, added, "*I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking,*" Gen. xxiv. 19. Jacob dug a well near to Sychar, which was afterwards called Samaria, and as the woman of Samaria said, "*drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle,*" John iv. 12. When Moses with the rod smote the rock twice, "*the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also,*" Numb. xx. 11. So God satisfies with this consolation both our higher and lower nature.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 1.—"My flesh longeth for thee." The verb צָרָה is used only in this place, and therefore the signification of it is rather uncertain, but it will receive light from the Arabic dialect. In Golius's Lexicon it signifies, *caligavit oculus, alteratus colore, et mente debilitatus fuit*. His eye grew dim, his colour was changed, and his mind was weakened; and therefore, as used by the Psalmist, implies the utmost intensity of fervency of desire, as though it almost impaired his sight, altered the very hue of his body, and even injured his understanding; effects sometimes of eager and unsatisfied desires.—*Samuel Chandler*.

Verse 1.—"In a dry." Here we must read, צָרָה [Keeretz], instead of צָרָה [Beeretz], for it is, "*like this,*" and not, "*in this*" (which has no force), even like this dry, wearied, and waterless region; so am I for seeing thee in the sanctuary, for beholding thy power and thy glory.—*Benjamin Weiss*, in a "*New Translation of the Book of Psalms, with Critical Notes,*" etc., 1858.

Weiss appears to have the authority of several MSS. for this, but he seldom errs in the direction of too little dogmatism.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 1, 2.—"O God, thou art my God."—He embraceth him at first word, as we use to do friends at first meeting. "*Early will I seek thee,*" says he: "*my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh*" (that is, myself) "*longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.*" Surely David had some extraordinary business now with God to be done for himself, as it follows (verse 2): "*To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary;*" where God had met him, and manifested himself to him. . . . The very sight of a friend rejoiceth a man (Prov. xxxvii. 17):

* Am not able to do without him.

"As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the face of his friend." It alone whets up joy by a sympathy of spirits; and in answer hereunto it is characteristically to God's people called the seeking of God's face, that is, himself, for so his face is taken: "Thou shalt have no other gods before my face;" that is, thou shalt have myself, or none but myself. Personal communion with God is the end of our graces; for as reason and the intercourse of it makes men sociable one with another, so the divine nature makes us sociable with God himself: and the life we live by is but an engine, a glass to bring God down to us.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"*To see thy power,*" etc. I. It is, or should be, the desire of every Christian to see and enjoy more and more of the glory of God. II. That the accomplishment of this design is to be sought by a devout and diligent attendance upon the worship of the sanctuary. How is God's character in the sanctuary manifested to believers? 1. By the ministry of reconciliation—by the exhibition of gospel truth. 2. Believers grow in their knowledge of the divine character in the sanctuary, by observing and feeling the application of those great doctrines to the souls of men, by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. III. The effects that result to the believer in his history and experience, from an increasing knowledge of the power and glory of God. The effects of this knowledge are great and manifold. 1. The believer, by fresh displays of the divine glory, is disenchanted from the fascination of the world. 2. Another effect of an increasing acquaintance with God, and of every view of the divine glory we obtain, is that the mind is disentangled from the embarrassments into which it is sometimes thrown by the aspect of providence. 3. By seeing the divine power and glory in the sanctuary, we shall have our strength renewed to go on our Christian course afresh. 4. A view of the divine glory crucifies our lusts, and puts the corruptions of our heart to death. 5. Fresh views of the divine power and glory nourish our humility. 6. These views of the divine glory in the sanctuary arm us for our conflict with the last enemy. Concluding remarks: 1. That it is characteristic of every good man, that he is devoutly attached to the solemnities of public worship. 2. That his object in going to the sanctuary is definite and distinct.—*John Angell James.*

Verse 2.—"*So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" To converse with ordinances, and not to converse with God; to have to do with ordinances, and not to have to do with God, alas! they are but dry breasts, and a miscarrying womb that will never bring forth the fruits of holiness. Ordinances without God are but like bones that have no marrow in them; they are but like shells without a kernel. Your hearing will be in vain; and your praying will be in vain; there will be no spirit-moving, no voice-answering, no heart-warnings, no soul-refreshing, no God-meetings.—*William Strong* (—1654) in the "*Saints' Communion.*"

Verse 2.—God's glory is in the firmament, in all the creatures, but more especially and fully in the church. Psalm xxix. 9, "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory;" there it is most visible, affecting, and provoking of every one to speak. In the world few take notice of it, but in the temple every one sees it, and speaks of it. The world is God opened, and so glorious; the church is Christ opened, and so very glorious. This made David long to be in the sanctuary when he was in the wilderness; and why so? "*To see thy power and thy glory.*" Could not David see them in the heavens, in the mountains, in the goodly cedars, and other works of God? Yes, but not as in the sanctuary; and therefore he saith, "*To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary;*" there I have seen thee otherwise than ever elsewhere; there he saw the king upon his throne and in his glory.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is better than life;*" or, "*better than lives,*" as the Hebrew hath it [*chaiim*]. Divine favour is better than life; it is better than life with all its revenues, with all its appurtenances, as honours, riches, pleasures, applause, etc.; yea, it is better than many lives put together. Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb, yea, limbs, to preserve their lives. As he cried out, "Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so you spare my life." Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favour upon him above life, yea, above many lives. Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no

man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favour of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he that hath long lain in a dark dungeon, etc.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 3.—"Thy lovingkindness is better than life." The love of life is a very frequent and pernicious snare, which a sense of God's love must deliver us from being entangled by. What so desirable as life, if a man have no place in the heart of God? This is the greatest temporal blessing, and nothing can outdo it, but the favour of the God of our life; and this excels indeed. What comparison is there between the breath in our nostrils, and the favour of an eternal God? any more than there is between an everlasting light and a poor vanishing vapour. Compare Isaiah lx. 19 with James iv. 14. Who would not, therefore, hate his own life, which hangs in doubt continually before him, and of which he can have no assurance, when he knows that the living God is his certain portion? Who would not freely yield up and part with ten thousand such lives, one after another (if he had so many), rather than the wrath of God should be kindled but a little.—*Timothy Cruso* (1657—1697).

Verse 3 (first clause).—God's mercy is better than lives. What lives? Those which for themselves men have chosen. One hath chosen for himself a life of business, another a country life, another a life of usury, another a military life; one this, another that. Divers are the lives, but *better is thy life than our lives.* Better is that which thou givest to men amended, than that which perverse men choose? One life thou givest, which should be preferred to all our lives, whatsoever in the world we might have chosen.—*Augustine.*

Verse 3.—"Life" is an impure good. It is a good which is implicated and involved with abundance of evils. There are many crosses, and troubles, and calamities, which the life of man is subject unto; which, though it have some comfort in it, yet that comfort is much troubled and mixed; yea, but now the favour of God it is good, and nothing but good. As it is said of his blessing, it adds no sorrow with it, nor has it any inconvenience in it, nor has it any evil attendant upon it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 3.—"My lips shall praise thee." Is it possible that any man should love another and not commend him, nor speak of him? If thou hast but a hawk or a hound that thou lovest, thou wilt commend it; and can it stand with love to Christ, yet seldom or never to speak of him nor of his love, never to commend him unto others, that they may fall in love with him also? You shall see the Spouse (Cant. v. 16) when she was asked, *what her beloved was above others?* she sets him out in every part of him, and concludes with this: "*he is altogether lovely:*" "*because thy lovingkindness (saith David) is better than life, my lips shall praise thee, and I will bless thee while I live.*" Can it stand with this life of love, to be always speaking about worldly affairs, or news at the best; both week-day and Sabbath-day, in bend and at board, in good company and in bad, at home and abroad? I tell you, it will be one main reason why you desire to live, that you may make the Lord Jesus known to your children, friends, acquaintance, that so in the ages to come his name might ring, and his memorial might be of sweet odour, from generation to generation. Ps. lxxi. 18. If before thy conversion, especially, thou hast poisoned others by thy vain and corrupt speeches, after thy conversion thou wilt seek to season the hearts of others by a gracious, sweet, and wise communication of savoury and blessed speeches; what the Lord hath taught thee thou wilt talk of it unto others, for the sake of him whom thou lovest.—*Thomas Sheppard* (1605—1649), in "*The Sound Believer.*"

Verses 3—6.—David exalts *lovingkindness* as a queen above all other, even the most precious, blessings bestowed upon him, "*because thy lovingkindness is better than [above] life.*" Around her throne he places seven members of his body and faculties of his mind, as the seven chief angels . . . who stand before the Lord, that they may praise and admire her; these are his lips, his tongue, his hands, his will, his mouth, his memory, and his intellect. For first, he extols the lovingkindness of God with his lips (verse 3): "*My lips shall praise thee.*" Secondly, with his tongue (verse 4): "*Thus will I bless thee while I live.*" Thirdly, with his hands: "*I will lift up my hands in thy name.*" Fourthly, with his will (verse 5): "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.*" Fifthly, with his mouth: "*And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*" Sixthly, with his memory (verse 6): "*When I remember thee upon my bed.*" Seventhly and lastly, with his intellect: "*And meditate on thee in the night watches.*"—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 4.—"Thus will I bless thee." There are two ways especially in which God is blest of his creatures. The one is *objectively*, by way of representation; and the other is *significatively*, by way of publication. According to the first sense, so all the creatures bless him: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Psalm xix. 1. "Sun and moon, and fire and hail, and snow and vapours." Psalm cxlviii. 3, 7, 8. All these they so bless him thus. But according to the second sense, so he is blest only by angels and men, who are therefore to do it with so much the greater intension. "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power," etc. Psalm cxlv. 10, 11.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 4.—"I will lift up my hands." The practice of lifting up the hands in prayer towards heaven, the supposed residence of the object to which prayer is addressed, was anciently used both by believers, as appears from various passages in the Old Testament; and by the heathen, agreeably to numerous instances in the classical writers. Parkhurst, considering the "hand" to be the chief organ or instrument of man's power and operations, and properly supposing the word to be thence used very extensively by the Hebrews for power, agency, dominion, assistance, and the like, regards the lifting up of men's hands in prayer, as an emblematical acknowledging of the *power*, and imploring of the *assistance*, of their respective gods. Is it not, however, the natural and unstudied gesture of earnest supplication?—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 5.—"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." My soul shall be satisfied as if I had received all that is intimated by the rich pieces of the peace-offering.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, on Levit. iii. 9, 10.

Verse 5.—"My soul shall be satisfied with fatness and fatness;" so the Hebrew hath it; that is, my soul shall be topful of comfort, it shall be filled up to the brim with pleasure and delight, in the remembrance and enjoyment of God upon my bed, or upon my beds, in the plural, as the Hebrew hath it. David had many a hard bed and many a hard lodging, whilst he was in his wilderness condition. It oftentimes so fell out that he had nothing but the bare ground for his bed, and the stones for his pillows, and the hedges for his curtains, and the heavens for his canopy; yet, in this condition, God was sweeter than marrow and fatness to him; though his bed was never so hard, yet in God he had full satisfaction and content. Jer. xxxi. 14; Philip. iv. 9.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 5.—"There is that in a gracious God and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul. Psalm xxxvi. 8; lxxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and in communion with him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—*Sanctified Knowledge*, saith, There is an infinite fulness in Christ, the fulness of a fountain. *Faith* saith, This is all for me, for he is my husband; then *Prayer* saith, If all this be thine, I will go and fetch it for thee; and *Thankfulness* says, I will return praise to God for it (and that's better than the receiving of mercies): "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."—*Matthew Lawrence*, in "The Use and Practice of Faith," 1657.

Verse 5.—In the words which I have chosen as the subject of discourse, the Psalmist expresses his humble expectation of having his soul feasted in the sanctuary. I intend, *first*, to show how the Lord satisfies the souls of men as with marrow and fatness; and, *secondly*, to point out the reason which believers have to conclude that they shall be thus satisfied in the ordinances of divine worship. I. I will endeavour, then, in the first place, to show how the Lord satisfies the souls of men as with marrow and fatness. And, in general, it may be observed, that he imparts such satisfaction by condescending to hold communion with them. This is the feast which our Lord promises to every sinner who opens his heart to receive him: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20. This was also the banquet to which the spouse of Christ was admitted, when she said, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." S. Song ii. 4. More particularly, 1. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by feasting them with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.* The Son of God became incarnate, shed his blood, and fulfilled all righteousness,

that he might be food for our souls. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John i. 14. And in his incarnate person he is living bread to us, bread that gives spiritual and eternal life to our souls, and effectually prevents them from perishing. . . . 2. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by showing them his glory in the face of Christ*. By this means the Psalmist David desired and expected to have his soul feasted, as we learn from the second verse of this Psalm: "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." . . . A saving sight of the glory of God in our Immanuel must be inexpressibly comfortable; it is a feast to the soul, and is productive of joy unspeakable and full of glory. . . . 3. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *by shedding abroad his love in their hearts*. This was another way in which David expected to have his soul feasted. He had felt the sweetness of divine love, he had tasted that the Lord was gracious; he knew by happy experience that his lovingkindness was sweeter than all the comforts of life; and he hoped to be blessed with further experience of his love, with such experience as would warm his heart, and afford matter of a new song of praise to God: and thus be expected to be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. He says, therefore, in the third verse of this Psalm, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." . . . 4. The Lord satisfies the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, *when he feasts them with new-covenant promises*. He hath given us exceeding great and precious promises; promises which are filled with all the fulness of God, and which are all in Christ, yea, and amen, to the glory of God. These promises are published to us all in the gospel, that we may embrace them by faith. But, alas! so great is the folly of men, that they put from them these words of grace, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Such folly is natural even to the people of God as well as others. . . . But when the rock of Israel, in a day of power, speaks these promises to them, they no longer reject, but cordially receive them in Christ, and gladly feast upon them. Then his words are found, and they eat them; and his word is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. . . . 5. The Lord also satisfies the souls of his people, *by filling them with the Spirit*. We are famishing while we are in a state of nature, "having not the Spirit;" for while without the Spirit, we are also without Christ. But when the Lord puts his Spirit within us, then our starving souls begin to be feasted; for this blessed Spirit shows us the things of Christ, and applies him to us; by which means we are enabled to eat his flesh, and drink his blood. And after the Holy Ghost is thus given, he is never taken away. . . . It is the promise of our Redeemer, that, if a man believe on him, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water:" and "this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." John vii. 38, 39. 6. The Lord satisfies his people as with marrow and fatness, *when he revives former experiences of his kindness*. Often he gives them, so to speak, a new feast upon an old experience. . . . II. I now proceed to point out some of the reasons which believers have to conclude that their souls shall be satisfied in the ordinances of divine worship. And, 1. They may reasonably found such a conclusion upon *the divine goodness*. 2. Believers may ground an expectation of being satisfied as with marrow and fatness, on the incarnation, the humiliation, and the death of Christ. 3. The fulness laid up in Christ is also a good foundation for such a hope. 4. Believers may also conclude from the divine promise that their souls shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. 5. From their being blessed with the spiritual appetite. 6. Their former experience of the Lord's satisfying them, may also encourage believers to hope that he will again satisfy them, as with marrow and fatness.—*Outline of a Sermon, by John Fraser (1745—1818).*

Verse 5:—

Ever full, but hungry ever,
What they have, they still desire;
Never suffer surfeit's loathing,
Nor yet famine's torments dire:
Hungering still, they eat, and eating,
Still the sacred food require.

Peter Damiano (988—1072).

Verses 5, 6.—David had his sweetmeats and heavenly junkets in the night, when the eyes of others were closed, and saw not the charger which was sent from above for his spiritual refreshment. His solitary meditations brought him more solace and comfort than the whole creation could afford him: "*When I remember*

thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Communion with God in secret is a heaven upon earth. What food can compare with the hidden manna? Some persons have excellent banquets in their closets. That bread which the saints eat in secret, how pleasant is it! Ah! what stranger can imagine the joy, the melody, which even the secret tears of the saints cause! Believers find rich mines of silver and gold in solitary places; they fetch up precious jewels out of secret holes, out of the bottom of the ocean, where are no inhabitants. Naturalists observe that those fish are sweetest which lie hid. Saints have often sweet joy and refreshment in secret; they have meat to eat, which the world knoweth not of. The fig-tree, olive, and vine would not leave their sweetness, fatness, and cheerfulness, to be kings over other trees. Judges ix. 11—13. They that know what it is to enjoy God in secret, would not leave it, or lose it, to be kings or commanders over the whole world.—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 6.—“*When I remember thee upon my bed (and), meditate on thee in the night watches.*” Thus the English version connects this verse with verse 5. But the division of the strophes renders the following translation preferable, which, moreover, obviates the need of supplying “and;” “Whenever I remember thee upon my bed, I meditate on thee in the night watches.” The remembrance of thee on my bed so engrosses me, that I cannot draw my mind off the thought, so as to fall into the oblivion of sleep; I often meditate on thee through the whole night watches. So Ps. cxix. 55, 148; Ps. i. 2. The Hebrew is *beds*; probably alluding to the fact that in his unsettled life in exile, he seldom slept for many nights in the same bed, but through fear of adversaries slept in different places. There were three night watches: *the first* (Lam. ii. 19); *the middle* (Judg. vii. 19); *the third, or morning watch* (Exod. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. ii. 11). In the New Testament the Roman usage of four prevails.—*A. R. Faussel.*

Verse 6.—“*Remember—and meditate.*” The meditation of anything hath more sweetness in it than bare remembrance. The memory is the chest to lay up a truth, but meditation is the palate to feed upon it. The memory is like the ark in which the manna was laid up; meditation is like Israel’s eating of the manna. When David began to meditate upon God, it was *sweet* to him as marrow. There is as much difference between a truth remembered and a truth meditated, as between a cordial in the glass and a cordial drunk down.—*John Wells* (1668), in *Sabbath Holiness.*”

Verse 6.—“*Upon my bed.*” The *bed* may be looked upon as a place for the remembrance of God in it, according to a threefold notion. I. *As a place of choice.* In the bed, of choice, rather than anywhere else, where I am left to my liberty. David when he had a mind to remember God, he would make choice of his bed for it, as most suitable and agreeable to it. In case of excessive weariness, or weakness contracted to the body from some occasion (this is often put accidentally in Scripture,) “To commune with our hearts upon our bed,” etc., the occasion of it here; it may fall out that the bed may be the fittest place for such a duty as this. Ps. iv. 4. II. *As it is a place of necessity.* In my bed at least, when I cannot anywhere else, as having restraints upon me. David, when (as now it was with him) he was detained from the public ordinances, whether by sickness, or any other impediment which he could not withstand, yet he would not now wholly forget God; he would remember him even in his bed. This is another notion in which we may take it. III. *As a place of indifferency;* that is, there as well as anywhere besides. I will not only remember thee when I am up, when I shall make it my business to remember thee, but even in my bed too. I will take an occasion and opportunity to remember thee there. By commending myself to thee, when I lie down to rest, and acknowledging and owning of thee when I first awake.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 6.—There were “*night watches*” kept in the tabernacle for praising God (Ps. cxxxiv. i.), which it is probable David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites in; but now he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7.—“*Because thou hast been.*” The surest way, and the nearest way, to lay hold upon God is the consideration of that which he hath done already, which was David’s way here; because, says he, this was God’s way before, therefore will I look for God in this way still. The language in which God spake to man,

the Hebrew, hath no present tense. They form not their verbs, as our western languages do, in the present tense, but they begin at that which is past. God carries us in his language, in his speaking, upon that which is past, upon that which he hath done already. I cannot have better security for present nor future than God's former mercies exhibited to me.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 7.—"Thou hast been my help." From this one word—that God hath been my help—I make account that we have both these notions; first, that God hath not left me to myself, he hath come to my succour, he hath helped me; and then, that God hath not left out myself, he hath been my help, but he hath left something for me to do with him and by his help. My security for the future in this consideration of that which is past lies not only in this, that God hath delivered me, but in this also, that he hath delivered me by way of a help, and help always presumes an endeavour and co-operation in him that is helped. God did not elect me as a helper, nor create me, nor redeem me, nor convert me, by way of helping me; for he alone did all, and he had no use at all for me. God infuses his first grace, the first way, merely as a giver; entirely, all himself; but his subsequent grace as a helper; therefore we call them auxiliant graces, helping graces, and we always receive them when we endeavour to make use of his former grace.—*John Donne*.

Verse 7.—"My help." I. In duty. He helps his people here. There is nothing which God requires of his people, as to be done by them, but himself helps them in the doing of it. He is not like the Egyptian task-masters, which require brick and give no straw wherewithal to make it. II. In conflict. He assists here also. As when the Israelite and the Egyptian strove together, Moses came in and helped the Israelite (Exod. ii. 12); even so does God in this case with us, when we are wrestling and struggling with Satan, who is our spiritual enemy, the Lord is here nigh to help us, which may encourage us still in our resistance and opposition: we have a mighty second to stand for us, and to take up our quarrel. III. In affliction. God helps his people; namely, to bear patiently those crosses which he lays upon them. He takes part with them in their sufferings, and in all their afflictions is afflicted himself, as sometimes he expresses it. He lays no more upon them than he does help them, and enable them, to endure. 1. He helps them *from*, by way of prevention. 2. He helps them *in*, by way of support. 3. He helps them *out*, by way of rescue, and redemption, and deliverance.—*Thomas Horton*.

Verse 7.—"My help. Thou hast been not only my helper, but my *"help,"* for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us but by him.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7.—"MY help." There is more encouragement in the least blessing bestowed upon ourselves than in the greatest blessing bestowed upon a stranger; and, therefore, on every account we may safely say, that a whole library of biographical books, and those relating exclusively to righteous individuals, could not so minister to the assurance of a believer as the documents which his own memory can furnish. These, then, should often engage his study, whether he be the rich or the poor. He should do just as David did. Doubtless David was well acquainted with the histories of Noah, and of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, of Moses; and the records of these eminent servants of God were records of surprising deliverances, of divine promises made good, and human wants supplied. Nevertheless, when himself in the wilderness, David did not recur to these records for encouragement. His exclamation is: "*Because thou hast been MY help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*"—*Henry Melvill*.

Verse 7.—"Will I rejoice." As a bird, sheltered in the rich foliage from the heat of the sun, sings its merry notes; so he celebrates his songs of praise from the shadow of the wings of God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 8.—"My soul followeth hard after thee." This is the language of a good man in his worst frames; for when he has lost his nearness to God, he will be uneasy till he has again obtained it, and will follow after it with all his might. It is also his language in his best frames; for when he knows and enjoys most of God, he wants to know and enjoy more. But it may especially be considered as the language of an afflicted and seeking soul, not sinking under its burden, but earnestly breathing after deliverance, and supported by the prospect of obtaining it. Hence it follows, "*Thy right hand upholdeth me.*" . . . I shall consider what is implied in the soul's following hard after God, and then enquire the reason of it. I. Following

hard after God supposes, 1. A previous acquaintance with him. An unknown good, be it ever so desirable in itself, cannot be the object of desire. Hence, when God shines into the heart, it is to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of all gracious exercises, and especially as the source of all fervent desires after him. 2. Following hard after God is expressive of ardent and intense desires. It does not consist in cold and languid wishes, but insatiable longings after communion with God and conformity to his will. 3. It implies laborious exertion. My soul followeth, it followeth *hard after thee*. Not earth nor heaven merely is the object of pursuit, but God himself. And the desires of a truly renewed soul are not sluggish and ineffectual; they lead him to the use of all appointed means, and to the exertion of his utmost endeavours till the object be attained. 4. Perseverance in seeking. *To follow* implies this, and to follow *hard* implies it more strongly. It is as if the Psalmist had said, "Does God retire? I will pursue. Does he withhold the blessing? I will wrestle with him till I obtain it. He long waited to be gracious, and I will now wait till he is so." II. We are to enquire the reason why David thus followed hard after God. 1. Guilt and distress followed hard after him. 2. His enemies also followed hard after him. Satan did so, and once and again caused him to stumble and fall. 3. He had followed hard after other things to no purpose. 4. We may add the powerful attractives of divine grace.—*Condensed from Benjamin Beddome's Sermon, "The Christian's Pursuit," in "Short Discourses," 1809.*

Verse 8.—"My soul followeth hard after thee." נִדְבָקָה אַחֲרָיָהּ. The primary sense of נִדְבָקָה is *agglutinavit*, to glue together; from thence it signifies figuratively to associate, to adhere to, to be united with; and particularly to be firmly united with strong affection. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, באִשְׁתּוֹ, and cleave to his wife;" properly, be closely united and compacted with his wife, with the most permanent affection. Gen. ii. 24. The Psalmist, therefore, means that his soul adhered to God with the warmest affection, and longed to offer up his sacrifices of praise in his sanctuary.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 8.—"My soul followeth hard after thee." נִדְבָקָה, *adhæsit, adherescit anima mea post te*: My soul cleaves after thee, as do things which hang by another; the root is of so great frequency in Scripture, as of enquiry amongst critics; it importeth here the posture of David's spirit, and speaketh it close to God; and so depending upon him, as nothing could loosen it from him; Satan's subtlety, Saul's cruelty, his own personal loss and indemnity, are not all of them of any force or dexterity, to cut asunder or untie the Gordian knot of this unity. The cleaving of David's spirit was a glueing of the Lord's spirit: a marriage of the Lord's making is altogether incapable of the devil's breaking.

It is no wonder David's words report him so much devoted to God, seeing with the same breath they speak him supported by God: "Thy right hand upholdeth me," saith he.—*Alexander Pringle, in "A Stay in Trouble; or, the Saint's Rest in the Evil Day," 1657.*

Verse 8.—"My soul followeth hard after thee." The original is נִדְבָקָה אַחֲרָיָהּ. "My soul cleaves after thee." As if he had said, God, lead on, my God! Behold, I follow as near, as close, as I can; *e vestigio*; I would not leave any distance, but pursue thy footsteps, step by step, leaning upon thine everlasting arms, that are underneath me, and following thy manuduction.—*John Gibbon, in "The Morning Exercises," 1661.*

Verse 8.—The soul's following, and following *hard* after God—what means this? Surely it intends much more than a languid, inert inclination; or "the desire of the slothful which killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour." It evinces an intenseness of concern that quickens and rouses the man into life and earnestness; that draws his very soul along with it; that reconciles him to every needful exertion and sacrifice, however trying; and urges him to persevere, whatever difficulties or discouragements he meets with in his course. And sometimes the distance is long, and the progress up hill, and the road rough, and the weather unfriendly, and enemies would thrust us back; and sometimes we lose sight of him, and ask those we meet: "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and when we spy him again, he seems to advance as we advance, and when we gain upon him and get nearer, he seems to look back and frown, and tell us to retire. The exercises and feelings of Christians in the divine life will enable them to explain these allusions. Who among them all has not, like the Jews, been sometimes "discouraged because of the way?" Who has not resembled Barak's adherents—"Faint, yet

pursuing?" Who has not frequently said, "*My soul followeth hard after thee*"?—William Jay.

Verses 9, 10.—If the Psalmist's divine longing was unquenched, so also was his faith; and in the latter part of the Psalm he foretells with full assurance the final overthrow of his enemies. Nor did his denunciations fail to meet with a certain accuracy of fulfilment even in the battle by which his own deliverance was effected. The armies encountered in the wood of Ephraim, across the Jordan; there was "a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men;" "and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured." Thus David's words concerning the "*lower parts of the earth*," and the "*sword*," and the "*foxes*," had not been idly spoken: the pitfalls of the forest, and the swords of the royal pursuers, and the wild beasts that had there made their lairs, all effectually did their work; and the fate of the rebel army was shared by their leader, who, caught in the thick boughs of the oak, pierced through the heart by Joab, and cut down by his attendants, received no further funeral honours than to be cast "into a great pit in the wood," and have a "very great heap of stones" laid upon him to cover him.—Joseph Francis Thrupp, in "*An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms*," 1860.

Verse 10.—"*They shall fall*." The word is ordinarily applied to *water*. 2 Sam. xiv. 14; Lam. iii. 49. But here, by the immediate mention of the "*sword*," it is restrained to the *effusion of blood*, and being in the third person plural, in the active sense, it is after the Hebrew idiom to be interpreted in the passive sense, *they shall pour out by the hand of the sword*, i.e., *they shall be poured out by the sword*, the *hand of the sword* being no more than the edge of the sword.—Henry Hammond.

Verse 10.—"*They shall be a portion for foxes*." Beasts were given to men for their food, but here men are given to beasts for a prey. A lamentable spectacle to see the vilest of all creatures ravenously feast themselves with the flesh of the noblest, and irrespectively hale and tear in pieces the casket which whilome enclosed the richest jewel in the world. Is it not against the law of nature that men should become beasts' meat; yea, the meat of such beasts as are carrion, and not man's meat? Questionless it is, yet nature giveth her consent to this kind of punishment of unnatural crimes. For it is consonant to reason, that the law of nature should be broken in their punishment who brake it in their sin; that they who devoured men like beasts should be devoured of beasts like men, that they who with their hands offered unnatural violence to their sovereign should suffer the like by the claws and teeth of wild beasts, their slaves; that they who bear a fox in their breast in their life, should be entombed in the belly of a fox at their death.

St. Austin, expounding this whole prophecy of Christ, yieldeth a special reason of this judgment of God by which the Jews were condemned to foxes. The Jews, saith he, therefore killed Christ that they might not lose their country; but, indeed, they therefore lost their country because they killed Christ; because they refused the Lamb and chose Herod the fox before him, therefore by the just retribution of the Almighty, they were allotted to the foxes for their portion. Notwithstanding this allusion of St. Austin to foxes in special, Jansenius and other expositors extend this grant in my text to all wild beasts and fowls, which are, as it were, impatient with the fox, and have full power and liberty given them to seize upon the corpses of traitors to God and their country; but foxes bear the name because they abound in those parts where was such store of them, that Samson in a short time, with a wet finger, caught three hundred.—Daniel Featley, D.D., in "*Clavis Mystica*," 1636.

Verse 10.—"*They shall be a portion for foxes*." If the body of a human being were to be left on the ground, the *jackals* would certainly leave but little traces of it; and in the olden times of warfare, they must have held high revelry in the battle-fields after the armies had retired. It is to this propensity of the *jackal* that David refers—himself a man of war, who had fought on many a battle-field, and must have seen the carcasses of the slain mangled by these nocturnal prowlers.—J. G. Wood.

Verse 10.—What a doom is that which David pronounces upon those who seek the soul of the righteous to destroy it: "*They shall be a portion for foxes*;" by which *jackals* are meant, as I suppose. These sinister, guilty, woebegone brutes,

when pressed with hunger, gather in gangs among the graves, and yell in rage, and fight like fiends over their midnight orgies; but on the battle-field is their great carnival. Oh! let me never even dream that any one dear to me has *fallen by the sword*, and lies there to be torn, and gnawed at, and dragged about by these hideous howlers.—W. M. Thomson, D.D., in *"The Land and the Book,"* 1861.

Verse 11.—*"Every one that sweareth by him,"* i.e., to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success. Or, *"that swears by him,"* i.e., by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol. Deut. vi. 15. And then it means all good people that make a sincere and open profession of God's name: they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement: "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me." They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him."—*Matthew Henry.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1 (first clause).—While the Atheist says, "No God," and the heathen worship "gods many," the true believer says, "O God, thou art my God." He is so, I. By choice. II. By covenant. III. By confession.

Verse 1 (second clause).—Seeking God "*early*." 1. Early in respect of *life*. II. Early in respect of *diligence*. III. Early in respect of *zeal*. IV. Early in respect of *times or continuance*.—*Alexander Shanks.*

Verse 1 (second clause).—*Earnest seeking.* That which is longed for will be eagerly sought. 1. The soul is *resolute*. "*I will seek*." 2. The soul is *reasonable*. "*I will seek*." 3. The soul is *ready*. "*Early will I*." 4. The soul is *persevering*. Let this be the resolution and action of both saved and unsaved.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 3.—I. *Love's resolution*. "My lips shall praise thee." 1. *To praise*. This is congenial to the renewed nature. It delights not in grumbling, reproaching, or scolding. Praise expresses appreciation, gratitude, happiness, affection. 2. *To praise God*. 3. *To praise God practically*. "*My lips*." By speaking well to him; by speaking well of him; of his wisdom, justice, love, grace, etc. 4. *To praise God continually*. "As long as I live," etc. II. *Love's reason*. "Because thy lovingkindness." Love must praise God because—1. It owes its existence to him. "We love him because he first loved us." 2. Because it is fostered by him. "The love of God is shed abroad," etc. 3. Because the expressions of his love demand praise. "Kindness" to needy, helpless, lost. "Lovingkindness," not wounding our natures. "Better than life;" either the principle, pleasures, or pursuits of life.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy lovingkindness is better than life*." 1. *Love enjoyed with life*. II. *Love compared with life*. III. *Love preferred to life*.—*G. J. K.*

Verses 5, 6.—I. *The empty vessel filled*. How? By meditation. With what? God's goodness as marrow and fatness. To what extent? Satisfaction II. *The full vessel running over*. "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." The soul overflows with praise—joyful praise.—*G. J. K.*

Verses 5, 6.—Describe the nature of, and show the intimate connection between, (1) the believer's employments and (2) his enjoyments.—*J. S. Bruce.*

Verse 6.—I. Important duties too much neglected: "Remembering God," "Meditating on him." II. Favourable seasons within the reach of all: "Upon my bed;" "In the night watches."—*J. S. B.*

Verse 7.—A well-founded resolve. I. Upon what based. II. How expressed.—*J. S. B.*

Verse 8.—I. *The soul's pursuit after God*. It follows, 1. In desire. 2. In action. 3. Earnestly. 4. Quickly. 5. Closely. II. *The soul's support*. "*Thy right hand upholdeth me*," the arm of strength. In doing and bearing.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 8.—"A mighty hunter before the Lord." I. The object of pursuit:

'Thee.'" II. The manner of pursuit: "Hard after." III. The dangers encountered.—*J. S. B.*

Verse 8 (second clause).—God's right hand upholds his people three ways. I. As to *sin*; lest they should fall by it. II. As to *suffering*; lest they should sink under it. III. As to *duty*; lest they should decline from it.—*W. Jay.*

Verses 9, 10.—I. The enemies of the Christian. Evil spirits, evil men, evil habits, etc., etc. II. Their intent. To destroy the soul. III. Their fall. Certain, shameful, destructive. IV. Their future. Hell is reserved for them.—*G. J. K.*

Verse 11.—Three topics. I. Royal rejoicing. II. Lawful swearing. III. Evil speaking.
