

PSALM LXVI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician.—*He had need be a man of great skill, worthily to sing such a Psalm as this : the best music in the world would be honoured by marriage with such expressions. A Song or Psalm, or a Song and Psalm. It may be either said or sung ; it is a marvellous poem if it be but read ; but set to suitable music, it must have been one of the noblest strains ever heard by the Jewish people. We do not know who is its author, but we see no reason to doubt that David wrote it. It is in the Davidic style, and has nothing in it unsuited to his times. It is true the "house" of God is mentioned, but the tabernacle was entitled to that designation as well as the temple.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*Praise is the topic, and the subjects for song are the Lord's great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverances, and all his dealings with his people, brought to a close by a personal testimony to special kindness received by the prophet-bard himself. Verses 1, 2, 3, 4 are a kind of introductory hymn, calling upon all nations to praise God, and declating to them the words of a suitable song. Verses 5, 6, 7 invite the beholder to "Come and see" the works of the Lord, pointing attention to the Red Sea, and perhaps the passage of Jordan. This suggests the similar position of the afflicted people which is described, and its joyful issue predicted, from verse 8 to verse 12. The singer then becomes personal, and confesses his own obligations to the Lord (verses 13, 14, 15) ; and, bursting forth with a vehement "Come and hear," declares with thanksgiving the special favour of the Lord to himself, verses 16—20.*

EXPOSITION.

MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands :

2 Sing forth the honour of his name : make his praise glorious.

3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works ! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee ; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

1. "*Make a joyful noise unto God.*" "In Zion," where the more instructed saints were accustomed to profound meditation, the song was silent unto God, and was accepted of him : but in the great popular assemblies a joyful noise was more appropriate and natural, and it would be equally acceptable. If praise is to be wide-spread, it must be vocal ; exulting sounds stir the soul and cause a sacred contagion of thanksgiving. Composers of tunes for the congregation should see to it that their airs are cheerful ; we need not so much noise, as *joyful* noise. God is to be praised with the voice, and the heart should go therewith in holy exultation. All praise from all nations should be rendered unto the Lord. Happy the day when no shouts shall be presented to Juggernaut or Buddha, but all the earth shall adore the Creator thereof. "*All ye lands.*" Ye heathen nations, ye who have not known Jehovah hitherto, with one consent let the whole earth rejoice before God. The languages of the lands are many, but their praises should be one, addressed to one only God.

2. "*Sing forth the honour of his name.*" The noise is to be modulated with tune and time, and fashioned into singing, for we adore the God of order and harmony. The honour of God should be our subject, and to honour him our object when we sing. To give glory to God is but to restore to him his own. It is our glory to be able to give God glory ; and all our true glory should be ascribed unto God, for it is his glory. "All worship be to God only," should be the motto of all true believers. The name, nature, and person of God are worthy of the highest honour. "*Make his praise glorious.*" Let not his praise be mean and grovelling : let it arise with grandeur and solemnity before him. The pomp of the ancient festivals is not to be imitated by us, under this dispensation of the Spirit, but we are to

throw so much of heart and holy reverence into all our worship that it shall be the best we can render. Heart worship and spiritual joy render praise more glorious than vestments, incense, and music could do.

3. "*Say unto God.*" Turn all your praises to him. Devotion, unless it be resolutely directed to the Lord, is no better than whistling to the wind. "*How terrible art thou in thy works.*" The mind is usually first arrested by those attributes which cause fear and trembling; and, even when the heart has come to love God, and rest in him, there is an increase of worship when the soul is awed by an extraordinary display of the more dreadful of the divine characteristics. Looking upon the convulsions which have shaken continents, the hurricanes which have devastated nations, the plagues which have desolated cities, and other great and amazing displays of divine working, men may well say: "How terrible art thou in thy works." Till we see God in Christ, the terrible predominates in all our apprehensions of him. "*Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee;*" but, as the Hebrew clearly intimates, it will be a forced and false submission. Power brings a man to his knee, but love alone wins his heart. Pharaoh said he would let Israel go, but he lied unto God; he submitted in word but not in deed. Tens of thousands, both in earth and hell, are rendering this constrained homage to the Almighty; they only submit because they cannot do otherwise; it is not their loyalty, but his power, which keeps them subjects of his boundless dominion.

4. "*All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee.*" All men must even now prostrate themselves before thee, but a time will come when they shall do this cheerfully: to the worship of fear shall be added the singing of love. What a change shall have taken place when singing shall displace sighing, and music shall thrust out misery! "*They shall sing to thy name.*" The nature and works of God will be the theme of earth's universal song, and he himself shall be the object of the joyful adoration of our emancipated race. Acceptable worship not only praises God as the mysterious Lord, but it is rendered fragrant by some measure of knowledge of his name or character. God would not be worshipped as an unknown God, nor have it said of his people, "Ye worship ye know not what." May the knowledge of the Lord soon cover the earth, that so the universality of intelligent worship may be possible: such a consummation was evidently expected by the writer of this Psalm; and, indeed, throughout all Old Testament writings, there are intimations of the future general spread of the worship of God. It was an instance of wilful ignorance and bigotry when the Jews raged against the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Perverted Judaism may be exclusive, but the religion of Moses, and David, and Isaiah was not so.

"*Selah.*" A little pause for holy expectation is well inserted after so great a prophecy, and the uplifting of the heart is also a seasonable direction. No meditation can be more joyous than that excited by the prospect of a world reconciled to its Creator.

5 Come and see the works of God: *he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*

6 He turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah.*

5. "*Come and see the works of God.*" Such glorious events, as the cleaving of the Red Sea and the overthrow of Pharaoh, are standing wonders, and throughout all time a voice sounds forth concerning them—"Come and see." Even till the close of all things, the marvellous works of God at the Red Sea will be the subject of meditation and praise; for, standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire, the triumphal armies of heaven sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. It has always been the favourite subject of the inspired bards, and their choice was most natural. "*He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*" For the defence of his church and the overthrow of her foes he deals terrific blows, and strikes the mighty with fear. O thou enemy, wherefore dost thou vaunt thyself? Speak no more so exceeding proudly, but remember the plagues which bowed the will of Pharaoh, the drowning of Egypt's chariots in the Red Sea, the

overthrow of Og and Sihon, the scattering of the Canaanites before the tribes. This same God still liveth, and is to be worshipped with trembling reverence.

6. "*He turned the sea into dry land.*" It was no slight miracle to divide a pathway through such a sea, and to make it fit for the traffic of a whole nation. He who did this can do anything, and must be God, the worthy object of adoration. The Christian's inference is that no obstacle in his journey heavenward need hinder him, for the sea could not hinder Israel, and even death itself shall be as life; the sea shall be dry land when God's presence is felt. "*They went through the flood on foot.*" Through the river the tribes passed dry-shod, Jordan was afraid because of them.

"What ail'd thee, O thou mighty sea?
Why roll'd thy waves in dread?
What bade thy tide, O Jordan, flee
And bare its deepest bed?"

O earth, before the Lord, the God
Of Jacob, tremble still;
Who makes the waste a water'd sod,
The flint a gushing rill."

"*There did we rejoice in him.*" We participate this day in that ancient joy. The scene is so vividly before us that it seems as if we were there personally, singing unto the Lord because he hath triumphed gloriously. Faith casts herself bodily into the past joys of the saints, and realises them for herself in much the same fashion in which she projects herself into the bliss of the future, and becomes the substance of things hoped for. It is to be remarked that Israel's joy was in her God, and there let ours be. It is not so much what he has done, as what he is, that should excite in us a sacred rejoicing. "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

7. "*He ruleth by his power for ever.*" He has not deceased, nor abdicated, nor suffered defeat. The prowess displayed at the Red Sea is undiminished: the divine dominion endures throughout eternity. "*His eyes behold the nations.*" Even as he looked out of the cloud upon the Egyptians and discomfited them, so does he spy out his enemies, and mark their conspiracies. His hand rules and his eye observes, his hand has not waxed weak, nor his eye dim. As so many grasshoppers he sees the people and tribes, at one glance he takes in all their ways. He oversees all and overlooks none. "*Let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*" The proudest have no cause to be proud. Could they see themselves as God sees them they would shrivel into nothing. Where rebellion reaches to a great head, and hopes most confidently for success, it is a sufficient reason for abating our fears, that the Omnipotent ruler is also an Omniscient observer. O proud rebels, remember that the Lord aims his arrows at the high-soaring eagles, and brings them down from their nests among the stars. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." After a survey of the Red Sea and Jordan, rebels, if they were in their senses, would have no more stomach for the fight, but would humble themselves at the Conqueror's feet. "*Selah.*" Pause again, and take time to bow low before the throne of the Eternal.

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:
9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

8. "*O bless our God, ye people.*" Ye chosen seed, peculiarly beloved, it is yours to bless your covenant God as other nations cannot. Ye should lead the strain, for he is peculiarly your God. First visited by his love, ye should be foremost in his praise. "*And make the voice of his praise to be heard.*" Whoever else may sing with bated breath, do you be sure to give full tongue and volume to the song. Compel unwilling ears to hear the praises of your covenant God. Make rocks, and hills, and earth, and sea, and heaven itself to echo with your joyful shouts.

9. "*Which holdeth our soul in life.*" At any time the preservation of life, and especially the soul's life, is a great reason for gratitude, but much more when we

are called to undergo extreme trials, which of themselves would crush our being. Blessed be God, who, having put our souls into possession of life, has been pleased to preserve that heaven-given life from the destroying power of the enemy. "*And suffereth not our feet to be moved.*" This is another and precious boon. If God has enabled us not only to keep our life, but our position, we are bound to give him double praise. Living and standing is the saint's condition through divine grace. Immortal and immovable are those whom God preserves. Satan is put to shame, for instead of being able to slay the saints, as he hoped, he is not even able to trip them up. God is able to make the weakest to stand fast, and he will do so.

10. "*For thou, O God, hast proved us.*" He proved his Israel with sore trials. David had his temptations. All the saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without trial. Why ought we to complain if we are subjected to the rule which is common to all the family, and from which so much benefit has flowed to them? The Lord himself proves us, who then shall raise a question as to the wisdom and the love which are displayed in the operation? The day may come when, as in this case, we shall make hymns out of our griefs, and sing all the more sweetly because our mouths have been purified with bitter draughts. "*Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*" Searching and repeated, severe and thorough, has been the test; the same result has followed as in the case of precious metal, for the dross and tin have been consumed, and the pure ore has been discovered. Since trial is sanctified to so desirable an end, ought we not to submit to it with abounding resignation.

11. "*Thou broughtest us into the net.*" The people of God in the olden time were often enclosed by the power of their enemies, like fishes or birds entangled in a net; there seemed no way of escape for them. The only comfort was that God himself had brought them there, but even this was not readily available, since they knew that he had led them there in anger as a punishment for their transgressions; Israel in Egypt was much like a bird in the fowler's net. "*Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*" They were pressed even to anguish by their burdens and pains. Not on their backs alone was the load, but their loins were pressed and squeezed with the straits and weights of adversity. God's people and affliction are intimate companions. As in Egypt every Israelite was a burden-bearer, so is every believer while he is in this foreign land. As Israel cried to God by reason of their sore bondage, so also do the saints. We too often forget that God lays our afflictions upon us; if we remembered this fact, we should more patiently submit to the pressure which now pains us. The time will come when, for every ounce of present burden, we shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

12. "*Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads.*" They stormed, and hectorred, and treated us like the mire of the street. Riding the high horse, in their arrogance, they, who were in themselves mean men, treated the Lord's people as if they were the meanest of mankind. They even turned their captives into beasts of burden, and rode upon their heads, as some read the Hebrew. Nothing is too bad for the servants of God when they fall into the hands of proud persecutors. "*We went through fire and through water.*" Trials many and varied were endured by Israel in Egypt, and are still the portion of the saints. The fires of the brick-kilns and the waters of the Nile did their worst to destroy the chosen race; hard labour and child-murder were both tried by the tyrant, but Israel went through both ordeals unharmed, and ever thus the church of God has outlived, and will outlive, all the artifices and cruelties of man. Fire and water are pitiless and devouring, but a divine fiat stays their fury, and forbids these or any other agents from utterly destroying the chosen seed. Many an heir of heaven has had a dire experience of tribulation; the fire through which he has passed has been more terrible than that which chars the bones, for it has fed upon the marrow of his spirit, and burned into the core of his heart; while the waterfloods of affliction have been even more to be feared than the remorseless sea, for they have gone in even unto the soul, and carried the inner nature down into deeps horrible, and not to be imagined without trembling. Yet each saint has been more than conqueror hitherto, and, as it has been, so it shall be. The fire is not kindled which can burn the woman's seed, neither does the dragon know how to vomit a flood which shall suffice to drown it. "*Bul thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*" A blessed issue to a mournful story. Canaan was indeed a broad and royal domain for the once enslaved tribes: God, who took them into Egypt, also brought them into the land which flowed

with milk and honey, and Egypt was in his purposes *en route* to Canaan. The way to heaven is *via* tribulation.

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,"

How wealthy is the place of every believer, and how doubly does he feel it to be so in contrast with his former slavery: what songs shall suffice to set forth our joy and gratitude for such a glorious deliverance and such a bountiful heritage. More awaits us. The depth of our griefs bears no proportion to the height of our bliss. For our shame we shall have double, and more than double. Like Joseph we shall rise from the prison to the palace, like Mordecai we shall escape the gallows prepared by malignity, and ride the white horse and wear the royal robe appointed by benignity. Instead of the net, liberty; instead of a burden on the loins, a crown on our heads; instead of men riding over us, we shall rule over the nations: fire shall no more try us, for we shall stand in glory on the sea of glass mingled with fire; and water shall not harm us, for there shall be no more sea. O the splendour of this brilliant conclusion to a gloomy history. Glory be unto him who saw in the apparent evil the true way to the real good. With patience we will endure the present gloom, for the morning cometh. Over the hills faith sees the daybreak, in whose light we shall enter into the wealthy place.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,

14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

13. "*I will.*" The child of God is so sensible of his own personal indebtedness to grace, that he feels he must utter a song of his own. He joins in the common thanksgiving, but since the best public form must fail to meet each individual case, he makes sure that the special mercies received by him shall not be forgotten, for he records them with his own pen, and sings of them with his own lips. "*I will go into thy house with burnt offerings;*" the usual sacrifices of godly men. Even the thankful heart dares not come to God without a victim of grateful praise; of this as well as of every other form of worship, we may say, "the blood is the life thereof." Reader, never attempt to come before God without Jesus, the divinely promised, given, and accepted burnt offering. "*I will pay thee my vows.*" He would not appear before the Lord empty, but at the same time he would not boast of what he offered, seeing it was all due on account of former vows. After all, our largest gifts are but payments; when we have given all, we must confess, "O Lord, of thine own have we given unto thee." We should be slow in making vows, but prompt in discharging them. When we are released from trouble, and can once more go up to the house of the Lord, we should take immediate occasion to fulfil our promises. How can we hope for help another time, if we prove faithless to covenants voluntarily entered upon in hours of need.

14. "*Which my lips have uttered,*" or vehemently declared; blurted out, as we say in common speech. His vows had been wrung from him; extreme distress burst open the door of his lips, and out rushed the vow like a long pent-up torrent, which had at last found a vent. What we were so eager to vow, we should be equally earnest to perform; but, alas! many a vow runs so fast in words that it lames itself for deeds. "*And my mouth hath spoken.*" He had made the promise public, and had no desire to go back; an honest man is always ready to acknowledge a debt. "*When I was in trouble.*" Distress suggested the vow; God in answer to the vow removed the distress, and now the votary desires to make good his promise. It is well for each man to remember that he was in trouble: proud spirits are apt to speak as if the road had always been smooth for them, as if no dog dare bark at their nobility, and scarce a drop of rain would venture to besprinkle their splendour; yet these very upstarts were probably once so low in spirits and condition that they would have been glad enough of the help of those they now despise. Even great Cæsar, whose look did awe the world, must have his trouble and become weak as other men; so that his enemy could say in bitterness, "when the fit was on him, I did mark how he did shake." Of the strong and vigorous man the nurse could tell a tale of weakness, and his wife could say of the boaster, "I did hear him groan;

his coward lips did from their colour fly." All men have trouble, but they act not in the same manner while under it; the profane take to swearing and the godly to praying. Both bad and good have been known to resort to vowing, but the one is a liar unto God, and the other a conscientious respecter of his word.

15. "*I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fallings.*" The good man will give his best things to God. No starveling goat upon the hills will be present at the altar, but the well-fed bullocks of the luxuriant pastures shall ascend in smoke from the sacred fire. He who is miserly with God is a wretch indeed. Few devise liberal things, but those few find a rich reward in so doing. "*With the incense of rams.*" The smoke of burning rams should also rise from the altar; he would offer the strength and prime of his flocks as well as his herds. Of all we have we should give the Lord his portion, and that should be the choicest we can select. It was no waste to burn the fat upon Jehovah's altar, nor to pour the precious ointment upon Jesus's head; neither are large gifts and bountiful offerings to the church of God any diminution to a man's estate: such money is put to good interest and placed where it cannot be stolen by thieves nor corroded by rust. "*I will offer bullocks with goats.*" A perfect sacrifice, completing the circle of offerings, should show forth the intense love of his heart. We should magnify the Lord with the great and the little. None of his ordinances should be disregarded; we must not omit either the bullocks or the goats. In these three verses we have gratitude in action, not content with words, but proving its own sincerity by deeds of obedient sacrifice.

"*Selah.*" It is most fit that we should suspend the song while the smoke of the victims ascends the heavens: let the burnt-offerings stand for praises while we meditate upon the infinitely greater sacrifice of Calvary.

16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me* :

19 *But* verily God hath heard *me* ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

16. "*Come and hear.*" Before, they were bidden to come and see. Hearing is faith's seeing. Mercy comes to us by way of ear-gate. "Hear, and your soul shall live." They saw how terrible God was, but they heard how gracious he was. "*All ye that fear God.*" These are a fit audience when a good man is about to relate his experience; and it is well to select our hearers when inward soul matters are our theme. It is forbidden us to throw pearls before swine. We do not want to furnish wanton minds with subjects for their comedies, and therefore it is wise to speak of personal spiritual matters where they can be understood, and not where they will be burlesqued. All God-fearing men may hear us, but far hence ye profane. "*And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*" I will count and recount the mercies of God to me, to my soul, my best part, my most real self. Testimonies ought to be borne by all experienced Christians, in order that the younger and feebler sort may be encouraged by the recital to put their trust in the Lord. To declare man's doings is needless; they are too trivial, and, besides, there are trumpeters enough of man's trumpety deeds; but to declare the gracious acts of God is instructive, consoling, inspiring, and beneficial in many respects. Let each man speak for himself, for a personal witness is the surest and most forcible; second-hand experience is like "cauld kale het again;" it lacks the flavour of first-hand interest. Let no mock modesty restrain the grateful believer from speaking of himself, or rather of God's dealings to himself, for it is justly due to God; neither let him shun the individual use of the first person, which is most correct in detailing the Lord's ways of love. We must not be egotists, but we must be egotists when we bear witness for the Lord.

17. "*I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.*" It is well when prayer and praise go together, like the horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Some cry who do not sing, and some sing who do not cry: both together are best. Since the Lord's answers so frequently follow close at the heels of our petitions,

and even overtake them, it becomes us to let our grateful praises keep pace with our humble prayers. Observe that the Psalmist did both cry and speak; the Lord hast cast the dumb devil out of his children, and those of them who are least fluent with their tongues are often the most eloquent with their hearts.

18. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart.*" If, having seen it to be there, I continue to gaze upon it without aversion; if I cherish it, have a side glance of love towards it, excuse it, and palliate it; "*The Lord will not hear me.*" How can he? Can I desire him to connive at my sin, and accept me while I wilfully cling to any evil way? Nothing hinders prayer like iniquity harboured in the breast; as with Cain, so with us, sin lieth at the door, and blocks the passage. If thou listen to the devil, God will not listen to thee. If thou refusest to hear God's commands, he will surely refuse to hear thy prayers. An imperfect petition God will hear for Christ's sake, but not one which is wilfully mis-written by a traitor's hand. For God to accept our devotions, while we are delighting in sin, would be to make himself the God of hypocrites, which is a fitter name for Satan than for the Holy One of Israel.

19. "*But verily God hath heard me.*" Sure sign this that the petitioner was no secret lover of sin. The answer to his prayer was a fresh assurance that his heart was sincere before the Lord. See how sure the Psalmist is that he has been heard; it is with him no hope, surmise, or fancy, but he seals it with a "*verily.*" Facts are blessed things when they reveal both God's heart as loving and our own heart as sincere. "*He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*" He gave his mind to consider my cries, interpreted them, accepted them, and replied to them; and therein proved his grace and also my uprightness of heart. Love of sin is a plague spot, a condemning mark, a killing sign, but those prayers, which evidently live and prevail with God, most clearly arise from a heart which is free from dalliance with evil. Let the reader see to it, that his inmost soul be rid of all alliance with iniquity, all toleration of secret lust, or hidden wrong.

20. "*Blessed be God.*" Be his name honoured and loved. "*Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.*" He has neither withdrawn his love nor my liberty to pray. He has neither cast out my prayer nor me. His mercy and my cries still meet each other. The Psalm ends on its key note. Praise all through is its spirit and design. Lord enable us to enter into it. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is said to be recited on Easter day, by the Greek church: it is described in the Greek Bible as *A Psalm of the Resurrection*, and may be understood to refer, in a prophetic sense, to the regeneration of the world, through the conversion of the Gentiles.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 1.—"*Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:*" Heb., *all the earth*; shout aloud for joy, as the people did at the return of the ark, so that the earth rang again. God shall show himself to be the God not of *Jews* only, but of *Gentiles* also; these shall as well cry *Christ*, as those *Jesus*; these say, *Father*, as those *Abba*. And, as there was great joy in Samaria when the gospel was there received (Acts viii. 8), so shall there be the like in all other parts of the earth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*All ye lands.*" Where, consider, that he does not sing praises well, who desires to sing alone.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Make his praise glorious.*" Another meaning is, *give or place glory*, that is, your glory to his praise, be fully persuaded when you praise him that it will redound to your own glory, regard this as your own glory; praise him in such a way that all your praises may be given to glorify God; or, let your glory tend in this direction that he may be praised. Desire not the glory of eternal blessedness, unless for the praise of God, as the blessed spirits in that temple do nothing but say glory to God, and sing the hymn of his glory without end, "*Holy, holy, holy.*"—*Lorinus.*

Verse 3.—"Say." *Dicite, say*, says David, delight to speak of God; *Dicite*, say something. There was more required than to think of God. Consideration, meditation, speculation, contemplation upon God and divine objects, have their place and their season; but this is more than that, and more than admiration too; for all these may come to an end in ecstasies, and in stupidities, and in useless and frivolous imaginations.—*John Donne*.

Verse 3.—"Unto God." To God, not concerning God, as some interpret, but to God himself; to his praises, and with minds raised to God, as it is in verse 4, *slang to himself*; Gejerus also correctly remarks, that the following discourse is addressed to God. Besides, it is to our God, as in verse 8, "*O bless our God, ye people*:" he is called God absolutely, because he alone is the true God.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 3.—"How terrible." Take from the Bible its awful doctrines and from providence its terrible acts, and the whole system, under which God has placed us, would be emasculated.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 3.—"Thine enemies shall submit themselves unto thee." In this, our first consideration is, that *God himself hath enemies*; and then, how should we hope to be, nay, why should we wish to be, without them. God had good, that is, glory from his enemies; and we may have good, that is, advantage in the way to glory, by the exercise of our patience, from enemies too. Those for whom God had done most, the angels, turned enemies first; vex not thou thyself, if those whom thou hast loved best hate thee deadliest. . . . God himself hath enemies. "*Thine enemies shall submit*," says the text, to God; there thou hast one comfort, though thou have enemies too; but the greater comfort is, that God calls thine enemies his. *Nolite tangere Christos meos* (Ps. cv. 15), says God of all holy people; you were as good touch me, as touch any of them, for, "they are the apple of mine eye" (Ps. xvii. 8). Our Saviour Christ never expostulated for himself; never said, Why scourge you me? why spit you upon me? why crucify you me? As long as their rage determined in his person, he opened not his mouth; when Saul extended the violence to the church, to his servants, then Christ came to that, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" . . . Here is a holy league, defensive and offensive; God shall not only protect us from others, but he shall fight for us against them; our enemies are his enemies.—*Condensed from John Donne*.

Verse 3.—"Thine enemies submit themselves." Literally, *lie unto thee*. This was remarkably the case with *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*. They promised again and again to let the people go, when the hand of the Lord was upon them; and they as frequently falsified their word.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 3 (second clause).—In times of affliction every hypocrite—all tag and rag—will be ready to come in to God in an outward profession; but usually this submission to God at this time is not out of truth. Hence it is said, "*Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee*:" in the original it is, "*they shall lie unto thee*," and so it is translated by Arias Montanus, and some others, noting hereby that a forced submission to God is seldom in truth.—*Jeremiah Burroughs*.

Verse 3.—The earthquakes in New England occasioned a kind of religious panic. A writer, who was then one of the ministers of Boston, informs us, that immediately after the great earthquake, as it was called, a great number of his flock came and expressed a wish to unite themselves with the church. But, on conversing with them, he could find no evidence of improvement in their religious views or feelings, no convictions of their own sinfulness; nothing, in short, but a kind of superstitious fear, occasioned by a belief that the end of the world was at hand. All their replies proved that they had not found God, though they had seen "*the greatness of his power*" in the earthquake.—*Edward Payson, D.D.*

Verse 5.—"Come and see the works of God." An indirect censure is here passed upon that almost universal thoughtlessness which leads men to neglect the praises of God.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 5.—"Come and see." The church at all times appeals to the world. "*Come and see*," as Jesus said to the two disciples of John the Baptist, and Philip to Nathanael. John i. 39, 46. God's marvels are to be seen by all, and seeing them is the first step towards believing in their divine author.—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 6.—"He turned the sea into dry land." The Psalmist refers to the passage through the Red Sea and the Jordan, not as to transactions which took place and

were concluded at a given period of time, but as happening really in every age. God's guidance of his people is a constant drying up of the sea and of the Jordan, and the joy over his mighty deeds is always receiving new materials.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"There did we rejoice in him;" where those things have been done, there have we rejoiced in him, not taking any credit to ourselves as if they were our acts, but rejoicing and glorying in God, and have praised him, as may be seen in Exod. xv. and Joshua iii. The prophet uses the future for the past, unless, perhaps, he meant to insinuate that these miracles would be succeeded by much greater ones, of which they were only the types and figures. A much greater miracle is that men should pass over the bitter sea of this life, and cross the river of mortality, that never ceases to run, and which swallows up and drowns so many, and still come safe and alive to the land of eternal promise, and there rejoice in God himself, beholding him face to face; and yet this greater miracle is so accomplished by God, that many pass through this sea as if it were dry land, and cross this river with dry feet; that is to say, having no difficulty in despising all things temporal, be they good or be they bad; that is to say, being neither attached to the good things, nor fearing the evil things, of this world, that they may arrive in security at the heavenly Jerusalem, where we will rejoice in him, not in hope, but in complete possession for eternity.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 7.—"His eyes behold the nations." The radical meaning of the word $\beta\epsilon\alpha\iota\omega$ is $\alpha\beta\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon\upsilon$, to shine, and metonymically to examine with a bright eye; to inspect with a piercing glance, and thence to behold, for either good or evil, as Prov. xv. 3: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Here it is taken in an adverse sense, and means, to watch from a watch-tower, to threaten from a lofty place. Ps. xxxvii. 32: "The wicked watcheth the righteous;" and Job xv. 22: He is waited for "from the watch-tower for the sword;" that is to say, the sword is drawn above the head of the wicked, as if it threatened him from the watch-tower of God. But, at the same time, there is also a reference to God's looking from the pillar of fire, and of cloud, upon the host of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Exod. xiv. 24.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 7.—"His eyes behold the nations." This should give check to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eye of his holiness, and renders the action odious to him? "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" saith Job (chap. xxxi. 4). . . . The consideration of this attribute should make us humble. How dejected would a person be if he were sure all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, did perfectly know his crimes, with all their aggravations! But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding? When we consider that he knows our actions, where of there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violations of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in all their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance . . . should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging pardon and forgiveness of him.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 9.—"Which holdeth our soul in life." As the works of creation at first, and upholding all by his power and providence, are yoked together as works of a like wonder, vouchsafed the creation in common, Heb. i. 2, 3; so just in the like manner we find regeneration and perseverance joined, as the sum of all other works in this life. Thus "begotten again," and "kept by the power of God to salvation," are joined by the Apostle, 1 Pet. i. 3 and 5, "Called and preserved in Christ Jesus;" so in Jude, verse 1. . . . "Blessed be God," says Peter, "who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again." And, "O bless our God, ye people, which holdeth our souls in life," says the Psalmist. Yea, if we do narrowly eye the words in either, both Peter and the Psalmist do bless God for both at once. Blessed be God for "begetting us," who are also "kept by the power of God;" so it follows in Peter. In the Psalmist both are comprehended in this one word:

1. "which *putteth* our souls in life" (so the margin, out of the Hebrew), that is, who puts life into your soul at the first, as he did into Adam when he made him a living soul; 2. and then which "*holdeth*," that is, continueth our souls in that life. So the translators render it also, according to the Psalmist's scope, and "O bless the Lord," saith the Psalmist, for these and both these.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 9.—"Which *holdest* our soul in life." It is truth, that all we have is in the hand of God; but God keeps our life in his hand last of all, and he hath that in his hand in a special manner. Though the soul continue, *life* may not continue; there is the soul when there is not life: life is that which is the union of soul and body. "*Thou holdest our soul in life*;" that is, thou holdest soul and body together. So Daniel describes God to Belshazzar, Dan. v. 23, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." The breath of princes is in the hand of God, and the same hand holds the breath of the meanest subject. This may be matter of comfort to us in times of danger, and times of death: when the hand of man is lifted up to take thy life remember thy life is held in the hand of God; and, as God said to Satan (Job. ii. 6): Afflict the body of Job, but save his life; so God saith still to bloody wretches, who are as the limbs of Satan: The bodies of such and such are in your hands, the estates of such and such are in your hands, but save their lives.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 9.—"Putteth our soul in life." An elegant and emphatic expression, only to be understood by observing the exact force of the words. The *soul* is the *life*, as is well known, the word נֶפֶשׁ is to *place*, to *place upon*, to *press in*, the word קָשָׁה signifies properly *joinings, fastenings together*, and hence these faculties and powers by which nature is held together and made firm.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 9.—"Which *holdeth* our soul in life." He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 9.—"And *suffereth not our feet to be moved*." It is a great mercy to be kept from desperate courses in the time of sad calamities, to be supported under burdens, that we sink not; and to be prevented from denying God, or his truth, in time of persecution.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 10.—"Thou, O God, hast proved us." It is not known what corn will yield, till it come to the flail; nor what grapes, till they come to the press. Grace is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves; the fire of affliction fetcheth it out. "*Thou hast tried us as silver*." The wicked also are tried (Rev. iii. 10), but they prove reprobate silver (Jer. vi. 28), or at best, as alchymy gold, that will not bear the seventh fire, as Job did (ch. xxiii. 10).—*John Trapp*.

Verse 10.—"As silver is tried." Convinced from the frequent use of this illustration, that there was something more than usually instructive in the processes of assaying and purifying silver, I have collected some few facts upon the subject. The hackneyed story of the refiner seeing his image in the molten silver while in the fire, has so charmed most of us, that we have not looked further; yet, with more careful study, much could be brought out.

To assay silver requires great personal care in the operator. "The principle of assaying gold and silver is very simple theoretically, but in practice great experience is necessary to insure accuracy; and there is no branch of business which demands more personal and undivided attention. The result is liable to the influence of so many contingencies, that no assayer who regards his reputation will delegate the principal processes to one not equally skilled with himself. Besides the result ascertainable by weight, there are allowances and compensations to be made, which are known only to an experienced assayer, and if these were disregarded, as might be the case with the mere novice, the report would be wide from the truth." * Pagnini's version reads: "Thou hast melted us by blowing upon us," and in the monuments of Egypt, artificers are seen with the blowpipe operating with small fire-places, with cheeks to confine and reflect the heat; the worker evidently paying personal attention, which is evident also in Malachi iii. 3, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

To assay silver requires a skilfully-constructed furnace. The description of this furnace would only weary the reader, but it is evidently a work of art in itself. Even the trial of our faith is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth.

He has refined us, but not with silver, he would not trust us there, the furnace of affliction is far more skillfully arranged than that.

To assay silver the heat must be nicely regulated. "During the operation, the assayer's attention should be directed to the heat of the furnace, which must be neither too hot nor too cold: if too hot, minute portions of silver will be carried off with the lead, and so vitiate the assay; moreover, the pores of the cupel being more open, greater absorption will ensue, and there is liability to loss from that cause. One indication of an excess of heat in the furnace, is the rapid and perpendicular rising of the fumes to the ceiling of the muffle, the mode of checking and controlling which has been pointed out in the description of the improved furnace. When the fumes are observed to fall to the bottom of the muffle, the furnace is then too cold; and, if left unaltered, it will be found that the cupellation has been imperfectly performed, and the silver will not have entirely freed itself from the base metals.*

The assayer repeats his trying processes. Usually two or more trials of the same piece are made, so that great accuracy may be secured. Seven times silver is said to be purified, and the saints through varied trials reach the promised rest.—C. H. S.

Verse 11.—"Thou broughtest us into the net," etc. Our enemies have pursued us (like the wild beasts taken by the hunter) into most grievous straits (1 Sam. xiii. 6). They have used us like beasts of burden, and laid sore loads upon us, which they have fast bound upon our backs. "Thou laidst affliction upon our loins." *Coarctationem in lumbis*; we are not only hampered, as in a net, but fettered, as with chains; as if we had been in the jailor's or hangman's hands.—John Trapp.

Verse 12.—"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads." The agents are *men*. Man is a sociable-living creature, and should converse with man in love and tranquility. Man should be a supporter of man; is he become an overthrower? He should help and keep him up; doth he ride over him and tread him under foot? O apostasy, not only from religion, but even from humanity! *Quid homini inimicissimum? Homo.*†—The greatest danger that befalls man comes whence it should least come, from man himself. *Cætera animantia*, says Pliny, *in suo genere, probe degunt*, etc. Lions fight not with lions; serpents spend not their venom on serpents; but man is the main suborner of mischief to his own kind. . . .

1. *They ride.* What need they mount themselves upon beasts, that have feet malicious enough to trample on us? They have a "foot of pride," Psalm xxxvi. 11, from which David prayed to be delivered; a presumptuous heel, which they dare lift up against God; and, therefore, a tyrannous toe, to spurn dejected man. They need not horses and mules, that can kick with the foot of a revengeful malice, Psalm xxxii. 9.

2. *Over us.* The way is broad enough wherein they travel, for it is the devil's road. They might well miss the poor, there is room enough besides; they need not ride over us. It were more brave for them to juggle with champions that will not give them the way. We never contend for their path; they have it without our envy, not without our pity. Why should they ride over us?

3. *Over our heads.* Is it not contentment enough to their pride to ride, to their malice to ride over us, but must they delight in bloodiness to ride over our heads? Will not the breaking of our arms and legs, and such inferior limbs, satisfy their indignation? Is it not enough to rack our strength, to mock our innocence, to prey on our estates, but must they thirst after our bloods and lives? *Quo tendit sæva libido?*—Whither will their madness run? But we must not tie ourselves to the letter. Here is a mystical or metaphorical gradation of their cruelty. Their riding is proud; their riding over us is malicious; and their riding over our heads is bloody oppression.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 12 (*first clause*).—The time was when the Bonners and butchers rode over the faces of God's saints, and madded † the earth with their bloods, whence drop whereof begot a new believer.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 12.—"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads." This verse is like that sea (Matt. viii. 24), so tempestuous at first, that the vessel was covered with waves; but Christ's rebuke quieted all, and there followed a great calm. Here are cruel Nimrods riding over innocent heads, as they would over fallow lands; and

* Encycl. Britain

† Seneca.

‡ Madded, to moisten, to make wet.

dangerous passages through fire and water; but the storm is soon ended, or rather the passengers are landed. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." So that this strain of David's music, or Psalmody, consists of two notes—one mournful, the other mirthful; the one a touch of distress, the other of redress: which directs our course to an observation of *misery* and of *mercy*; of grievous misery, of gracious mercy. There is desolation and consolation in one verse: a deep dejection, as laid under the feet of beasts; a happy deliverance, "broughtest us out into a wealthy place." In both these strains God hath his stroke; he is a principal in this concert. He is brought in for an actor, and for an author; an actor in the persecution, an author in the deliverance. "Thou causest," etc.; "Thou broughtest," etc. In the one he is a causing worker; in the other a sole working cause. In the one he is joined with company; in the other he works alone. He hath a finger in the former; his whole hand in the latter. We must begin with *misery* before we come to *mercy*. If there were no trouble, we should not know the worth of a deliverance. The passion of the saints is given, by the hearty and ponderous description, for very grievous; yet it is written in the forehead of the text, "The Lord caused it." "Thou causedst men to ride," etc. Hereupon, some wicked libertine may offer to rub his filthiness upon God's purity, and to plead an authentional derivation of all his villany against the saints from the Lord's warrant: "He caused it." We answer, to the justification of truth itself, that God doth ordain and order every persecution that striketh his children, without any allowance to the instrument that gives the blow. God works in the same action with others, not after the same manner. In the affliction of Job were three agents—God, Satan, and the Sabæans. The devil works on his body, the Sabæans on his goods; yet Job confesseth a third party: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." Here oppressors trample on the godly, and God is said to cause it. He causeth affliction for trial (so verses 10, 11: "Thou hast tried us," etc.); they work it for malice; neither can God be accused nor they excused.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 12.—"Thou hast placed men over our heads." Thus Jerome renders, although the Hebrew noun, רִכָּב, is in the singular, the word itself denotes an *obscure, mean man*, who is mentioned with indignity, but ought to be buried in oblivion. The singular noun is taken collectively, and so also is רִכָּבִים, with the affix. Such were the Egyptian and Babylonish idolaters, whom the Hebrew served. To place any one over the head of another, or, as the Hebrew word רִכָּב means, to ride, to be superior to, to subdue to oneself and subject, and to sit upon and insult, just as the horseman rules with the rein, and spur, and whip the beast which he rides.—Lorinus.

Verse 12.—"To ride over our heads." This is an allusion to beasts of burden, and particularly to camels, whose heads the rider almost sits over, and so domineers over them as he pleases.—Thomas Fonton, in "Annotations on the Book of Job, and the Psalms." 1732.

Verse 12.—"We went through fire and through water." The children of Israel when they had escaped the Red Sea, and seen their enemies the Egyptians dead, they thought all was cocksure, and therefore sang *Epicinia*, songs of rejoicing for the victory. But what followed within a while? The Lord stirred up another enemy against them, from out their bowels, as it were, which was hunger, and this pinched them sorer, they thought, than the Egyptian. But was this the last? No; after the hunger came thirst, and this made them to murmur as much as the former; and after the thirst came fiery serpents, and fire and pestilence, and Amalekites, and Midianites, and what not? Thus hath it been with the church not only under the law, but also under Christ, as it might be easily declared unto you. Neither hath it been better with the several members thereof; they likewise have been made conformable to the body and to the Head. What a sight of temptations did Abraham endure? So Jacob, so Joseph, so the patriarchs, so the prophets? Yea, and all they that would live godly in Christ Jesus, though their sorrow in the end were turned to joy, yet they wept and lamented first. Though they were brought at the length to a wealthy place, yet they passed through fire and water first.—Miles Smith.—1624.

Verse 12.—"We went through fire and through water." There was a great variety of such perils; and not only of several, but of contrary sorts: "We went through fire and through water," either of which singly and alone denotes an extremity of evils. Thus, through water (Ps. lxxix. 1, 2): "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am

come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Or, through fire (Ezek. xv. 7): "And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them." But when through both successively, one after the other, this denotes an accumulation of miseries, or trials, indeed: as we read Isa. xliii. 2, with God's promise to his people in such conditions: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Which promise is here, you see, acknowledged by the Psalmist to have been performed: God was with the three children when they walked through the fire, in the very letter of Isaiah's speech; and with the children of Israel when they went through the water of the Red Sea.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"We went through fire and through water." In allusion, probably, to the ordeal by fire and water, which is of great antiquity.

On the question who had interred the body of Polylices:—

"All denied:

Offering, in proof of innocence, to grasp
The burning steel, to walk through fire, and take
Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed."—*Sophocles.*

From *T. S. Millington's "Testimony of the heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ."* 1863.

Verse 12.—"Fire and water." The Jewish law required both these for purification of spoil in war, where they could be borne. Num. xxxi. 23: "Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified through the water of separation." God's saints are, therefore, subject to both ordeals.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 12.—"But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Every word is sweetly significant, and amplifies God's mercy to us. Four especially are remarkable:—1. The deliverer; 2. The deliverance; 3. The delivered; and, 4. Their felicity or blessed advancement. So there is in the deliverer, *aliquid celsitudinis*, "Thou;" in the delivery, *certitudinis*, "broughtest out," in the delivered, *solitudinis*, "us;" in the happiness, *plenitudinis*, "into a wealthy place." There is highness and lowness, sureness and fulness. The deliverer is great, the deliverance is certain, the distress grievous, the exaltation glorious. There is yet a first word, that like a key unlocks this golden gate of mercy, a *veruntamen*:—*But*. This is *vox respirationis*, a gasp that fetcheth back again the very life of comfort. "But thou broughtest," etc. We were fearfully endangered into the hands of our enemies; they rode and trode upon us, and drove us through hard perplexities. "But thou," etc. If there had been a full-point or period at our misery, if those gulfs of persecution had quite swallowed us, and all our light of comfort had been thus smothered and extinguished, we might have cried, *Perit spes nostra*, yea, *perit salus nostra*.—Our hope, our help is quite gone. He had mocked us that would have spoken, Be of good cheer. This same *but* is like a happy oar, that turns our vessel from the rocks of despair, and lands it at the haven of comfort.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 12 (second and third clause).—1. The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, yet they get through them; we went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods. Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God there is a way through them. 2. The inlet to a better state is much more happy. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place," into a well-watered place; for the word is, *like the gardens of the Lord*, and therefore fruitful.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12 (last clause).—Thou, O God, with the temptation hast given the issue. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." 1. Thou hast proved, and thou hast brought. 2. Thou laidst the trouble, and thou tookest it off; yea, and hast made us an ample recompense, for thou hast brought us to a moist, pleasant, lovely, fertile, rich place, a happy condition, a flourishing condition of things, so that thou hast made us to forget all our trouble.—*William Nicholson*, in "*David's Harp strung and tuned.*" 1662.

Verse 12.—"A wealthy place." The hand of God led them in that fire and water of affliction through which they went; but who led them out? The Psalmist tells us in the next words: "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place;" the margin

saith, "into a moist place." They were in fire and water before. *Fire* is the extremity of heat and dryness; *water* is the extremity of moistness and coldness. A *moist place* notes a due temperament of heat and cold, of dryness and moistness, and therefore elegantly shadows that comfortable and contentful condition into which the good hand of God had brought them, which is significantly expressed in our translation by "a wealthy place;" those places flourishing most in fruitfulness, and so in wealth, which are neither over hot nor over cold, neither over dry nor over moist.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 13.—You see all the parts of this song; the whole concert or harmony of all is praising God. You see *quo loco*, in his house; *quo modo*, with burnt-offering; *quo animo*, paying our vows.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 13.—"Burnt-offerings." For ourselves, be we sure that the best sacrifice we can give to God is obedience; not a dead beast, but a living soul. The Lord takes not delight in the blood of brutish creatures. It is the mind, the life, the soul, the obedience, that he requires: 1 Sam. xv. 22, "To obey is better than sacrifice." Let this be our burnt-offering, our holocaust, a sanctified body and mind given up to the Lord, Rom. xii. 1, 2. First, the heart: "My son, give me thy heart." Is not the heart enough? No, the hand also: Isaiah i. 16, Wash the hands from blood and pollution. Is not the hand enough? No, the foot also: "Remove thy foot from evil." Is not the foot enough? No, the lips also: "Guard the doors of thy mouth;" Ps. xxxiv. 13, "Refrain thy tongue from evil." Is not thy tongue enough? No, the ear also: "Let him that hath ears to hear, hear." Is not the ear enough? No, the eye also: "Let thine eyes be towards the Lord." Is not all this sufficient? No, give body and spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." When the eyes abhor lustful objects, the ear slanders, the foot erring paths, the hands wrong and violence, the tongue flattery and blasphemy, the heart pride and hypocrisy; this is thy holocaust, thy whole burnt-offering.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verses 13, 15.—In the "burnt-offerings," we see his approach to the altar with the common and general sacrifice; and next, in his "paying vows," we see he has brought his *peace-offerings* with him. Again, therefore, he says at the altar: "I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fallings" (ver 15). This is the general offering, brought from the best of his flock and herd. Then follow the *peace-offerings*: "With the incense (אֵשׁ, fuming smoke) of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. *Selah.*" Having brought his offerings, he is in no haste to depart, notwithstanding; for his heart is full. Ere, therefore, he leaves the sanctuary, he utters the language of a soul at peace with God: verses 16—20. This, truly, is one whom "the very God of peace" has sanctified, and whose whole spirit, and body, and soul he will preserve blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. v. 23.—*Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verses 13—15.—He tells what were the vows he promised in his trouble, and says he promised the richest sacrifices of cattle that could be made according to the law. These were three: rams, cows, and goats. Rams included lambs; cows included heifers; and goats, kids.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verse 14.—"Which my lips have uttered." Hebrew, *have opened*: that is which I have uttered, *diductis labiis*, with lips wide open. *Videmus qualiter vota nuncupari soleant*, saith Vatablus. Here we see after what sort vows used to be made, when we are under any pressing affliction; but when once delivered, how heavily many come off in point of payment.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 14.—Express mention is made of *opened lips* to indicate that the *vows* were made with great vehemence of mind, and in a state of need and pressure; so that his lips were *broken through* and widely opened. For the root, פָּרַח contains the idea of *opening anything with violence*; to *break open*, as the Latin expression is, *rumpere labia*.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 15.—"I will offer," etc. Thou shalt have the best of the herd and of the fold.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 15.—"Fallings." For as I will not come empty into thy house, so I will not bring thee a niggardly present; but offer sacrifices of all sorts, and the best and choicest in every kind.—*Symon Patrick*.

Verse 15.—"Bullocks with goats." That is, I will liberally provide for every part of the service at the tabernacle.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 16.—"Come and hear, all ye that fear God." One reason why the saints are so often inviting all that fear God to come unto them is, because the saints see and know the great good that they shall get by those that fear God. The children of darkness are so wise in their generation as to desire most familiarity and acquaintance with those persons whom they conceive may prove most profitable and advantageous to them, and to pretend much friendship there where is hope of most benefit. And shall not the saints, the children of light, upon the same account wish and long for the society of those that fear God, because they see what great good they shall gain by them? It is no wonder that the company of those that fear God is so much in request, since it is altogether gainful and commodious; it's no wonder they have many invitations, since they are guests by which something is still gotten; and, indeed, among all persons living, those that fear God are the most useful and enriching.—*Samuel Heskins, in "Soul Mercies Precious in the Eyes of Saints . . . set forth in a little Treatise on Psalm lvi. 16." 1654.*

Verse 16.—"All ye that fear God." For such only will hear to good purpose; others either cannot, or care not. "And I will declare," etc. Communicate unto you my soul-secrets and experiments. There is no small good to be gotten by such declarations. Bilney, perceiving Latimer to be zealous without knowledge, came to him in his study and desired him for God's sake to hear his confession. "I did so," saith Latimer, "and, to say the truth, by his confession I learned more than afore in many years. So from that time forward I began to smell the word of God, and forsake the school-doctors, and such fooleries."—*John Trapp.*

Verse 16.—"Ye that fear God." Observe the invitation given to those only "who fear God," because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" he loosens the feet to "come," opens the ears to "hear;" and therefore, he who has no fear of God will be called to no purpose, either to come or to hear.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 16.—"I will declare." Consider the ends which a believer should propose in the discharge of this duty ["of communicating Christian experience"]. The principal end he should have in view when he declares his experience is the glory of that God, who hath dealt so bountifully with him. He would surely have the Lord exalted for his faithfulness and goodness to him; he would have it published, that the name of the Lord might be great; that sinners might know that his God is faithful to his word; that he hath not only engaged to be "a present help in time of need," but that he hath found him in reality to be so. As he knows the enemies of God are ready enough to charge him with neglect of his people, because of the trials and afflictions they are exercised with; so he would, in contradiction to them, declare what he hath found in his own experience, that in very faithfulness he afflicts those that are dearest to him. And with what lustre doth the glory of God shine, when his children are ready to acknowledge that he never called them out to any duty but his grace was sufficient for them; that he never laid his hand upon them in any afflictive exercise, but he, at the same time, supplied them with all those supports which they stood in need of? I say, for Christians thus to stand up, on proper occasions, and bear their experimental testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of God, what a tendency hath it to make the name of the Lord, who hath been their strong tower, glorious in the midst of the earth. . . . How may we blush and be ashamed, that we have so much conversation in the world and so little about what God hath done for our souls? It is a very bad sign upon us, in our day, that the things of God are generally postponed; while either the affairs of state, or the circumstances of outward life, or other things, perhaps, of a more trifling nature, are the general subjects of our conversation. What! are we ashamed of the noblest, the most interesting subject? It is but a poor sign that we have felt anything of it, if we think it unnecessary to declare it to our fellow Christians. What think you? Suppose any two of us were cast upon a barbarous shore, where we neither understood the language, nor the customs of the inhabitants, and were treated by them with reproach and cruelty; do you think we should not esteem it a happiness that we could unburden ourselves to each other, and communicate our griefs and troubles? And shall we think it less so, while we are in such a world as this, in a strange land, and at a distance from our Father's house? Shall we neglect conversing with each other? No; let our conversation not only be in heaven, but

about spiritual and heavenly things.—*Samuel Wilson* (1703–1750), in “*Sermons on Various Subjects.*”

Verse 16.—“*I will declare.*” After we are delivered from the dreadful apprehensions of the wrath of God, it is our duty to be publicly thankful. It is for the glory of our Healer to speak of the miserable wounds that once pained us; and of that kind hand that saved us when we were brought very low. It is for the glory of our Pilot to tell of the rocks and of the sands; the many dangers and threatening calamities that he, by his wise conduct, made us to escape: and to see us safe on the shore, may cause others that are yet afflicted, and tost with tempests, to look to him for help; for he is able and ready to save them as well as us. We must, like soldiers, when a tedious war is over, relate our combats, our fears, our dangers, with delight; and make known our experiences to doubting, troubled Christians, and to those that have not yet been under such long and severe trials as we have been.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660–1729), in “*A Discourse on Trouble of Mind.*”

Verse 17.—This verse may be rendered thus: “*I cried unto him with my mouth, and his exaltation was under my tongue;*” that is, I was considering and meditating how I might lift up and exalt the name of God, and make his praise glorious. Holy thoughts are said to be under the tongue when we are in a preparation to bring them forth.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17.—“*He was extolled with my tongue.*” It is a proof that prayer has proceeded from unworthy motives, when the blessings which succeed it are not acknowledged with as much fervency as when they were originally implored. The ten lepers all cried for mercy, and all obtained it, but only one returned to render thanks.—*John Morison.*

Verse 17.—“*He was extolled with my tongue:*” *lit.* “an extolling (of Him) was under my tongue,” implying fulness of praise (Psalm x. 7). A store of praise being conceived as under the tongue, whence a portion might be taken on all occasions. The sense is, “scarcely had I cried unto him when, by delivering me, he gave me abundant reason to extol him.” (Psalm xxxiv. 6.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 17.—“*With my tongue.*” Let the praise of God be in thy tongue, under thy tongue, and upon thy tongue, that it may shine before all men, and that they may see that thy heart is good. The fish *lucerna* has a shining tongue,* from which it takes its name; and in the depths of the sea the light of its tongue reveals it: if thy heart has a tongue, shining with the praises of God, it will sufficiently show itself of what sort it is. Hence the old saying, “Speak, that I may see thee.”—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 18.—“*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” The very supposition that “if he regarded iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not hear him,” implies the possibility that such may be the state even of believers; and there is abundant reason to fear that it is in this way their prayers are so often hindered, and their supplications so frequently remain unanswered. Nor is it difficult to conceive how believers may be chargeable with regarding iniquity in their heart, even amidst all the solemnity of coming into the immediate presence of God, and directly addressing him in the language of prayer and supplication.

It is possible that they may put themselves into such a situation, in a state of mind but little fitted for engaging in that holy exercise; the world, in one form or another, may for the time have the ascendancy in their hearts; and there may have been so much formality in their confessions, and so much indifference in their supplications, that when the exercise is over, they could not honestly declare that they really meant what they acknowledged, or seriously desired what they prayed for. A Christian, it is true, could not be contented to remain in a state like this; and, when he is awakened from it, as he sooner or later will be, he cannot fail to look back upon it with humiliation and shame. But we fear there are seasons in which believers themselves may make a very near approach to such a state: and what then is the true interpretation of prayers offered up at such a moment? It is in fact just saying, that there is something which, for the time, they prefer to what they are formally asking of God; that, though the blessings which they do ask may be for a time withheld, yet they would find a compensation in the enjoyment of the

* A reviewer condemns us for quoting false natural history, but no intelligent reader will be misled thereby.—*Editor.*

worldly things which do at the moment engross their affections ; and that, in reality, they would not choose to have at that instant such an abundant communication of spiritual influence imparted to them, as would render these worldly objects less valuable in their estimation, and would turn the whole tide of their affections towards spiritual things. . . .

The Christian may sometimes betake himself to prayer, to ask counsel of God in some perplexity regarding divine truth, or to seek direction in some doubtful point of duty ; but, instead of being prepared fairly to exercise his judgment, in the hope that, while doing so, the considerations that lie on the side of truth will be made to his mind clear and convincing ; he may have allowed his inclinations so to influence and bias his judgment towards the side of error, or in favour of the line of conduct which he wishes to pursue, that when he asks counsel it may only be in the hope that his previous opinion will be confirmed, and when he seeks direction it is in reality on a point about which he was previously determined. . . .

Another case is, I fear, but too common, and in which the believer may be still more directly chargeable with regarding iniquity in his heart. It is possible that there may be in his heart or life something which he is conscious is not altogether as it should be—some earthly attachment which he cannot easily justify—or some point of conformity to the maxims and practices of the world, which he finds it difficult to reconcile with christian principle ; and yet all the struggle which these have from time to time cost him, may only have been an effort of ingenuity on his part to retain them without doing direct violence to conscience—a laborious getting up of arguments whereby to show how they may be defended, or in what way they may lawfully be gone into ; while the true and simple reason of his going into them, namely, the love of the world, is all the while kept out of view. And, as an experimental proof how weak and inconclusive all these arguments are, and at the same time how unwilling he still is to relinquish his favourite objects, he may be conscious that in confessing his sins he leaves them out of the enumeration, rather because he would willingly pass them over, than because he is convinced that they need not be there ; he may feel that he cannot and dare not make them the immediate subject of solemn and deliberate communing with God ; and, after all his multiplied and ingenious defences, he may be reconciled to them at last, only by ceasing to agitate the question whether they are lawful or not.—*Robert Gordon, D.D.* 1825.

Verse 18.—Whence is it that a man's regarding or loving sin in his heart hinders his prayers from acceptance with God ? 1. The first reason is, because in this case he cannot pray by the Spirit. All prayers that are acceptable with God are the breathings of his own Spirit within us. Rom. viii. 26. As without the intercession of Christ we cannot have our prayers accepted, so without the intercession of the Spirit we cannot pray. . . . II. The second reason is, because as long as a man regards iniquity in his heart he cannot pray in faith ; that is, he cannot build a rational confidence upon any promise that God will accept him. Now, faith always respects the promise, and promise of acceptance is made only to the upright : so long, therefore, as men cherish a love of sin in their heart, they either understand not the promises, and so they pray without understanding, or they understand them, and yet misapply them to themselves, and so they pray in presumption : in either case, they have little cause to hope for acceptance. . . . III. The third reason is, because while we regard iniquity in our hearts we cannot pray with fervency ; which, next to sincerity, is the great qualification of prayer, to which God has annexed a promise of acceptance (Matt. xi. 12) : "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. vii. 7 : Those only that seek are like to find, and those that knock to have admittance ; all which expressions denote vehemence and importunity. Now, the cause of vehemence, in our prosecution of any good, is our love of it ; for proportionable to the affection we bear to anything is the earnestness of our desires and the diligence of our pursuit after it. So long, therefore, as the love of sin possesses our hearts, our love to spiritual things is dull, heavy, inactive, and our prayers for them must needs be answerable. O the wretched fallacy that the soul will here put upon itself ! At the same time it will love its sin and pray against it ; at the same time it will entreat for grace, with a desire not to prevail : as a father confesses of himself, that before his conversion he would pray for chastity, with a secret reserve in his wishes that God would not grant his prayer. Such are the mysterious, intricate treacheries by which the love of sin will make a soul deceive and circumvent itself. How languidly and faintly will it pray for spiritual mercies ; conscience, in the meanwhile, giving the lie to every such petition ! The soul, in

this case, cannot pray against sin in earnest ; it fights against it, but neither with hope nor intent to conquer ; as lovers, usually, in a game one against another, with a desire to lose. So, then, while we regard iniquity, how is it possible for us to regard spiritual things, the only lawful object of our prayers ? and, if we regard them not, how can we be urgent with God for the giving of them ? And where there is no fervency on our part, no wonder if there is no answer on God's.—*Robert South*. 1633—1716.

Verse 18.—“*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” Though the subject-matter of a saint's prayer be founded on the word, yet if the end he aims at be not levelled right, this is a door at which his prayer will be stopped : “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” James iv. 3. Take, I confess, a Christian in his right temper, and he aims at the glory of God ; yet, as a needle that is touched with a loadstone may be removed from its point to which nature hath espoused it, though trembling till it again recovers it ; so a gracious soul may in a particular act and request vary from this end, being joggled by Satan, yea, disturbed by an enemy nearer home—his own unmortified corruption. Do you not think it possible for a saint, in distress of body and spirit, to pray for health in the one, and comfort in the other, with too selfish a respect to his own case and quiet ? Yes, surely ; and to pray for gifts and assistance in some eminent service, with an eye to his own credit and applause ; to pray for a child with too inordinate a desire that the honour of his house may be built up in him. And this may be understood as the sense, in part, of that expression, “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*” For though to desire our own health, peace, and reputation, be not an iniquity, when contained within the limits that God hath set ; yet, when they overflow to such a height, as to overtop the glory of God, yea, to stand but in a level with it, they are a great abomination. That which in the first or second degree is wholesome food, would be rank poison in the fourth or fifth : therefore, Christian, catechize thyself, before thou prayest : O, my soul, what sends thee on this errand ? Know but thy own mind what thou prayest for, and thou mayest soon know God's mind how thou shalt speed. Secure God his glory, and thou mayest soon know God's mind how thou shalt speed.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 18.—“*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*”

1. They regard iniquity in their heart, who practise it secretly, who are under restraint from the world, but are not possessed of an habitual fear of the omniscient God, the searcher of all hearts, and from whose eyes there is no covering of thick darkness where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Jer. xxiii. 24.

2. They regard iniquity in the heart, who entertain and indulge the desire of sin, although in the course of providence they may be restrained from the actual commission of it. I am persuaded the instances are not rare, of men feeding upon sinful desires, even when through want of opportunity, through the fear of man, or through some partial restraint of conscience, they dare not carry them into execution.

3. They regard iniquity in their heart, who reflect upon past sins with delight, or without sincere humiliation of mind. Perhaps our real disposition, both towards sin and duty, may be as certainly discovered by the state of our minds after, as in the time of action. The strength and suddenness of temptation may betray even a good man into the commission of sin ; the backwardness of heart and power of inward corruption may make duty burdensome and occasion many defects in the performance ; but every real Christian remembers his past sins with unfeigned contrition of spirit, and a deep sense of unworthiness before God ; and the discharge of his duty, however difficult it may have been at the time, affords him the utmost pleasure on reflection. It is otherwise with many ; they can remember their sins without sorrow, they can speak of them without shame, and sometimes even with a mixture of boasting and vain glory. Did you never hear them recall their past follies, and speak of them with such relish, that it seems to be more to renew the pleasure than to regret the sin ? Even supposing such persons to have forsaken the practice of some sins, if they can thus look back upon them with inward complacency, their seeming reformation must be owing to a very different cause from renovation of heart.

4. They regard iniquity in the heart, who look upon the sins of others with approbation ; or, indeed, who can behold them without grief. Sin is so abominable a thing, so dishonouring to God, and so destructive to the souls of men, that

no real Christian can witness it without concern. Hence it is so frequently taken notice of in Scripture, as the character of a servant of God, that he mourns for the sins of others. Ps. cxix. 136, 158.

5. In the last place, I suspect that they regard sin in the heart, who are backward to bring themselves to the trial, and who are not truly willing that God himself would search and try them. If any, therefore, are unwilling to be tried, if they are backward to self-examination, it is an evidence of a strong and powerful attachment to sin. It can proceed from nothing but from a secret dread of some disagreeable discovery, or the detection of some lust which they cannot consent to forsake. . . . There are but too many who, though they live in the practice of sin, and regard iniquity in their hearts, do yet continue their outward attendance on the ordinances of divine institution, and at stated times lay hold of the seals of God's covenant. Shall they find any acceptance with him? No. He counts it a profane mockery; he counts it a sacrilegious usurpation. Ps. l. 16, 17. Shall they have any comfort in it? No: unless in so far as in righteous judgment he suffers them to be deceived; and they are deceived, and they are most unhappy, who lie longest under the delusion. Ps. l. 21. Shall they have any benefit by it? No: instead of appeasing his wrath, it provokes his vengeance; instead of enlightening their minds, it blinds their eyes; instead of sanctifying their nature, it hardens their hearts. See a description of those who had been long favoured with outward privileges and gloried in them. John xii. 39, 40. So that nothing is more essential to an acceptable approach to God in the duties of his worship in general, and particularly to receiving the seals of his covenant, than a thorough and universal separation from all known sin. Job. xi. 13, 14.—*John Witherspoon* (1722—1749), in a *Sermon* entitled "*The Petitions of the Insincere Unavailing.*"

Verses 18, 19, 20.—Lord, I find David making a syllogism, in mood and figure, two propositions he perfected. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*" Now I expected that David should have concluded thus; "Therefore I regard not wickedness in my heart; but far otherwise he concludes: "*Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.*" Thus David hath deceived, but not wronged me. I looked that he should have clapped the crown on his own, and he puts it on God's head. I will learn this excellent logic; for I like David's better than Aristotle's syllogisms, and whatsoever the premises be, I make God's glory the conclusion.—*Thomas Fuller.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 3.—The terrible in God's works of nature and providence.

Verse 4.—I. *Who?* All the earth. 1. All, collectively, all classes and tribes. 2. All numerically. 3. All harmoniously. II. *What?* Shall worship and sing. 1. Humiliation; then, 2. Exultation. III. *When?* Shall, etc. Denotes 1. Futurity. 2. Certainty. God has spoken it. All things are tending towards it.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—Here is—I. A subject for general study: the "works of God." II. For particular study: "his doing towards," etc. 1. These are most wonderful. 2. In these we are most concerned.

Verse 6.—Great difficulties, unexpectedly overcome, made the theme of joy.

Verse 6 (*last clause*).—Our share in the past deliverances of the church.

Verse 7.—Sovereignty, immutability ("for ever"), and omniscience,—the enemies of proud rebels.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—To get a hearing for the gospel difficult, necessary, and possible. Ways and means for so doing.

Verses 8, 9.—I. Praise *to*. 1. As God. 2. As *our* God. II. Praise *for*. Preservation. 1. Of natural life. 2. Of spiritual life. III. Praise *by*, "ye people." 1. On your own account. 2. On account of others. Or, 1. Individually. 2. Unitedly.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—Perseverance the subject of gratitude. I. The maintenance of the inner life. II. The integrity of the outward character

Verse 10.—The assaying of the saints.

Verse 10.—I. The design of the afflictions. 1. To prove them. 2. To reprove them. II. The illustration of that design. As silver, etc. III. The issue of the trial.

Verses 11, 12.—The hand of God should be acknowledged. I. In our temptations: "Thou broughtest us." II. In our bodily afflictions: "Thou laidest," etc. III. In our persecutions: "Thou hast caused," etc. IV. In our deliverances: "Thou broughtest us out," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—*Fire and water.* Varied trials. 1. Discover different evils. 2. Test all parts of manhood. 3. Educate varied graces. 4. Endear many promises. 5. Illustrate divine attributes. 6. Afford extensive knowledge. 7. Create capacity for the varied joys of heaven.

Verse 12 (first clause).—The rage of oppression.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verse 12 (last clause).—A plentiful place, free from penury; a pleasant place, void of sorrow; a safe place, free from dangers and distresses.—*Daniel Wilcocks.*

Verse 12 (last clause).—The victory of patience, with the expiration of malice.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verse 12 (last clause).—The wealth of a soul whom God has tried and delivered. Among other riches he has the wealth of experience, of strengthened graces, of confirmed faith, and of sympathy for others.

Verse 13.—God's house; or, the place of praises.—*Thomas Adams' Sermon.*

Verses 13—15.—I. Resolutions made (verse 13). 1. What? To offer praise. 2. Why? For deliverance. 3. Where? In thy house. II. Resolutions uttered (verse 14). 1. To God. 2. Before men. III. Resolutions fulfilled. 1. In public acknowledgment. 2. In heartfelt gratitude. 3. In more frequent attendance at the house of God. 4. The renewed self-dedication. 5. In increased liberality.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. What has God done for the soul of every Christian? II. Why does the Christian wish to declare what God has done for his soul? III. Why does he wish to make this declaration to those only who fear God? 1. Because they alone can understand such a declaration. 2. They alone will really believe him. 3. They only will listen with interest, or join with him in praising his Benefactor.—*E. Payson.*

Verse 16.—I. Religious teaching should be *simple*: "I will declare." II. *Earnest*: "Come and hear." III. *Seasonable*: "All ye that." IV. *Discriminating*: "Fear God." V. *Experimental*: "What he hath," etc.

Verse 17.—I. The two principal parts of devotion. Prayer and praise. II. Their degree. In prayer, crying. In praise, extolling. III. Their order: 1. Prayer. 2. Then praise. What is won by prayer is worn in praise.

Verses 18, 19.—I. The test admitted. II. The test applied. III. The test approved.

Verse 19.—The fact that God has heard prayer.

Verse 20.—The mercy of God. I. In permitting prayer. II. In inclining to prayer. III. In hearing prayer.