

PSALM LXXVII.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun. *It was meet that another leader of the psalmody should take his turn. No harp should be silent in the courts of the Lord's house. A Psalm of Asaph. Asaph was a man of exercised mind, and often touched the minor key; he was thoughtful, contemplative, believing, but withal there was a dash of sadness about him, and this imparted a tonic flavour to his songs. To follow him with understanding, it is needful to have done business on the great waters, and weathered many an Atlantic gale.*

DIVISIONS.—*If we follow the poetical arrangement, and divide at the Selahs, we shall find the troubled man of God pleading in verses 1—3, and then we shall hear him lamenting and arguing within himself, 4—9. From verses 10—15 his meditations run Godward, and in the close he seems as in a vision to behold the wonders of the Red Sea and the wilderness. At this point, as if lost in an ecstasy, he hurriedly closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those do who, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words even to weariness. Perhaps this Psalm was meant to be a prelude to the next, and, if so, its sudden close is accounted for. The hymn now before us is for experienced saints only, but to them it will be of rare value as a transcript of their own inner conflicts.*

EXPOSITION.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

1. "*I cried unto God with my voice.*" This Psalm has much sadness in it, but we may be sure it will end well, for it begins with prayer, and prayer never has an ill issue. Asaph did not run to man but to the Lord, and to him he went, not with studied, stately, stilted words, but with a cry, the natural, unaffected, unfeigned expression of pain. He used his voice also, for though vocal utterance is not necessary to the life of prayer, it often seems forced upon us by the energy of our desires. Sometimes the soul feels compelled to use the voice, for thus it finds a freer vent for its agony. It is a comfort to hear the alarm-bell ringing when the house is invaded by thieves. "*Even unto God with my voice.*" He returned to his pleading. If once sufficed not, he cried again. He needed an answer, he expected one, he was eager to have it soon, therefore he cried again and again, and with his voice too, for the sound helped his earnestness. "*And he gave ear unto me.*" Importunity prevailed. The gate opened to the steady knock. It shall be so with us in our hour of trial, the God of grace will hear us in due season.

2. "*In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.*" All day long his distress drove him to his God, so that when night came he continued still in the same search. God had hidden his face from his servant, therefore the first care of the troubled saint was to seek his Lord again. This was going to the root of the matter and removing the main impediment first. Diseases and tribulations are easily enough endured when God is found of us, but without him they crush us to the earth. "*My sore ran in the night, and ceased not.*" As by day so by night his trouble was on him and his prayer continued. Some of us know what it is, both physically and spiritually, to be compelled to use these words: no respite has been afforded us by the silence of the night, our bed has been a rack to us, our body has been in torment, and our spirit in anguish. It appears that this sentence is wrongly translated, and should be, "my hand was stretched out all night;" this shews that his prayer ceased not, but with uplifted hand he continued to seek succour of his God. "*My soul refused*

to be comforted." He refused some comforts as too weak for his case, others as untrue, others as unhallowed; but chiefly because of distraction, he declined even those grounds of consolation which ought to have been effectual with him. As a sick man turns away even from the most nourishing food, so did he. It is impossible to comfort those who refuse to be comforted. You may bring them to the waters of the promise, but who shall make them drink if they will not do so? Many a daughter of dependency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains. There are times when we are suspicious of good news, and are not to be persuaded into peace, though the happy truth should be as plain before us as the King's highway.

3. "*I remembered God, and was troubled.*" He who is the wellspring of delight to faith became an object of dread to the Psalmist's distracted heart. The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side, and indeed all the attributes may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil; even the brightness of divine love blinds us, and fills us with a horrible suspicion that we have neither part nor lot in it. He is wretched indeed whose memories of The Ever Blessed prove distressing to him; yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss. "*I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*" He mused and mused but only sank the deeper. His inward disquietudes did not fall asleep as soon as they were expressed, but rather they returned upon him, and leaped over him like raging billows of an angry sea. It was not his body alone which smarted, but his noblest nature writhed in pain, his life itself seemed crushed into the earth. It is in such a case that death is coveted as a relief, for life becomes an intolerable burden. With no spirit left in us to sustain our infirmity, our case becomes forlorn; like a man in a tangle of briars who is stripped of his clothes, every hook of the thorns becomes a lancet, and we bleed with ten thousand wounds. Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep glens and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms! "*Selah.*" Let the song go softly; this is no merry dance for the swift feet of the daughters of music, pause ye awhile, and let sorrow take breath between her sighs.

4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking : I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.

6 I call to remembrance my song in the night : I commune with mine own heart : and my spirit made diligent search.

7 Will the Lord cast off for ever ? and will he be favourable no more ?

8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever ? doth *his* promise fail for evermore ?

9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ? *Selah.*

4. "*Thou holdest mine eyes waking.*" The fears which thy strokes excite in me forbid my eyelids to fall, my eyes continue to watch as sentinels forbidden to rest. Sleep is a great comforter, but it forsakes the sorrowful, and then their sorrow deepens and eats into the soul. If God holds the eyes waking, what anodyne shall give us rest? How much we owe to him who giveth his beloved sleep! "*I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*" Great griefs are dumb. Deep streams brawl not among the pebbles like the shallow brooklets which live on passing showers. Words fail the man whose heart fails him. He had cried to God but he could not speak to man, what a mercy it is that if we can do the first, we need not despair though the second should be quite out of our power. Sleepless and speechless Asaph was reduced to great extremities, and yet he rallied, and even so shall we.

5. "*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*" If no good was in the present, memory ransacked the past to find consolation. She fain would borrow a light from the altars of yesterday to light the gloom of to-day. It is our duty to search for comfort, and not in sullen indolence yield to despair; in quiet contemplation topics may occur to us which will prove the means of raising our spirits, and there is scarcely any theme more likely to prove consolatory than that which deals with the days of yore, the years of the olden time, when the Lord's faithfulness was tried and proved by hosts of his people. Yet it seems that even this consideration created depression rather than delight in the good man's soul, for he contrasted his own mournful condition with all that was bright in the venerable

experiences of ancient saints, and so complained the more. Ah, sad calamity of a jaundiced mind to see nothing as it should be seen, but everything as through a veil of mist.

6. "*I call to remembrance my song in the night.*" At other times his spirit had a song for the darkest hour, but now he could only recall the strain as a departed memory. Where is the harp which once thrilled sympathetically to the touch of these joyful fingers? My tongue, hast thou forgotten to praise? Hast thou no skill except in mournful ditties? Ah me, how sadly fallen am I! How lamentable that I who like the nightingale could charm the night, am now fit comrade for the hooting owl. "*I commune with mine own heart.*" He did not cease from introspection, for he was resolved to find the bottom of his sorrow, and trace it to its fountain head. He made sure work of it by talking not with his mind only, but his inmost heart; it was heart work with him. He was no idler, no melancholy trifler; he was up and at it, resolutely resolved that he would not tamely die of despair, but would fight for his hope to the last moment of life. "*And my spirit made diligent search.*" He ransacked his experience, his memory, his intellect, his whole nature, his entire self, either to find comfort or to discover the reason why it was denied him. That man will not die by the hand of the enemy who has enough force of soul remaining to struggle in this fashion.

7. "*Will the Lord cast off for ever?*" This was one of the matters he enquired into. He painfully knew that the Lord might leave his people for a season, but his fear was that the time might be prolonged and have no close; eagerly, therefore, he asked, will the Lord utterly and finally reject those who are his own, and suffer them to be the objects of his contemptuous reprobation, his everlasting cast-offs? This he was persuaded could not be. No instance in the years of ancient times led him to fear that such could be the case. "*And will he be favourable no more?*" Favourable he had been; would that goodwill never again show itself? Was the sun set never to rise again? Would spring never follow the long and dreary winter? The questions are suggested by fear, but they are also the cure of fear. It is a blessed thing to have grace enough to look such questions in the face, for their answer is self-evident and eminently fitted to cheer the heart.

8. "*Is his mercy clean gone for ever?*" If he has no love for his elect, has he not still his mercy left? Has that dried up? Has he no pity for the sorrowful? "*Doth his promise fail for evermore?*" His word is pledged to those who plead with him; is that become of none effect? Shall it be said that from one generation to another the Lord's word has fallen to the ground; whereas aforesaid he kept his covenant to all generations of them that fear him? It is a wise thing thus to put unbelief through the catechism. Each one of the questions is a dart aimed at the very heart of despair. Thus have we also in our days of darkness done battle for life itself.

9. "*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*" Has El, the Mighty One, become great in everything but grace? Does he know how to afflict, but not how to uphold? Can he forget anything? Above all, can he forget to exercise that attribute which lies nearest to his essence, for he is love? "*Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*" Are the pipes of goodness choked up so that love can no more flow through them? Do the bowels of Jehovah no longer yearn towards his own beloved children? Thus with cord after cord unbelief is smitten and driven out of the soul; it raises questions and we will meet it with questions: it makes us think and act ridiculously, and we will heap scorn upon it. The argument of this passage assumes very much the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Strip it naked, and mistrust is a monstrous piece of folly. "*Selah.*" Here rest awhile, for the battle of questions needs a lull.

10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.

11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

13 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is* so great a God as our God?

14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

10. "*And I said, This is my infirmity.*" He has won the day, he talks reasonably now, and surveys the field with a cooler mind. He confesses that unbelief is an infirmity, a weakness, a folly, a sin. He may also be understood to mean, "this is my appointed sorrow," I will bear it without complaint. When we perceive that our affliction is meted out by the Lord, and is the ordained portion of our cup, we become reconciled to it, and no longer rebel against the inevitable. Why should we not be content if it be the Lord's will? What he arranges it is not for us to cavil at. "*But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*" Here a good deal is supplied by our translators, and they make the sense to be that the Psalmist would console himself by remembering the goodness of God to himself and others of his people in times gone by: but the original seems to consist only of the words, "the years of the right hand of the most High," and to express the idea that his long continued affliction, reaching through several years, was allotted to him by the Sovereign Lord of all. 'Tis well when a consideration of the divine goodness and greatness silences all complaining, and creates a childlike acquiescence.

11. "*I will remember the works of the Lord.*" Fly back, my soul, away from present turmoils, to the grandeurs of history, the sublime deeds of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts; for he is the same and is ready even now to defend his servants as in the days of yore. "*Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*" Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvellous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries.

12. "*I will meditate also of all thy work.*" Sweet work to enter into Jehovah's work of grace, and there to lie down and ruminate, every thought being absorbed in the one precious subject. "*And talk of thy doings.*" It is well that the overflow of the mouth should indicate the good matter which fills the heart. Meditation makes rich talking; it is to be lamented that so much of the conversation of professors is utterly barren, because they take no time for contemplation. A meditative man should be a talker, otherwise he is a mental miser, a mill which grinds corn only for the miller. The subject of our meditation should be choice, and then our talk will be edifying; if we meditate on folly and affect to speak wisdom, our double-mindedness will soon be known unto all men. Holy talk following upon meditation has a consoling power in it for ourselves as well as for those who listen, hence its value in the connection in which we find it in this passage.

13. "*Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary,*" or *in holiness.* In the holy place we understand our God, and rest assured that all his ways are just and right. When we cannot trace his way, because it is "in the sea," it is a rich consolation that we can trust it, for it is in holiness. We must have fellowship with holiness if we would understand "the ways of God to man." He who would be wise must worship. The pure in heart shall see God, and pure worship is the way to the philosophy of providence. "*Who is so great a God as our God?*" In him the good and the great are blended. He surpasses in both. None can for a moment be compared with the mighty One of Israel.

14. "*Thou art the God that doest wonders.*" Thou alone art Almighty. The false gods are surrounded with the pretence of wonders, but thou really workest them. It is thy peculiar prerogative to work marvels: it is no new or strange thing with thee, it is according to thy wont and use. Herein is renewed reason for holy confidence. It would be a great wonder if we did not trust the wonder-working God. "*Thou hast declared thy strength among the people.*" Not only Israel, but Egypt, Bashan, Edom, Philistia, and all the nations have seen Jehovah's power. It was no secret in the olden time and to this day it is published abroad. God's providence and grace are both full of displays of his power; he is in the latter peculiarly conspicuous as "mighty to save." Who will not be strong in faith when there is so strong an arm to lean upon? Shall our trust be doubtful when his power is beyond all question? My soul see to it that these considerations banish thy mistrust.

15. "*Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.*" All Israel, the two tribes of Joseph as well as those which sprang from the other sons of Jacob, were brought out of Egypt by a display of divine power, which is here ascribed not to the hand but to the arm of the Lord, because it was the fulness of

his might. Ancient believers were in the constant habit of referring to the wonders of the Red Sea, and we also can unite with them, taking care to add the song of the Lamb to that of Moses, the servant of God. The comfort derivable from such a meditation is obvious and abundant, for he who brought up his people from the house of bondage will continue to redeem and deliver till we come into the promised rest. "*Selah.*" Here we have another pause preparatory to a final burst of song.

16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee ; they were afraid : the depths also were troubled.

17 The clouds poured out water : the skies sent out a sound : thine arrows also went abroad.

18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven : the lightnings lightened the world : the earth trembled and shook.

19 Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

16. "*The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee ; they were afraid.*" As if conscious of its Maker's presence, the sea was ready to flee from before his face. The conception is highly poetical, the Psalmist has the scene before his mind's eye, and describes it gloriously. The water saw its God, but man refuses to discern him ; it was afraid, but proud sinners are rebellious and fear not the Lord. "*The depths also were troubled.*" To their heart the floods were made afraid. Quiet caves of the sea, far down in the abyss, were moved with affright ; and the lowest channels were left bare, as the water rushed away from its place, in terror of the God of Israel.

17. "*The clouds poured out water.*" Obedient to the Lord, the lower region of the atmosphere yielded its aid to overthrow the Egyptian host. The cloudy chariots of heaven hurried forward to discharge their floods. "*The skies sent out a sound.*" From the loftier aerial regions thundered the dread artillery of the Lord of Hosts. Peal on peal the skies sounded over the heads of the routed enemies, confusing their minds and adding to their horror. "*Thine arrows also went abroad.*" Lightnings flew like bolts from the bow of God. Swiftly, hither and thither, went the red tongues of flame, on helm and shield they gleamed ; anon with blue bale-fires revealing the innermost caverns of the hungry sea which waited to swallow up the pride of Mizraim. Behold, how all the creatures wait upon their God, and show themselves strong to overthrow his enemies.

18. "*The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven,*" or "*in the whirlwind.*" Rushing on with terrific swiftness and bearing all before it, the storm was as a chariot driven furiously, and a voice was heard (even thy voice, O Lord !) out of the fiery car, even as when a mighty man in battle urges forward his charger, and shouts to it aloud. All heaven resounded with the voice of the Lord. "*The lightnings lightened the world.*" The entire globe shone in the blaze of Jehovah's lightnings. No need for other light amid the battle of that terrible night, every wave gleamed in the fire-flashes, and the shore was lit up with the blaze. How pale were men's faces in that hour, when all around the fire leaped from sea to shore, from crag to hill, from mountain to star till the whole universe was illuminated in honour of Jehovah's triumph. "*The earth trembled and shook.*" It quaked and quaked again. Sympathetic with the sea, the solid shore forgot its quiescence and heaved in dread. How dreadful art thou, O God, when thou comest forth in thy majesty to humble thine arrogant adversaries.

19. "*Thy way is in the sea.*" Far down in secret channels of the deep is thy roadway ; when thou wilt thou canst make a sea a highway for thy glorious march. "*And thy path in the great waters.*" There, where the billows surge and swell, thou still dost walk ; Lord of each crested wave. "*And thy footsteps are not known.*" None can follow thy tracks by foot or eye. Thou art alone in thy glory, and thy ways are hidden from mortal ken. Thy purposes thou wilt accomplish, but the means are often concealed, yea, they need no concealing, they are in themselves too vast and mysterious for human understanding. Glory be to thee, O Jehovah.

20. "*Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*" What a transition from tempest to peace, from wrath to love. Quietly as a flock Israel was guided on, by human agency which veiled the excessive glory of the divine

presence. The smiter of Egypt was the shepherd of Israel. He drove his foes before him, but went before his people. Heaven and earth fought on his side against the sons of Ham, but they were equally subservient to the interests of the sons of Jacob. Therefore, with devout joy and full of consolation, we close this Psalm; the song of one who forgot how to speak and yet learned to sing far more sweetly than his fellows.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Whenever, and by whomsoever, the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. It utterly destroys all the beauty, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in the opening portion, if we suppose that the people are introduced speaking in the first person. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrow of others under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record.—*J. J. Stewart Peroune.*

Verse 1.—In the beginning of the Psalm, before speaking of his sorrows, he hastens to show the necessary and most efficacious remedy for allaying sorrow. He says that he did not, as many do, out of their impatience of grief or murmuring, either accuse God of cruelty or tyranny, or utter blasphemous words by which dishonour might fall upon God, or by indulging in sorrow and distrust hasten his own destruction, or fill the air with vain complainings, but fled straight to God, and to him unburdened his sorrow, and sought that he would not shut him from that grace which he bountifully offers to all. This is the only and sure sovereign remedy which most effectually heals his griefs.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"I cried." To the Orientals the word פָּצַח presented the idea of a crash, as of the heavens sending out thunders and lightnings. Whence beyond other things he metaphorically says, *he cried for sorrow*; . . . shaken with a tempest of thoughts he burst out into an open and loud-sounding complaint.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—"Even unto God with my voice." The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 1 (last clause).—At the second knock, the door of grace flew open: *the Lord heard me.*—*John Collings.*

Verse 2.—"In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"My sore ran in the night." Hebrew: *My hand was poured out*; that is, stretched out in prayer; or wet with continual weeping. *Non fuit remissa, nec retracta in lectum.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"My sore ran in the night, and ceased not," etc.—"There is no healing of this wound, no easing of this sore, no cleansing of the conscience, no quieting of a man's spirit: till God whom the soul seeketh show himself as the Physician, the evil continueth still and groweth."—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"My soul refused to be comforted." God has provided suitable and sufficient comfort for his people. He sends them comforters just as their circumstances require. But they at times refuse to hear the voice of the charmer. The Lord has perhaps taken away an idol—or he withholds his sensible presence, that they may learn to live by faith—or he has blighted their worldly prospects—or he has written vanity and emptiness upon all their gourds, cisterns, and delights. They give way to passion, as did Jonah—or they sink into sullen gloom—or allow

unhumbled pride to rule the spirit—or yield to extreme sorrow, as Rachel did—or fall under the power of temptation—or imbibe the notion that they have no right to comfort. This is wrong, all wrong, decidedly wrong. Look at what is left you, at what the gospel presents to you, at what heaven will be to you. But the Psalmist was recovered from this state. He was convinced that it was wrong. He was sorry for his sin. He was reformed in his spirit and conduct. He wrote this Psalm to instruct, caution, and warn us. Observe, they who are entitled to all comfort, often through their own folly, enjoy the least. The Lord's people are often their own tormentors, they put away the cup of comfort from them, and say they are unworthy of it.

O Thou source of every blessing,
Chase my sorrows, cheer my heart,
Till in heaven, thy smiles possessing,
Life, and joy, and peace impart.

—James Smith.

Verse 2.—"My soul refused to be comforted." Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some that have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials that have been tendered to them against the walls. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them. They have been much set against all ordinances and religious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yea, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which hath laid hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life, and yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, hath God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favour, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds. O despairing souls, you see that others, whose conditions have been as bad if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God hath turned their hell into a heaven; he hath remembered them in their low estate; he hath pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he hath wiped all tears from their eyes; and he hath been a well-spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls, but look up to the mercy-seat.—Thomas Brooks.

Verse 3.—"I remembered God, and was troubled." If our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being troubled. It will then be painful to remember that he is our Creator and Benefactor, for the remembrance will be attended with a consciousness of base ingratitude. It will be painful to think of him as Lawgiver; for such thoughts will remind us that we have broken his law. It will be painful to think of his holiness; for if he is holy, he must hate our sins, and be angry with us as sinners:—of his justice and truth, for these perfections make it necessary that he should fulfil his threatenings and punish us for our sins. It will be painful to think of his omniscience—for this perfection makes him acquainted with our most secret offences, and renders it impossible to conceal them from his view; of his omnipresence—for the constant presence of an invisible witness must be disagreeable to those who wish to indulge their sinful propensities. It will be painful to think of his power—for it enables him to restrain or destroy, as he pleases: of his sovereignty, for sinners always hate to see themselves in the hands of a sovereign God: of his eternity and immutability—for from his possessing these perfections it follows that he will never alter the threatenings which he has denounced against sinners, and that he will always live to execute them. It will be painful to think of him as judge; for we shall feel, that as sinners, we have no reason to expect a favourable sentence from his lips. It will even be painful to think of the perfect goodness and excellence of his character; for his goodness leaves us without excuse in rebelling against him, and makes our sins appear exceeding sinful.—Edward Payson.

Verse 3.—"I remembered God, and was troubled." All had not been well between God and him; and whereas formerly, in his remembrance of God, his thoughts were chiefly exercised about his love and kindness, now they were wholly possessed with his own sin and unkindness. This causeth his trouble. Herein lies a share of the entanglements occasioned by sin. Saith such a soul in itself, "Foolish creature, hast thou thus required the Lord? Is this the return that thou hast made unto him for all his love, his kindness, his consolations, mercies? Is this

thy kindness for him, thy love to him? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is this thy boasting of him, that thou hadst found so much goodness and excellence in him and his love, that though all men should forsake him, thou never wouldest do so? Are all thy promises, all thy engagements which thou madest unto God, in times of distress, upon prevailing obligations, and mighty impressions of his good Spirit upon thy soul, now come to this, that thou shouldst so foolishly forget, neglect, despise, cast him off? Well! now he is gone; he is withdrawn from thee; and what wilt thou do? Art thou not even ashamed to desire him to return?" They were thoughts of this nature that cut Peter to the heart upon his fall. The soul finds them cruel as death, and strong as the grave. It is bound in the chains of them, and cannot be comforted, Ps. xxxviii. 3—6.—*John Owen*.

Verse 3.—There are moments in the life of all believers when God and his ways become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we know from Paul the apostle that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God, when they cannot utter their sighs. Romans viii. 26.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*.

Verse 3.—“*Selah*.” In the end of this verse is put the word “*Selah*.” And it doth note unto the reader or hearer what a miserable and comfortless thing man is in trouble, if God be not present with him to help him. It is also put as a spur and prick for every Christian man and woman to remember and call upon God in the days of their troubles. For as the Jews say, wheresoever this word “*Selah*” is, it doth admonish and stir up the reader or hearer to mark what was said before it; for it is a word always put after very notable sentences.—*John Hooper*.

Verse 4.—“*Thou holdest mine eyes waking*.” Thou art afflicted with want of sleep:—A complaint incident to distempered bodies and thoughtful minds. Oh, how wearisome a thing it is to spend the long night in tossing up and down in a restless bed, in the chase of sleep; which the more eagerly it is followed, flies so much the farther from us! Couldst thou obtain of thyself to forbear the desire of it, perhaps it would come alone: now that thou suest for it, like to some froward piece, it is coy and overly, and punishes thee with thy longing. Lo, he that could command a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, yet could not command rest. “On that night his sleep departed from him,” Esth. vi. 1, neither could be forced or entreated to his bed. And the great Babylonian monarch, though he had laid some hand on sleep, yet he could not hold it; for “his sleep brake from him,” Dan. ii. 1. And, for great and wise Solomon, it would not so much as come within his view. “Neither day nor night seeth he sleep with his eyes,” Eccl. viii. 16. Surely, as there is no earthly thing more comfortable to nature than bodily rest (Jer. xxxi. 26); so, there is nothing whose loss is more grievous and disheartening. . . . Instead of closing thy lids to wait for sleep, lift up thy stiff eyes to him that “giveth his beloved rest,” Psalm cxxvii. 2. Whatever be the means, he it is that “*holdeth mine eyes waking*.” He that made thine eyes, keeps off sleep from thy body, for the good of thy soul: let not thine eyes wake, without thy heart. The spouse of Christ can say, “I sleep, but my heart waketh,” Cant. v. 2. How much more should she say, “Mine eyes wake, and my heart waketh also!” When thou canst not sleep with thine eyes, labour to see him that is invisible: one glimpse of that sight is more worth than all the sleep that thine eyes can be capable of. Give thyself up into his hands, to be disposed of at his will. What is this sweet acquiescence but the rest of the soul? which if thou canst find in thyself, thou shalt quietly digest the want of thy bodily sleep.—*Joseph Hall*, in his “*Balm of Gilead*.”

Verse 4.—“*I am so troubled that I cannot speak*.” He adds that he was so cut down and lifeless that he could not speak. Little griefs, as it is often said, are uttered, great ones strike us dumb. In great troubles and affrights the spirit fails the exterior members, and flows back to its fountain; the limbs stand motionless, the whole body trembles, the eyes remain fixed, and the tongue forgets its office. Hence it is that Niobe was represented by the poets as turned into a stone. The history of Psammenitus also, in Herodotus, is well known, how over the misfortunes of his children he sat silent and overwhelmed, but when he saw his friend’s calamities he bewailed them with bitter tears.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 4.—“*I am so troubled that I cannot speak*.” Sometimes our grief is so violent that it finds no vent, it strangles us, and we are overcome. It is with us in our desertions as with a man that gets a slight hurt; at first he walks up and

down, but not looking betimes to prevent a growing mischief, the neglected wound begins to fester, or to gangrene, and brings him to greater pain and loss. So it is with us many times in our spiritual sadness; when we are first troubled, we pray and pour out our souls before the Lord; but afterwards the waters of our grief drown our cries and we are so overwhelmed, that if we might have all the world we cannot pray, or at least we can find no enlargement, no life, no pleasure in our prayers; and God himself seems to take no delight in them, and that makes us more sad, Psalm xxii. 1.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729), in *"A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

Verse 4.—*"Troubled."* Or, *bruised*: the Hebrew word properly signifieth an astonishment caused by some great blow received.—*John Diodati*.

Verse 4.—*"I cannot speak."* Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making sighs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb. *Objection*. I have not so much as a voice to utter to God; and Christ saith, "Cause me to hear thy voice" (Cant. ii. 14). *Answer*. Yea, but some other thing hath a voice beside the tongue: "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" (Psalm vi. 8). Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping.—*Samuel Rutherford*.

Verse 4.—If through all thy discouragements thy condition prove worse and worse, so that thou canst not pray, but art struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, as David, then fall a-making signs when thou canst not speak; groan, sigh, sob, "chatter," as Hezekiah did; bemoan thyself for thine unworthiness, and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 5.—*"The days of old."* Doubtless to our first parents the darkness of the first night was somewhat strange; persons who had never seen anything but the light of the day, when the shadows of the night first did encompass them, could not be without some apprehension: yet when at the back of a number of nights they had seen the day-spring of the morning light constantly to arise; the darkness of the blackest nights was passed over without fear, and in as great security, as the light of the fairest days. To men who have always lived upon land, when first they set to sea, the winds, waves, and storms are exceeding terrible; but when they are a little beaten with the experience of tempests, their fears do change into resolution and courage. It is of no small use to remember that those things which vex most our spirit, are not new, but have already been in times before our days.—*Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons*. 1643.

Verse 6.—*"I call to remembrance my song in the night."* Either, (1) "I will now, in the present night of affliction, remember my former songs." "Though this is a time of distress, and my present circumstances are gloomy, yet I have known brighter days. He that lifted me up, has cast me down, and he can raise me up again." Sometimes this reflection, indeed, adds a poignancy to our distress, as it did to David's trouble, Ps. xlii. 4. Yet it will bear a better improvement, which he seems to make of it; verse 11, and so Job, (ii. 10.) *"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"* And his case shows that after the most sweeping calamities the Lord can again give things a turn in favour of them that hope in him. Therefore, present troubles should not make us forget former comforts, especially as the former so much exceeded our deserts, and the present afflictions fall so short of our demerits. Or, (2) the text may mean, "I will remember how I have been enabled to sing in the former nights of affliction." And surely it is especially seasonable to remember supports and consolations granted under preceding distresses. Elihu complained (Job xxxv. 10), "There is none that saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night." David comforted himself with the thought, "Though deep calleth unto deep, yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me." Ps. xlii. 8. And the Lord promised by Isaiah (xxx. 29), "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept." No doubt Paul and Silas remembered their song in the night, when imprisoned at Philippi; and it afforded them encouragement under subsequent trials. And cannot many of you, my brethren, in like manner, remember the supports and consolations you have enjoyed in former difficulties,

and how the Lord turned the shadow of death into morning? And ought you not to trust to him that hath delivered, that he will yet deliver? He that hath delivered in six troubles will not forsake you in seven. The "clouds may return after the rain;" but not a drop can fall without the leave of him, who rides on the heavens for your help, and in his excellency on the sky. Did you not forbode at first a very different termination of the former troubles? and did the Lord disappoint your fears, and put a new song into your mouth; and will you not now begin to trust him, and triumph in him? Surely you have found that the Lord can clear the darkest skies. "Light is sown for the righteous," and ere long you shall see an eternal day. If such songs are given to the pilgrims of the night, how shall they sing in that world where the sun shall set no more! There will be no night there.—*John Ryland*. 1753—1825.

Verse 6.—"*I call to remembrance*:" being glad in this scarcity of comfort, to live upon the old store, as bees do in winter.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 6.—"*My song in the night*." The "songs of the night" is as favourite a word of the Old Testament as "glory in tribulation" is of the New, and it is one of those which prove that both Testaments have the self-same root and spirit.—*John Ker*.

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search*." He falls upon self-examination, and searcheth his spirit, to consider why the hand of God was so against him, and why the face of God was so hid from him. Some read it, "I digged into my spirit;" as Ezekiel digged into the wall, to search for and find out the abomination, that made the Lord thus leave him in the dark, and hide his face from him. He searcheth the wound of his spirit; that was another way to cure it. It is a notable way to cure the wounds of the soul, for the soul to search them.—*John Collings*.

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search*." The verb *ερευνω*, *chaphas*, signifies such an investigation as a man makes who is obliged to *strip himself* in order to do it; or, to *lift up coverings*, to search fold by fold, or in our own phrase, to *leave no stone unturned*.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 6.—"*My spirit made diligent search*." As Ahasuerus, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom, so the doubting soul betakes himself to the records of heaven, the word of God in the Scriptures, and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his heart, if he can find there anything that answers the characters of Scripture-faith, as the face in the glass doth the face of man. David, when he was at a loss what to think of himself, and many doubts did clog his faith, inasmuch that the thinking of God increased his trouble, he did not sit down and let the ship drive, as we say, not regarding whether God loved him or no, but *communes with his own heart*, and *his spirit makes diligent search*. Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubtings: he dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house dares settle himself to sleep till he hath looked in every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night; and the poor doubting soul is much more afraid, lest it should wake with hell-fire about it: whereas a soul in a state and under the power of unbelief is secure and careless.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 6.—"*Diligent search*." This duty requires diligence. External acts of religion are facile; to lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer, this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to take the heart all in pieces as a watch, and see what is defective, this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own.—*Thomas Wat on*.

Verse 8.—"*Doth his promise fail for evermore?*" Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, 'tis enough, if God has said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation, which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation, and the Author of the promise, will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low." Luke iii. 5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other; Isa. lxiii. 1: "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If

anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come, though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. iii. 3. Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 9.—“*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*” In what pangs couldst thou be, O Asaph, that so woeful a word should fall from thee: “*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*” Surely, the temptation went so high, that the next step had been blasphemy. Had not that good God, whom thy bold weakness questions for forgetfulness, in great mercies remembered thee, and brought thee speedily to remember thyself and him; that, which thou confessest to have been infirmity, had proved a sinful despair. I dare say for thee, that word washed thy cheeks with many a tear, and was worthy of more; for, O God, what can be so dear to thee, as the glory of thy mercy? There is none of thy blessed attributes, which thou desirest to set forth so much unto the sons of men, and so much abhorrest to be disparaged by our detraction, as thy mercy. Thou canst, O Lord, forget thy displeasure against thy people; thou canst forget our iniquities, and cast our sins out of thy remembrance, Micah vii. 18, 19; but thou canst no more forget to be gracious, than thou canst cease to be thyself. O my God, I sin against thy justice hourly, and thy mercy interposes for my remission: but, oh, keep me from sinning against thy mercy. What plea can I hope for, when I have made my advocate my enemy?—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 9.—“*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*” The poor child crieth after the mother. What shall I do for my mother! Oh, my mother, my mother, what shall I do for my mother! And it may be the mother stands behind the back of the child, only she hides herself, to try the affection of the child: so the poor soul cries after God, and complains, Oh, my Father! my Father; Where is my heavenly Father? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure? when (all the while), God is nearer than they think for, shining upon them in “a spirit of grace and supplications,” with sighs and “groans that cannot be uttered.” Thus the gracious woman, Mary Magdelene, she seeks after Christ, she enquires, she cries after him, and weeps: My dear Saviour, my dear Lord and Master, he is “taken out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him!” Thus she complains to the disciples, and thus she complains to the angels, when Christ stood at her very back and overheard all: nay, when she turned her about and saw him, yet at first she did not know him; nay, when he spoke to her and she to him, yet she knew him not, but thought he had been the gardener, John xx. 15. Thus is it with many a gracious soul; though God speaks home to their hearts in his Word, and they speak to him by prayer, and they cannot say but the Spirit “helps their infirmities;” yet they complain for want of his presence, as if there were nothing of God in them.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 9.—“*Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?*” The metaphor here is taken from a spring, the mouth of which is closed, so that its waters can no longer run in the same channel; but, being confined, break out and take some other course. Wilt thou take thy mercy from the Israelites and give it to some other people?—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—“*Selah.*” Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word, “*Selah;*” stop there; go no further; let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and he then chid himself, verse 10: “This is mine infirmity.”—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—“*This is my infirmity.*” Literally, this is my disease,—which appears to mean, This is my lot and I must bear it; lo! it is a partial evil, for which the equity of God’s government should not be questioned. The authorised version, “*This is my infirmity,*” suggests, perhaps advisedly, another signification, viz., These thoughts are but hallucinations of my agony,—but to this gloss I should scruple to commit myself.—*C. B. Cayley.*

Verse 10.—It is the “*infirmity*” of a believer to be thinking of himself, and

drawing false inferences (for all such inferences are necessarily erroneous), from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his *strength*, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the Most High—to meditate upon the changeless truth and mercy of that God who has committed himself in holiness to the believing sinner's sure salvation, by causing the Son of his love to suffer in our stead the dread reality of penal death.—Arthur Pridham.

Verse 10.—“*Infirmity.*” An “*infirmity*” is this,—some sickness or indisposition of the soul, that arises from the weakness of grace. Or an infirmity is this,—when the purpose and inclination of the heart is upright, but a man wants strength to perform that purpose; when “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. xxvi. 41); when a man can say with the apostle, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not,” Rom. vii. 18. When the bent and inclination of the soul is right, but either through some violence of corruption or strength of temptation, a man is diverted and turned out of the way. As the needle in the seaman's compass, you know if it be right it will stand always northwards, the bent of it will be toward the North Pole, but being jogged and troubled, it may sometimes be put out of frame and order, yet the bent and inclination of it is still northward; this is an infirmity.—James Nalton. 1664.

Verse 10.—It is unnecessary to state all the renderings which the learned have given of this verse. It is unquestionably ambiguous, as the word זָכַר may be derived from different roots, which have different significations. I derive it from זָכַר or זָכַר which signifies to be in pain as a woman in labour, and as it is in the infinitive, I render it, “the time of my sorrow or pain.” The next term, שָׁנָה , I derive from שָׁנָה to change, as the Chaldee does, Ainsworth, Hammond, and others; and I render potentially. I consider the whole as a beautiful metaphor. The author considers himself as in distress, like a woman in travail; and like her, hopes soon to have his sorrow turned to joy. He confides in God's power to effect such a change; and hence naturally recollects the past instances of God's favour to his people.—Benjamin Boothroyd.

Verse 10.—“*I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.*” Not the moments, nor the hours, nor days of a few short afflictions, that his left hand hath dealt to me: but the “*years of his right hand* ;” those long, large, and boundless mercies wherewith he hath comforted me.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 10.—“*I will remember the years,*” etc. The words in the Hebrew text are *shenoth jemin gneljon*, which I find to be variously rendered and translated by interpreters. I shall not trouble you with them all at this present time, but only take notice of two of them, which I conceive are the principal and most comprehensive; the one is of our oldest English translation, and the other of our last and newest; the former reads the words thus: “*The right hand of the Most High can change all this.*” The latter reads the words thus, as we have it now before us, “*I will remember the years,*” etc. The main ground of this variation is the different exposition of the Hebrew word *shenoth*, which may be translated either to change, from the verb in the infinitive mood, or else may be translated *years*, from the noun in the plural number. This hath given the occasion to this difference and variety of translation, but the sense is very good and agreeable which way soever we take it—

First, take it according to the former translation, as it does exhibit to us the power of God. “*The right hand of the Lord can change all this.*” This was that whereby David did support himself in his present affliction; that the Lord was able to change and alter this his condition to him, and that for the better. . . . For the second sense here before us, that's this: “*I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High;*” where the word “*remember*” is borrowed from the next following verse, to supply the sense of this, as otherwise being not in the text. Now here the prophet David fetches a ground of comfort from God's practice, as before he did from his power; there, from what God could do; here, from what he had done already in former time, and ages, and generations.—Thomas Horton.

Verse 11.—“*I will remember,*” etc. Remember and commemorate as the Hebrew (by a double reading) importeth.—John Trapp.

Verse 11.—“*I will remember.*” Faith is a considering grace: he that believes will not make haste; no, not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that

God keeps a bad house. Thus David recovered himself, when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation: "*This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember thy wonders of old.*" Therefore, Christian, when thou art in the depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God, as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this: No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me. Go, Christian, play over thy own lessons, praise God for past mercies, and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for a present mercy. . . .

Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate, for want of which he had gone to prison; and some one experience remembered keeps the soul from despair, a prison which the devil longs to have the Christian in. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope," Lam. iii. 21. David was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe and preserve the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God with him; they were so often the subject of his meditation and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but exercise his memory a little, and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. "*I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.*" The hound, when he hath lost the scent, hunts backward and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss, and thou questionest thy salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee. Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith that the others also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a pledge of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—"*The works of the Lord.*" . . . "*Thy wonders.*" The Psalmist does not mean to draw a distinction between the *works* and the *wonders* of God; but, rather, to state that all God's works are wonders. . . . all, whether in providence or grace—all God's works are wonderful. If we take the individual experience of the Christian, of what is that experience made up? Of wonders. The work of his conversion, wonderful!—arrested in a course of thoughtlessness and impiety; graciously sought and gently compelled to be at peace with God, whose wrath he had provoked. The communication of knowledge, wonderful!—Deity and eternity gradually piled up; the Bible taken page by page, and each page made a volume which no searching can exhaust. The assistance in warfare, wonderful!—himself a child of corruption, yet enabled to grapple with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and often to trample them under foot. The solaces in affliction, wonderful!—sorrow sanctified so as to minister to joy, and a harvest of gladness reaped from a field which has been watered with tears. The foretastes of heaven, wonderful!—angels bringing down the clusters of the land, and the spirit walking with lightsome tread the crystal river and the streets of gold. All wonderful! Wonderful that the Spirit should strive with man; wonderful that God should bear with his backslidings; wonderful that God should love him notwithstanding his pollution; wonderful that God should persist in saving him, in spite, as it were, of himself. Oh! those amongst you who know anything, experimentally, of salvation through Christ, well know that the work is wonderful in its commencement, wonderful in its continuance, and they will need no argument to vindicate the transition from "*works*" to "*wonders.*" It will be the transition of your own thoughts and your own feelings, and you will never give in the record of God's dealings with yourselves without passing, as the Psalmist passed, from mentioning to ascription. Ye may set yourselves to commemorate God's "*works,*" ye will find yourselves extolling God's "*wonders.*" Ye may begin with saying, "*I will remember the works of the Lord;*" but ye will conclude by exclaiming, "*Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*"—*Henry Melwill.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy wonders.*" The word is in the singular here, and also in verse 14. So also in the next verse, "*Thy work,*" because the one great wonder, the one great work in which all others were included, is before his thoughts.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy wonders.*" He had before spoken to others, but here he turns to God. It is good for a soul in a hard exercise, to raise itself from thinking of God and of his works, unto speaking unto God directly: no ease or relief will be found

till address be made unto himself, till we turn our face toward him and direct our speech unto him, as here the Psalmist doth, from the midst of the eleventh verse to the end of the psalm.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 13.—"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." The word "sanctuary" is to be taken either for heaven or for the temple. I am rather inclined to refer it to heaven, conceiving the meaning to be, that the ways of God rise high above the world, so that if we are truly desirous to know them, we must ascend above all heavens. Although the works of God are in part manifest to us, yet all our knowledge of them comes far short of their immeasurable height. Besides, it is to be observed, that none enjoy the least taste of his works but those who by faith rise up to heaven. And yet, the utmost point to which we can ever attain is, to contemplate with admiration and reverence the hidden wisdom and power of God, which, while they shine forth in his works, yet far surpass the limited powers of our understanding.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 13.—"Thy way is in the sanctuary." That is, every one of the elect may and ought to learn in thy church the conduct and proceedings of thy providence towards those that were thine.—*John Diodati.*

Verses 13, 19.—"In the sanctuary" and "In the sea." His "way" is "in the sanctuary," and His "way" is "in the sea." Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary, where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor, troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth. But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the "sea." He walks where we cannot always trace his footsteps. God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know. There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in his own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with his footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou ledest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterwards, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with his people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God himself is nearer still—and to him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Pet. iii.), "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But, still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—"In the sea." And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then "they are not known." But confidence in God himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for his name's sake.—*From "Things New and Old."* 1865.

Verse 14.—"The God that doest wonders." If he said, *Thou art the God that hast done wonders*, it would be plain that he spake only of those ancient miracles which were wrought in former days: but now that he saith, *Thou art the God that doest wonders*, he evidently refers to those wonderful works, which he is doing now, and shall not cease to do even to the end of the world.—*Gerhohus.*

Verse 15.—"The sons of Jacob and Joseph." The distinction between the sons of Jacob and Joseph is not meaningless. For by the sons of Jacob or Israel the believing Jews are properly intended, those that trace their descent to him not only

according to the flesh but according to faith. Of whom although *Joseph* was one, yet since he was sold by his brethren and after many sufferings among foreign tribes raised to high rank, it is highly congruous to distinguish him from the sons of *Jacob*, and he is fitly regarded as a prince of the Gentiles apart from *Jacob's* sons, who sold him.—*Gerhohus*.

Verse 15.—“*The sons of Jacob and Joseph.*” Was it *Joseph* or was it *Jacob* that begat the children of Israel? Certainly *Jacob* begat; but as *Joseph* nourished them, they are called by his name also.—*Talmud*.

Verse 16.—“*The waters saw thee, O God,*” etc. “The waters of the Red Sea,” says Bishop *Horne*, “are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility; as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over.” This in fact is true poetry; and in this attributing of life, spirit, feeling, action, and suffering to inanimate objects, there are no poets who can vie with those of the Hebrew nation.—*Richard Mant*.

Verse 16.—“*The depths also were troubled.*” The *depths* are mentioned in addition to the *waters*, to show that the dominion and power of God reach not only to the surface of the waters, but penetrate to the most profound abysses, and agitate and restrain the waters from their lowest bottom.—*Mollerus*.

Verses 16—18.—The waters saw thee, but men do not see thee. The depths were troubled, but men say in their heart, There is no God. The clouds poured out water, but men pour not out cries and tears unto God. The skies send out a sound, but men say not, Where is God my Maker? Thine arrows also went abroad, but no arrows of contrition and supplication are sent back by men in return. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, but men hear not the louder thunders of the law. The lightnings lightened the world, but the light of truth shines in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. The earth trembled and shook, but human hearts remain unmoved.

“My heart it shakes not at the wrath
And terrors of a God.”

—*George Rogers*.

Verses 16—19.—As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunder-bolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal night oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians.—*Josephus*.

Verse 19.—“*Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters,*” etc. Until lately, not much was known of oceanic currents, nor of their influences on the condition of particular localities and the intercourse of man with man. They are now seen to be the “way” or “path” of the Creator “in the great waters.” Numerous agencies tend to the production of these currents. Amongst them we may reckon the propagation of the tide wave in its progress over the globe, the duration and strength of certain winds, the variations in density which sea-water undergoes in different latitudes, and at different depths, by change of temperature, and the quantity of salt it contains, and by the hourly alterations of atmospheric pressure which take place within the tropics. The oceanic currents are nearly constant in breadth, crossing the sea in many directions. Long bands of seaweed carried by the currents shew at once their velocity, and the line of demarcation between the waters at rest and the waters in motion. Between the tropics there is a general movement of the sea from east to west, called the equatorial current, supposed to be due to the trade winds, and the progress of the tide wave. There are narrower currents carrying warm water to higher and cold water to lower latitudes.—*Edwin Sidney*, in “*Conversations on the Bible and Science.*” 1866.

Verse 19.—“*Thy way is in the sea,*” where no man can wade, except God be before him, but where any man may walk if God take him by the hand and lead him through.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 19.—“*Thy footsteps are not known.*” He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of divine providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and to lead them into his secrets.—*Samuel Slater* (—1704), in “*The Morning Exercises.*”

Verse 19.—“*Thy footsteps are not known.*” That is, they are not always known; or, they are not known in all things; yea, they are not altogether known in anything.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 19.—“*Thy footsteps are not known.*” Upon some affair of great consequence, which had occurred in some providential dispensations, Luther was very importunate at the throne of grace to know the mind of God in it; and it seemed to him as if he heard God speak to his heart thus: “I am not to be traced.” Referring to this incident, one adds, “If he is not to be traced, he may be trusted;” and that religion is of little value which will not enable a man to trust God where he can neither trace nor see him. But there is a time for everything beneath the sun, and the Almighty has his ‘times and seasons.’ It has been frequently with my hopes and desires, in regard to providence, as with my watch and the sun, which has often been ahead of true time; I have gone faster than providence, and have been forced to stand still and wait, or I have been set back painfully. That was a fine sentiment of Flavel, “Some providences, like Hebrew letters, must be read backwards.”—Quoted in “*Christian Treasury,*” 1849. *Author not mentioned.*

Verse 19.—See also notes on verse 13.

Verse 20.—“*Thou leddest thy people like a flock,*” etc. From this verse the afflicted may learn many consolations. First, that the best people that be are no better able to resist temptation, than the simple sheep is able to withstand the brier that catcheth him. The next, that man is of no more ability to beware of temptations, than the poor sheep is to avoid the brier, being preserved only by the diligence of the shepherd. The third, that as the shepherd is careful of his entangled and bribed sheep, so is God of his afflicted faithful. And the fourth is, that the people of Israel could take no harm of the water, because they entered the sea at God’s commandment. Whereof we learn, that no danger can hurt when God doth command us to enter into it; and all dangers overcome us if we choose them ourselves, besides God’s commandment; as Peter, when he went at God’s commandment upon the water, took no hurt; but when he entered into the bishop’s house upon his own presumption, was overcome and denied Christ. The Israelites, when they fought at God’s commandment, the peril was nothing; but when they would do it of their own heads, they perished: so that we are bound to attend upon God’s commandment, and then no danger shall destroy us, though it pain us. The other doctrine is in this, that God used the ministry of Moses and Aaron in the deliverance of his people, who did command them to do nothing but that the Lord did first bid. Whereof we learn that such as be ministers appointed of God, and do nothing but as God commandeth, are to be followed; as Paul saith, “Follow me, as I follow Christ.”—*John Hooper.*

Verse 20.—“*Thou leddest thy people like a flock.*” Observe, the good shepherd leads his followers like sheep: First, with great solicitude and care, to protect them from wolves. Secondly, with consideration and kindness, for the sheep is a harmless animal. Thirdly, with a wise strictness, for sheep easily wander, and they are of all animals the most stupid.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—“*Leddest thy people.*” Our guiding must be mild and gentle, else it is not *duxisti*, but *traxisti*; drawing and driving, and no leading. *Leni spiritu non dura manu*, rather by an inward sweet influence to be led, than by an outward extreme violence to be forced forward. So did God lead his people here. Not the greatest pace, I wis, for they were a year marching that they might have posted in eleven days, as Moses saith. (Deut. i. 2.) No nor yet the nearest way neither, as Moses telleth us. (Ex. xiii. 18.) For he fetched a compass divers times, as all wise governors by his example must do, that desire rather safely to lead, than hastily to drive forward. “The Spirit of God leadeth this people,” saith Isaiah (ch. lxiii. 14) “as an horse is ridden down the hill into a valley;” which must not be at a gallop, lest horse and ruler both come down one over another; but warily and easily.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 20.—“*By the hand of Moses and Aaron.*” He says not, Moses and Aaron

led the people of Israel; but, *Thou* leddest the people, and that *thy* people, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Great was the power of these two men; nevertheless neither of them was the shepherd of the sheep, but each was a servant to the one and only true shepherd, to whom the sheep exclusively belonged. Nor yet was either the leader of the sheep, but the shepherd himself was present and led his own flock, to whom these two acted as servants. There are therefore three things to be learned from this passage. First, the sheep do not belong to the servants, but to the true shepherd. Secondly, the true shepherd is the leader of his own sheep. Thirdly, the office of Moses and Aaron was to attend to this duty, that the Lord's sheep should be properly led and pastured. So Christ himself leads the sheep, his own sheep, and for this work he employs the ministry of his servants.—*Musculus*.

Verse 20.—The Psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old; but there he must end: in his present intensity of passion he cannot trust himself to draw forth in detail any mere *lessons* of comfort. There are seasons when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simple contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The benefit of using the voice in private prayer.

Verses 1, 3, 5, 10.—Note the wise man's progress out of his soul trouble. I. I cried. II. I remembered. III. I considered. IV. I said.

Verse 2.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 853. "A Sermon for the Most Miserable of Men."

Verse 2.—I. Special prayer: "In the day," etc. II. Persevering prayer: hands lifted up to God by night as well as by day. III. Agonising prayer: "my soul refused to be comforted," until the answer came. "Being in an agony, he prayed," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (last clause).—When this is wise, and when it is censurable.

Verse 4.—I. A good man cannot rest on his bed until his soul rests on God. II. He cannot speak freely to others until God speaks peace to his soul.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Occupation for the sleepless, and consolation for the speechless.

Verses 5, 6.—There are four rules for obtaining comfort in affliction. I. The consideration of God's goodness to his people of old. II. Remembrance of our own past experience. III. Self-examination. IV. The diligent study of the word.—*G. R.*

Verse 6.—"Remembrance." A good memory is very helpful and useful. 1. It is a great means of *knowledge*: for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing? 2. It is a means of *faith*: 1 Cor. xv. 2. 3. It is a means of *comfort*. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. 4. It is a means of *thankfulness*. 5. It is a means of *hope*; for "experience worketh hope" (Rom. v. 4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience. 6. It is a means of *repentance*; for, how can we repent or mourn for what we have forgotten? 7. It is a means of *usefulness*. When one spark of *grace* is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also.—*R. Steele*.

Verse 7 (first clause).—To place the question in a strong light, let us consider, I. Of whom is the question raised? "the Lord." II. What course of action is in question? "cast off for ever." III. Towards whom would the action be performed?

Verse 8.—These questions, I. Suppose a change in the immutable Jehovah in two glorious attributes. II. Are contrary to all past evidence. III. Can only arise from the flesh and Satan; and, therefore, IV. Are to be met in the power of the Spirit, with strong faith in the Eternal God.

Verse 10.—A confession applicable to many other matters. Such as, fear of death, fear of desertion, dread of public service, sensitiveness of neglect, etc.

Verse 10.—“*My infirmity.*” Different meanings of this word. These would furnish a good subject. Some infirmities are to be patiently endured, others gloried in, others taken in prayer to God for his Spirit’s help, and others lamented and repented of.

Verses 10, 11, 12.—Remember, meditate, talk.

Verses 11, 12.—I. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past. II. Consolation increased by meditation. III. Consolation strengthened by communication: “and talk,” etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—Themes for thought and topics for conversation. Creation, Providence, Redemption, etc.

Verses 13, 19.—“*In the sea,*” “*in the sanctuary.*” God’s way incomprehensible, though undoubtedly right: in his holiness lies the answer to the enigmas.

Verse 14.—*Thaumaturgets*, or the Great Wonder-worker.

Verse 15.—“*And Joseph.*” The honour of nourishing those who have been begotten of God by other men’s labours.

Verse 15.—Redemption by power, the consequence, evidence, and necessary attendant of redemption by price.

Verse 15.—I. The redeemed: “thy people;” “the sons of,” etc. 1. In captivity though they are his people. 2. His people though they are in captivity. II. The redemption: from Egyptian bondage. III. The Redeemer: “Thou, with thine arm,” etc. God by Christ, his arm: “Mine own arm brought,” etc. ‘To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 16—18.—I. The homage of nature to the God of grace. II. Its subserviency to his designs.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. The ways of God to men are peculiar: “in the sea;” “thy path,” etc. II. They are uniform, they lie in regular “footsteps.” III. They are inscrutable: like the path of the ship upon the waters, not of the ploughshare on the land.

Verse 19.—God’s way is in the sea. In things changeable, ungovernable, vast, unfathomable, terrible, overwhelming, the Lord has the ruling power.

Verse 20.—I. The subjects of divine guidance: “thy people.” II. The manner of their guidance: “like a flock”—separated, united, dependent. III. The agents employed: “by the hand;” the Great Shepherd leads by the hand of under-shepherds. “May every under-shepherd keep his eye intent on Thee.”—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Church history. I. The church a flock. II. God seen as leading it on. III. Instrumentality always used.