

PSALM LXXIX.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Psalm of Asaph. *A Psalm of complaint such as Jeremiah might have written amid the ruins of the beloved city. It evidently treats of times of invasion, oppression, and national overthrow. Asaph was a patriotic poet, and was never more at home than when he rehearsed the history of his nation. Would to God that we had national poets whose song should be of the Lord.*

DIVISION.—From verse 1 to 4 the complaint is poured out, from 5 to 12 prayer is presented, and, in the closing verse, praise is promised.

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.

4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

1. "*O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.*" It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread. All Canaan is thy land, but thy foes have ravaged it. "*Thy holy temple have they defiled.*" Into the inmost sanctuary they have profanely forced their way, and there behaved themselves arrogantly. Thus, the holy land, the holy house, and the holy city, were all polluted by the uncircumcised. It is an awful thing when wicked men are found in the church and numbered with her ministry. Then are the tares sown with the wheat, and the poisoned gourds cast into the pot. "*They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*" After devouring and defiling, they have come to destroying, and have done their work with a cruel completeness. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the joy of the nation, the abode of her God, was totally wrecked. Alas! alas, for Israel! It is sad to see the foe in our own house, but worse to meet him in the house of God: they strike hardest who smite at our religion. The Psalmist piles up the agony; he was a suppliant, and he knew how to bring out the strong points of his case. We ought to order our case before the Lord with as much care as if our success depended on our pleading. Men in earthly courts use all their powers to obtain their ends, and so also should we state our case with earnestness, and bring forth our strong arguments.

2. "*The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.*" The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. Beasts on which man could not feed fed on him. The flesh of creation's Lord became meat for carrion crows and hungry dogs. Dire are the calamities of war, yet have they happened to God's saints and servants. This might well move the heart of the poet, and he did well to appeal to the heart of God by reciting the grievous evil. Such might have been the lamentation of an early Christian as he thought of the amphitheatre and all its deeds of blood. Note in the two verses how the plea is made to turn upon God's property in the temple and the people:—we read "thine inheritance," "thy temple," "thy servants," and "thy saints." Surely the Lord will defend his own, and will not suffer rampant adversaries to despoil them.

3. "*Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem.*" The invaders slew men as if their blood was of no more value than so much water; they poured it forth as lavishly as when the floods deluge the plains. The city of holy peace became a field of blood. "*And there was none to bury them.*" The few who survived were afraid to engage in the task. This was a serious trial and grievous horror to the Jews, who evinced much care concerning their burials. Has it come to this, that there are none to bury the dead of thy family, O Lord? Can none be found to grant a shovelful of earth with which to cover up the poor bodies of thy murdered saints? What woe is here! How glad should we be that we live in so quiet an age, when the blast of the trumpet is no more heard in our streets.

4. "*We are become a reproach to our neighbours.*" Those who have escaped the common foe make a mockery of us; they fling our disasters into our face, and ask us, "Where is your God?" Pity should be shown to the afflicted, but in too many cases it is not so, for a hard logic argues that those who suffer more than ordinary calamities must have been extraordinary sinners. Neighbours especially are often the reverse of neighbourly; the nearer they dwell the less they sympathise. It is most pitiable it should be so. "*A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*" To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one. Asaph was an excellent advocate, for he gave a telling description of calamities which were under his own eyes, and in which he sympathised, but we have a mightier Intercessor above, who never ceases to urge our suit before the eternal throne.

5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

5. "*How long, Lord?*" Will there be no end to these chastisements? They are most sharp and overwhelming; wilt thou much longer continue them? "*Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" Is thy mercy gone so that thou wilt for ever smite? "*Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?*" There was great cause for the Lord to be jealous, since idols had been set up, and Israel had gone aside from his worship, but the Psalmist begs the Lord not to consume his people utterly as with fire, but to abate their woes.

6. "*Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee.*" If thou must smite look further afield; spare thy children and strike thy foes. There are lands where thou art in no measure acknowledged; be pleased to visit these first with thy judgments, and let thine erring Israel have a respite. "*And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.*" Hear us the prayerful, and avenge thyself upon the prayerless. Sometimes providence appears to deal much more severely with the righteous than with the wicked, and this verse is a bold appeal founded upon such an appearance. It in effect says—Lord, if thou must empty out the vials of thy wrath, begin with those who have no measure of regard for thee, but are openly up in arms against thee; and be pleased to spare thy people, who are thine notwithstanding all their sins.

7. "*For they have devoured Jacob.*" The oppressor would quite eat up the

saints if he could. If these lions do not swallow us, it is because the Lord has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. "*And laid waste his dwelling place,*" or his pasture. The invader left no food for man or beast, but devoured all as the locust. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

8. "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" Sins accumulate against nations. Generations lay up stores of transgressions to be visited upon their successors; hence this urgent prayer. In Josiah's days the most earnest repentance was not able to avert the doom which former long years of idolatry had sealed against Judah. Every man has reason to ask for an act of oblivion for his past sins, and every nation should make this a continual prayer. "*Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.*" Hasten to our rescue, for our nation is hurrying down to destruction; our numbers are diminished and our condition is deplorable. Observe how penitent sorrow seizes upon the sweeter attributes, and draws her pleas from the "tender mercies" of God; see, too, how she pleads her own distress, and not her goodness, as a motive for the display of mercy. Let souls who are brought very low find an argument in their abject condition. What can so powerfully appeal to pity as dire affliction? The quaint prayer-book version is touchingly expressive: "O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon; for we are come to great misery." This supplication befits a sinner's life. We have known seasons when this would have been as good a prayer for our burdened heart as any that human mind could compose.

9. "*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name.*" This is masterly pleading. No argument has such force as this. God's glory was tarnished in the eyes of the heathen by the defeat of his people, and the profanation of his temple; therefore, his distressed servants implore his aid, that his great name may no more be the scorn of blaspheming enemies. "*And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*" Sin,—the root of the evil—is seen and confessed; pardon of sin is sought as well as removal of chastisement, and both are asked not as matters of right, but as gifts of grace. God's name is a second time brought into the pleading. Believers will find it their wisdom to use very frequently this noble plea: it is the great gun of the battle, the mightiest weapon in the armoury of prayer.

10. "*Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?*" Why should those impious mouths be filled with food so sweet to them, but so bitter to us? When the afflictions of God's people become the derision of sinners, and cause them to ridicule religion, we have good ground for expostulation with the Lord. "*Let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.*" Justice is desired that God may be vindicated and feared. It is but meet that those who taunted the people of God because they smarted under the Lord's rod, should be made themselves also to smart by the same hand. If any complain of the spirit of this imprecation, we think they do so needlessly; for it is the common feeling of every patriot to desire to see his country's wrongs redressed, and of every Christian to wish a noble vengeance for the church by the overthrow of error. The destruction of Antichrist is the recompense of the blood of the martyrs, and by no means is it to be deprecated; far rather is it one of the most glorious hopes of the latter days.

11. "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" When thy people cannot sing, and dare not shout aloud, then let their silent sigh ascend into thine ear, and secure for them deliverance. These words are suitable for the afflicted in a great variety of conditions; men of experience will know how to adapt them to their own position and to use them in reference to others. "*According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die.*" Faith grows while it prays; the appeal to the Lord's tender mercy is here supplemented by another addressed to the divine power, and the petitioner rises from a request for those who are brought low, to a prayer for those who are on the verge of death, set apart as victims for the slaughter. How consoling is it to desponding believers to reflect that God can preserve even those who bear the sentence of death in themselves. Men and devils may consign us to perdition, while sickness drags us to the grave, and sorrow sinks us in the dust; but, there is One who can keep our soul alive, ay, and bring it up again from the depths of despair. A lamb shall live between the lion's jaws if the Lord wills it. Even in the charnel, life shall vanquish death if God be near.

12. "And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord." They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity. Pour into their laps good store of shame because they dared insult the God of Israel. Recompense them fully, till they have received the perfect number of punishments. It will be so. The wish of the text will become matter of fact. The Lord will avenge his own elect though he bear long with them.

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

13. "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever; we will shew forth thy praise to all generations." The gratitude of the church is lasting as well as deep. On her tablets are memorials of great deliverances, and, as long as she shall exist, her sons will rehearse them with delight. We have a history which will survive all other records, and it is bright in every line with the glory of the Lord. From the direst calamities God's glory springs, and the dark days of his people become the prelude to unusual displays of the Lord's love and power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is, in every respect, the pendant of Ps. lxxiv. The points of contact are not merely matters of style (cf. lxxix. 5, "how long for ever?" with lxxiv. 1, 10; lxxix. 10, עַד, with lxxiv. 5; lxxix. 2, the giving over to the wild beasts, with lxxiv. 19, 14; lxxix. 13, the conception of Israel as of a flock, in which respect Ps. lxxix. is judiciously appended to Ps. lxxviii. 70—72, with Ps. lxxiv. 1, and also with Ps. lxxiv. 19.) But the mutual relationships lie still deeper. Both Psalms have the same Asaphic stamp, both stand in the same relation to Jeremiah, and both send forth their complaints out of the same circumstances of the time, concerning a destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, such as only the age of the Seleucidæ (1 Macc. 1. 31, iii. 45, 2 Macc. viii. 3), together with the Chaldæan period can exhibit, and in conjunction with a defiling of the Temple and a massacre of the servants of God, of the *Chastdm* (1 Macc. vii. 13, 2 Macc. xiv. 6), such as the age of the Seleucidæ exclusively can exhibit. The work of the destruction of the Temple which was in progress in Ps. lxxiv., appears in Psalm lxxix. as completed, and here, as in the former Psalm, one receives the impression of the outrages, not of some war, but of some persecution: it is straightway the religion of Israel for the sake of which the sanctuaries are destroyed and the faithful are massacred.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—"Thy holy temple have they defiled." This was not only the highest degree of the enemy's inhumanity and barbarity, . . . but also a calamity to the people of God never to be sufficiently deplored. For by the overthrow of the temple the true worship of God, which had been instituted at that temple alone, appeared to be extinguished, and the knowledge of God to vanish from among mankind. No pious heart could ponder this without the greatest grief.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"They have laid Jerusalem on heaps." They have made Jerusalem to be nothing but graves. Such multitudes were cruelly slain and murdered, that Jerusalem was, as it were, but one grave.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 1—4.—In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides "took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, the flesh of thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them." And

in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said, "Let us depart hence;" when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death; when insult, and shame, and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was a punishment for many and long-repeated crimes; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still!—"Plain Commentary."

Verses 1, 4, 5.—Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest; the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure (Ps. cii. 14). It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations, dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down-trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own Psalmist,—"*O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? will thou be angry for ever?*"—J. L. Porter, in "*The Giant Cities of Bashan.*" 1865.

Verse 2.—"*The dead bodies of thy servants,*" etc. It is a true saying of S. Augustine, The care of our funeral, the manner of our burial, the exequial pomp, all these *magis sunt vivorum solatia quam subsidia mortuorum*, are rather comforts for the living than any way helps for the dead. To be interred profiteth not the party deceased; his body feels it not, his soul regards it not; and we know that many holy martyrs have been excluded from burial, who in a Christian scorn thereof bespake their persecutors in words of those which were slain at Pharsalia: "Thou effectest nothing by this anger; what matters it whether disease dissolve the body, or the funeral pile!" But yet there is an honesty* which belongeth to the dead body of man. Jehu commanded Jezebel to be buried; David thanked the people of Jabesh-Gilead for burying of Saul. Peter, who commanded Ananias and Sapphira, those false abdicators of their patrimony, to die, commanded to have them buried being dead. It is an axiom of charity. *Mortuo non prohibeas gratiam*, withhold not kindness from the dead. It shows our love and regard for men in our own flesh to see them buried; it manifesteth our faith and hope of the resurrection; and therefore when that body which is to rise again, and to be made glorious and immortal in heaven, shall be cast to the fowls of the air or beasts of the field, it argueth in God great indignation against sin (Jer. xxii. 19, of Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried as an ass is buried, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem"); in man inhuman and barbarous cruelty.—John Dunster, in "*Prodromus.*" 1613.

* i.e., a right, a proper respect.

Verses 2, 3.—[The following extract is from the writings of a godly monk who applies the language of the Psalm to the persecutions of his time. He wrote at Rome during the period of the Reformation, and was evidently a favourer of the gospel.] At this day what river is there, what brook, in this our afflicted Europe, (if it is still ours) that we have not seen flowing with the blood of Christians? And that too shed by the swords and spears of Christians? Wherefore there is made a great wailing in Israel; and the princes and elders mourn; the young men and virgins are become weak, and the beauty of the woman is changed. Why? The holy place itself is desolate as a wilderness. Hast thou ever seen so dire a spectacle? They have piled up in heaps the dead bodies of thy servants to be devoured by birds: the unburied remains of thy saints, I say, they have given to the beasts of the earth. What greater cruelty could ever be committed? So great was the effusion of human blood at that time, that the rivulets, yea, rather, the rivers round the entire circuit of the city, flowed with it. And thus truly is the form of our most beautiful city laid waste, and its loveliness; and so reduced is it, that not even the men who carry forth dead bodies for burial can be obtained, though pressed with the offer of large rewards; so full of fear and horror were their minds: and this was all the more bitter, because "*We are become a reproach to those round about us,*" and are spoken of in derision by the infidels abroad and by enemies at home. Who is so bold as to endure this and live? How long therefore shall this most bitter inquietude last?—*Giambattista Folengo. 1490—1559.*

Verse 2.—"*Dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls.*" With what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet, to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy servants.*" "*Thy saints.*" No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them: for here, albeit their carcases fall, and be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*We are become a reproach.*" If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were "*counted as the off-scouring of all things.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*" This was more grievous to them than stripes or wounds, saith Chrysostom, because these being inflicted upon the body are divided after a sort betwixt soul and body, but scorns and reproaches do wound the soul only. *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia,* they leave a sting behind them, as Cicero observeth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—It is the height of reproach a father casts upon his child when he commands his slave to beat him. Of all outward judgments this is the sorest, to have strangers rule over us, as being made up of shame and cruelty. If once the heathen come into God's inheritance, no wonder the church complains that she is "*become a reproach to her neighbours, a shame and derision to all round about her.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" The voice of complaint says not, How long, Lord, shall this wickedness of our enemy endure? How long shall we see this desolation? But, how long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever? We are admonished, therefore, in this passage, that we should recognise the anger of God against us in all our afflictions, lest as the nations are accustomed, we only accuse the malice of our enemies, and never think of our sins and the divine punishment. It cannot be that he who acknowledges the anger of God that is upon him, should not at the same time acknowledge his fault also, unless he wishes to attribute the iniquity to God of being angry and inflicting stripes upon the undeserving.—*Musc ulus.*

Verse 5.—The word "*jealousy*" signifies not mere revenge, but revenge mingled

with love, for unless he loved, says Jerome, he would not be jealous, and after the manner of a husband avenge the sin of his wife.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 6.—Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened with punishment. The prophet's imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, see Jer. x. 25, and same imprecation, Ps. lxxix. 6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call not upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer, then, is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them.—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 7.—“*They have devoured Jacob.*” Like wolves who cruelly tear and devour a flock of sheep. For the word which follows signifies not only a habitation in general, but also a sheepcot.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 8.—“*O remember not against us former iniquities.*” The prophet numbers himself with the people not only in their affliction, but also in their distress, and liability to the anger of God because of the crimes committed. He was not a partner in those enormous sins by which they had provoked the jealousy of God, and yet he exempts not himself from the people at large. Thus, in the following verse, he says, “*And purge away our sins.*” He says not, Remember not the iniquity of this people; nor, And purge away their sins: But, Remember not *our* iniquities: and Purge away *our* sins. In this way the prophets, though holy men, were wont to make themselves sharers of the people's sins, not by sinning, but by weeping and praying and imploring the mercy of God. See Isaiah lix. 12. “*Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.*” . . . Daniel ix. 5. “*We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,*” etc. 1. Let us also follow this example, that so far we may have fellowship with the whole Church, that we may be partners of those who truly love and worship God. 2. Then, that abstaining from false worship, we may not sin wickedly with the wicked. 3. That whenever we ought to weep or pray, we may mourn and confess not only our own, but also the shortcomings of the whole church corporate, as if they were common to ourselves, even if we have no part in them, and may implore for them the mercy of God.—*Musculus*.

Verse 8.—“*O remember not against us former iniquities.*” The Jews have a saying, that there is no punishment happens to Israel, but there is an ounce in it for the sin of the calf; their meaning is, that this is always remembered and visited, according to Exodus xxxii. 34; the phrase may take in all the sins of former persons, their ancestors, and of former times, from age to age, they had continued in, which had brought ruin upon them; and all their own sins of nature and of youth, all past ones to the present time.—*John Gill*.

Verse 8.—“*O remember not against us former iniquities.*” Old debts vex most; the delay of payment increases them by interest upon interest; and the return of them being unexpected, a person is least provided for them. We count old sores, breaking forth, incurable. Augustus wondered at a person sleeping quietly that was very much in debt, and sent for his pillow, saying, “surely there is some strange virtue in it, that makes him rest so secure.” My brethren, if one debt unto God's law be more than the whole creation can satisfy, what do any of us mean to rest secure with so vast a burden upon our consciences and accounts? Ah! take heed thou beest not surprised and arrested with old debts. *O God, thou rememberest former iniquities against us.* God will call over, and charge thy sins upon thee, when all the sweet is gone.—*Elias Pledger* (—1676), in “*Morning Exercises.*”

Verse 8.—“*O remember not against us former iniquities.*” The only right way to remedy a miserable condition, is to sue for the remission of sins, and for the renewed evidence of reconciliation: for before the church here do ask any thing for their outward delivery, they pray, “*O remember not against us former iniquities.*”—*David Dickson*.

Verse 8.—“*Speedily.*” Lest they come too late, for we are at our last gasp.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 8.—“*Prevent.*” God's mercy must anticipate. “*come to meet,*” man's necessity.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 8.—"We are brought very low." Literally, "We are greatly thinned." Few of us remain.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"We are brought very low." We are very greatly exhausted (emptied out); that is, we are utterly destitute of all things, both fortune, and strength of mind and body, just like a well or a vessel completely emptied.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"Very low." Past the hopes of all human help, and therefore the glory of our deliverance will be wholly thine.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 9.—"Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name and deliver us." "Help us" under our troubles, that we may bear them well; "help us" out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. "Deliver us" from sin, and from sinking.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"God of our salvation." If human reason were to judge of the many and great blows wherewith God so often smote and wasted his people, it would call God not the Saviour of the people, but the destroyer and oppressor. But the faith of the Prophet judges far otherwise of God, and sees even in an angry and pursuing God, the salvation of his people. The gods of the nations, though they do not afflict even in temporal things, are gods not of the salvation of their worshippers but of their perdition. But our God, even when he is most severely angry, and smites, is not the God of destruction, but of salvation.—*Musculus.*

Verse 9.—"For thy name's sake." Twice the appeal is made "for thy name's sake;" that revelation of God which he had made of himself to Moses when he passed by and proclaimed the name of Jehovah, Ex. xxiv. 6, 7. Compare Ps. xx. 1, xxiii. 3; xxix. 2.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9.—"For thy name's sake." The good which God doth unto his church, be it temporal or spiritual, is for his own sake. What I do (saith God), I do for mine holy name's sake; there is nothing to move me but mine own name; that is holy, great, and glorious, and I will for my name's sake do much for my church and people. That they were preserved in Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were brought out of Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were replanted in Canaan, was for his holy name's sake; that they had a temple, sacrifices, priests, prophets, ordinances again, was for his name's sake; when they were near to destruction often, in former days, God wrought for his name's sake, Ezek. xx.; so Isaiah xlvi. 8, 9. It is not for the enemies' sake that God doth preserve or deliver his people; nor for their sakes, their prayers, tears, faith, obedience, holiness, that he doth great things for them, bestows great mercies upon them; but it is for his own name's sake. For man's sake God cursed the earth, Gen. viii. 21; but it is for his name's sake that he blesseth it. The choicest mercies God's people have, are for his name's sake: they have pardon of sin for his name's sake, Ps. xxv. 11, 1 John ii. 12; purging of sin for his name's sake; Ps. lxxix. 9; leading in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, Ps. xxiii. 2; quickening of their dead and dull hearts for his name's sake, Ps. cxliii. 11. Though his people offend him, yet he forsakes them not, for his great name's sake.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 9.—If God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love "mercy rather than sacrifice." God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name: and he delights more in the mercy shown to one than in the blood of all the damned, that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy, in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow of it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. "This," said Abigail to David, "shall be no grief to thee nor offence of heart unto my Lord," 1 Sam. xxv.; she meant, he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in hell.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—When the Lord's people are brought very low, let them not look for a lifting up or relief except from God only; therefore say they here, "Help us, O

Lord." Such as have laid hold on God for salvation promised in the covenant, may also look for particular deliveries out of particular troubles, as appendices of the main benefit of salvation; therefore, "*Help us, O God of our salvation,*" say they. When men do ask anything, the granting whereof may glorify God, they may confidently expect to have it; and in special when God may be so glorified, and his people may also be preserved and comforted: "*Help us (say they) for the glory of thy name: and deliver us.*" As the conscience of sin useth to step in oftener between us and mercy, so must we call oftener for remission of sin; for earnest affection can double and treble the same petition without babbling: "*Deliver us, and purge away our sins.*" It is the glory of the Lord to forget sin, and when remission of sins is prayed for according to God's promise, the Lord's glory is engaged for the helping of faith to obtain it: "*Purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee." The propriety of styling the sons of Adam "*prisoners,*" can scarcely fail to be discerned when we remember the restraint which the immortal spirit endures whilst it inhabits its present earthly house, or recollect the hardships to which many of our race are subjected, or, once more, the degrading slavery to which they reduce themselves by serving their own lusts and refusing to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ would make them free. Now, in whichever of these senses men are prisoners, it is clear that they have occasion and that they are wont to sigh, and that it is the part of the pious and faithful believer in God to bear this in mind, and, inasmuch as he has put on bowels of compassion, to say, as well for others as for himself, "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" Three things, then, are suggested by the first clause of the passage before us. The first is, that all who live in this world are prisoners. . . . We would go on to remark, secondly, that these various prisoners have their respective sorrowful sighings. Thirdly, then, let it be observed, will the believer, conscious of these several sighings of the crowd of prisoners whom he sees all around him, pray to the Almighty that they may come before his everlasting presence.—*W. C. Le Breton.* (1849.)

Verse 11.—"The sighing." The nature of a sigh will suggest to us some important particulars connected with the state of bondage spoken of in the text. A sigh is an *unexpressed declaration*. Although we do not speak, still we can tell a long tale of sorrow with a sigh. How often the mourner who will not tell a human being of his grief, will vent it when he is alone, with a long-drawn, an uneven sigh! Now, I direct your attention to this, because it is a perfect picture of the spiritual condition in which some men are. They are not loud in their complaints; they are not standing in the corners of the streets proclaiming their exceeding sinfulness; they are not continually making their neighbours and their friends hear them preach about their vileness—a vileness which, if any one else attributed to them, would stir up all their wrath. Theirs is not the character of men in strife; but of men bearing a heavy burden, which presses from them an evidence of what they endure. And if any of you, brethren, thus walk in sighs and sorrow before God, he takes these sighs as applications to him for relief. Your misery, if entirely pent in, would be obstinate impenitency, but if vented, even in a sigh, is a declaration of your need. Let me encourage you, brethren, not to spare these evidences of your state. There are times when you feel so dead that you cannot enter into long confessions; when the spirit is so weary that you feel that you cannot speak. Much might at such a season be spoken by a sign. "Destroy it not," we say, "for a blessing is in it:" pour it forth, and it will reach the throne. And here it will prove to be not only an *unexpressed declaration of your state*, but also an *unexpressed wish for deliverance* therefrom. When the captive gazes through the bars of iron which night and day stand like mute sentinels before the narrow window of his cell, and when his eyes fall upon the green fields and groves beyond, he sighs, and turns away from the scene with a wish. He spake not a word, yet he wished. That sigh was a wish that he could be set free. And such sighs as these are heard by God. Your longings, your sorrows, when they are not fulfilled, your sad thoughts,—“Oh! when shall I be delivered from the burden of my sin, and from the coldness of my heart!”—all these wishes were your sighs, and they have been heard on high.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 11.—"The prisoner." An eastern prison is still a place of great misery, chiefly from the limited supply of water to the prisoners.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 11.—“Come before thee.”

Though not a human voice he hears,
And not a human form appears
His solitude to share,
He is not all alone—the eye
Of him who hears the prisoner's sigh
Is even on him there.

J. L. Chester,

Verse 11.—“Preserve thou those that are appointed to die.” Ought not pious people more closely to imitate their heavenly Father in caring for those who have been condemned to die? An eminent Christian lady keeps a record of all who have been sentenced to death, so far as she hears of them, and prays for them every day till their end come. Is not such conduct in sympathy with the heart of God?—William S. Plummer.

Verse 12.—“Render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom,” etc. This may seem to be contrary to common justice; because that the punishment should not exceed the fault. But here you are to know, that this hath not respect unto what the enemies of God's church have acted, but what they have deserved. And therefore when the prophet here says, “Render unto our neighbours sevenfold,” it is not sevenfold beyond their deserts; for one scorn that a wicked man poureth upon a child of God (and so upon God), cannot be recompensed with ten thousand reproaches poured upon wicked men. The least reproach poured upon God is an infinite wrong. And the reproach of his people is so much his, as he reckons it as his own; and will therefore render to their enemies their reproach “sevenfold” (and that's but equal) “into their bosom.”—Abraham Wright.

Verse 12.—“Unto our neighbours.” Because their scorn was more intolerable, and also more inexcusable than the oppression of distant enemies.—J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verse 12.—“Into their bosom.” An expression which originally seems to have had reference to the practice of carrying and holding things in the lap, or the front fold of the flowing oriental dress, has in usage the accessory sense of retribution or retaliation.—Joseph Addison Alexander.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 4.—Saints the subject of derision to sinners. When justly so. When unjustly. What do they see to excite ridicule; what shall we do under the trial; how will it end?

Verse 5.—I. The cause of the anger: jealousy. II. The moderation of it. If it continued for ever, the people would perish, the promises be unfulfilled, the covenant fail, and the Lord's honour be impeached. III. The staying of it. By prayer; by pleading his name, his glory, and the blood of Jesus.

Verse 8.—A sinner's confession, petition, and plea.

Verse 9.—I. A threefold prayer. II. An encouraging title: “God of our salvation.” III. A victorious plea.

Verse 9.—I. The Prayer. “Help us,” etc. 1. Purge away sin. 2. Deliver us from our troubles. 3. Help us to serve thee in future. II. The Plea. 1. For thy name's sake. 2. The glory of thy name. 3. The glory of thy name as our salvation. The order in both cases is inverted.—G. R.

Verse 10.—The revenge for the martyrs, which it is lawful and incumbent upon us to desire.

Verse 11.—I. The prisoner. 1. Under forced bondage to sin. 2. Under the bondage of conviction. 3. In the dungeon of despair. II. The prisoner's application for relief. III. The source from which he looked for help.—P. B. Power.

Verse 11.—I. The degree of protection solicited: "According to the greatness of thy power." II. The protection itself: "Preserve thou." III. The objects of it: "Those that are appointed to die."—*W. C. Le Breton.*

Verse 11.—I. Mournful condition. A prisoner, sighing, appointed to die. II. Hopeful facts: a God, a God hearing sighs, a God of great power. III. Suitable prayers: "come before thee": "preserve."

Verse 11.—"Appointed to die," used as a description of deep spiritual distress. Fears of the divine decree, of having apostatised, of having sinned away the day of grace, of the sin which is unto death, etc. How these cases can be effectually met.

Verse 13.—The obligations of the Protestant church based on her martyrs' blood, her great deliverances, her nearness to God. She ought to secure gospel teaching to coming generations.

Verse 13.—I. Relation claimed: "We thy people, the sheep of," etc. II. Obligation admitted: "So we," etc., when thou hast interposed for our deliverance, we will praise thee. III. Resolution formed. 1. To give thanks for ever. 2. To transmit his praise to generations following.—*G. R.*
