

## PSALM LXXX.

**TITLE.**—To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth. *For the fourth time we have a song upon Shoshannim, or the lilies; the former ones being Psalms xlv., lx., and lxix. Why this title is given it would be difficult to say in every case, but the delightfully poetical form of the present Psalm may well justify the charming title. Eduth signifies testimony. The Psalm is a testimony of the church as a "lily among thorns." Some interpreters understand the present title to refer to an instrument of six strings, and Schleusner translates the two words, "the hexachord of testimony." It may be that further research will open up to us these "dark sayings upon a harp." We shall be content to accept them as evidence that sacred song was not lightly esteemed in the days of old. A Psalm of Asaph. A later Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.*

**DIVISION.**—The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times: "Turn us again, O God," etc. Verses 1—3 is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel; from 4—7 is a lamentation over the national woe; and from 8—19 the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beautiful allegory as a vine. It is a mournful Psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.

### EXPOSITION.

**G**IVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.

3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

1. "*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel.*" Hear thou the bleatings of thy suffering flock. The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled Psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace. Good old Jacob delighted to think of God as the Shepherd of Israel, and this verse may refer to his dying expression: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." We may be quite sure that he who deigns to be a shepherd to his people will not turn a deaf ear to their complaints "*Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," and if so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place. The term may, however, refer to the ten tribes of which Manasseh was the acknowledged head. The Lord had of old in the wilderness led, guided, shepherded all the tribes; and, therefore, the appeal is made to him. The Lord's doings in the past are strong grounds for appeal and expectation as to the present and the future. "*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.*" The Lord's especial presence was revealed upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and in all our pleadings we should come to the Lord by this way: only upon the mercy-seat will God reveal his grace, and only there can we hope to commune with him. Let us ever plead the name of Jesus, who is our true mercy-seat, to whom we may come boldly, and through whom we may look for a display of the glory of the Lord on our behalf. Our greatest dread is the withdrawal of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs.

2. "*Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.*" It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for

they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so it with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the same breath: these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up a prayer for all the sections of the one church.

3. *"Turn us again, O God."* It is not so much said, "turn our captivity," but turn "us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition. It needs the Lord himself to do this, for conversion is as divine a work as creation; and those who have been once turned unto God, if they at any time backslide, as much need the Lord to turn them again as to turn them at the first. The word may be read, "restore us;" verily, it is a choice mercy that "he restoreth my soul." *"And cause thy face to shine."* Be favourable to us, smile upon us. This was the high priest's blessing upon Israel: what the Lord has already given us by our High-priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of him. *"And we shall be saved."* All that is wanted for salvation is the Lord's favour. One glance of his gracious eye would transform Tophet into Paradise. No matter how fierce the foe, or dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. This verse is a very useful prayer. Since we too often turn aside, let us often with our lips and heart cry, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

4. *"O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?"* How long shall the smoke of thy wrath drown the smoking incense of our prayers? Prayer would fain enter thy holy place but thy wrath battles with it, and prevents its entrance. That God should be angry with us when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief. With many a pang may the pleader ask, "How long?" Commander of all the hosts of thy creatures, able to save thy saints in their extremity, shall they for ever cry to thee in vain?

5. *"Thou feedest them with the bread of tears."* Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his bitter morsel. Thy people ate bread of wheat before, but now they receive from thine own hand no better diet than bread of tears. *"And givest them tears to drink in great measure."* Tears are both their food and their drink, and that without stint. They swallow tierces of tears, and swim in gulfs of grief, and all this by God's own appointment; not because their enemies have them in their power by force of arms, but because their God refuses to interpose. Tear-bread is even more the fruit of the curse than to eat bread in the sweat of one's face, but it shall by divine love be turned into a greater blessing by ministering to our spiritual health.

6. *Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours."* Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil. A neighbour's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are so un-neighbourly as envious neighbours. *"And our enemies laugh among themselves."* They

find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which leeth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil.

7. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*" The prayer rises in the form of its address to God. He is here the God of Hosts. The more we approach the Lord in prayer and contemplation the higher will our ideas of him become.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

8. "*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt.*" There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction. "*Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.*" Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruitbearing plant.

9. "*Thou preparedst room before it.*" The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captured, and Canaan became like a plot of land made ready for a vineyard. "*And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.*" Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread on every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "*rooting roots,*" and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

10. "*The hills were covered with the shadow of it.*" Israel dwelt up to the mountains' summits, cultivating every foot of soil. The nation multiplied and

became so great that other lands felt its influence, or were shadowed by it. "*And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.*" The nation itself was so great that even its tribes were powerful and worthy to take rank among the mighty. A more correct rendering describes the cedars as covered with the vine, and we know that in many lands vines climb the trees, and cover them. What a vine must that be which ascends the cedars of God, and even overtops them! It is a noble picture of the prosperity of the Israelitish people in their best days. In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.

11. "*She sent out her boughs unto the sea.*" Along the Mediterranean and, perhaps, across its waters, Israel's power was felt. "*And her branches unto the river.*" On her eastern side she pushed her commerce even to the Euphrates. Those were brave days for Israel, and would have continued, had not sin cut them short. When the church pleases the Lord, her influence becomes immense, far beyond the proportion which her numbers or her power would lead us to expect; but, alas! when the Lord leaves her she becomes as worthless, useless, and despised as an untended vine, which is of all plants the most valueless.

12. "*Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?*" Thou hast withdrawn protection from her after caring for her with all this care;—wherefore is this, O Lord? A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury: none regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies; such has the church full often been. "*So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her.*" Her cruel neighbours have a pluck at her, and marauding bands, like roaming beasts, must need pick at her. With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage.

13. "*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" Such creatures are famous for rending and devouring vines. Babylon, like a beast from the marshes of the Euphrates, came up and wasted Judah and Israel. Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs. "*And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.*" First one foe and then another wreaked vengeance on the nation, neither did God interpose to chase them away. Ruin followed ruin; the fox devoured the young shoots which had been saved from the damage wrought by the boar. Alas, poor land. How low wast thou brought! An oak or cedar might have been crushed by such ravages, but how canst thou endure it, O weak and tender vine? See what evils follow in the train of sin, and how terrible a thing it is for a people to be forsaken of their God.

14. "*Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts.*" Turn thyself to us as well as us to thee. Thou hast gone from us because of our sins, come back to us, for we sigh and cry after thee. Or, if it be too much to ask thee to come, then do at least give us some consideration and cast an eye upon our griefs. "*Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.*" Do not close thine eyes; it is thy vine, do not utterly turn away from it as though it were quite gone from thy mind. Great Husbandman, at least note the mischief which the beasts have done, for then it may be thy heart will pity, and thy hand will be outstretched to deliver.

15. "*And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted.*" Shall all thy care be lost? Thou hast done so much, wilt thou lose thy labour? With thy power and wisdom thou didst great things for thy people, wilt thou now utterly give them up, and suffer thine enemies to exult in the evil which they delight in? "*And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.*" A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected. Though the vine had been left, yet one branch had been regarded of the Lord, as if to furnish a scion for another vine; therefore, is the prayer made in this form. Let us pray the Lord, if he will not in the first place look upon his church, to look upon the Lord Jesus, and then behold her in mercy for his sake. This is the true art of prayer, to put Christ forward and cry,

"Him and then the sinner see,  
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

16. "*It is burned with fire.*" In broken utterances the sorrowful singer utters his distress. The vineyard was like a forest which has been set on fire; the choice vines were charred and dead. "*It is cut down.*" The cruel axe had hacked after

its murderous fashion, the branches were lopped, the trunk was wounded, desolation reigned supreme. "*They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.*" God's rebuke was to Israel what fire and axe would be to a vine. His favour is life, and his wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon our churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger.

17. "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand.*" Let thy power rest on thy true Benjamin, son of thy right hand; give a commission to some chosen man by whom thou wilt deliver. Honour him, save us, and glorify thyself. There is no doubt here an outlook to the Messiah, for whom believing Jews had learned to look as the Saviour in time of trouble. "*Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*" Send forth thy power with him whom thou shalt strengthen to accomplish thy purposes of grace. It pleases God to work for the sons of men by sons of men. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. O Lord, fulfil thy promise to the man of thy right hand, who participates in thy glory, and give him to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

18. "*So will not we go back from thee.*" Under the leadership of one whom God had chosen the nation would be kept faithful, grace would work gratitude, and so cement them to their allegiance. It is in Christ that we abide faithful: because he lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from him. "*Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*" If the Lord gives life out of death, his praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When he visits our souls anew we shall be revived, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.

19. "*Turn us again, O Lord of hosts.*" Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. "*Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*" Even we who were so destroyed. No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save at the last point, and that too by simply turning his smiling face upon his afflicted. Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—It is an Asaph-prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. It is as if they had before them Isaiah lxiii. 11, "Then he remembered the days of old." They call to his mind the days of *Joseph*, when (Gen. xlix. 24) the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the *tabernacle days*, when (first, since the days of Eden), the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, on the mercy-seat. They call to his mind *wilderness times* (verse 2), when their march was gladdened by his presence, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way (see Num. x. 32—34) "O God, bring us back again! Cause thy face to shine! and all shall be well again!"  
—Andrew A. Bonar.

*Verse 1.*—The prophet does not nakedly begin his prayer, but mingles therewith certain titles, by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O thou who sustainest and governest all things which are in heaven and in earth, who hast placed thy dwelling-place above the heaven of heavens; but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Those things which enhance the favour and providence of God revealed to Israel, he brings to remembrance that he might

nourish and strengthen confidence in prayer. . . . Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ our Shepherd and propitiation.—*Musculus.*

*Verse 1.*—"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." It is the part of the shepherd to give ear to the bleatings and cries of the sheep, to call them to mind, that he may readily run to their help.—*Venema.*

*Verse 1.*—"O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across the river; and, as our Lord says of the good shepherd, you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows, by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less, and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But, no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear. The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river which all his sheep must cross? He, too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him fear no evil. They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With eye fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. The great majority, however, "linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away." They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and, like Peter on stormy Gennesaret, when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The Good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all his flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambkins are carried safely over. I once saw flocks crossing the Jordan "to Canaan's fair and happy land," and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherds were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too, with which many more sheep were threatened—of being swept down into that mysterious sea of death, which swallows up the Jordan itself—was more solemn and suggestive.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

*Verse 1.*—"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock art considered by the unbelieving to have no thoughts for our affairs; therefore stretch forth thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut. We seek not gold and riches, or the dignities of this world, but we long for thy light, we desire most ardently to know thee, therefore "shine forth."—*Saonarola.*

*Verse 1.*—"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims." From this phrase the following ideas may be derived:—(1) That God is a King, sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his "ministers." His throne is the heavens, the symbol of which is the holy of holies, his "ministers" are "angels," and are elsewhere distinguished by that name, as Gen. iii., Ps. xviii., 11; (2) that God is the "King" of Israel, dwelling among them by the external symbol of his presence. His most illustrious ministers are depicted by the "cherubims," who comprehend his heavenly as well as earthly ministers; (3) that God is the covenant "King" of his people, and has fixed his dwelling-place above the "ark of the covenant," an argument that he will observe the covenant and fulfil its promises, that he will guard his people, and procure for them every felicity; (4) lastly, that God is willing to reveal to the people his *grace* and *mercy* through the covering of the ark, called the "*mercy seat*," on which God sat.—*Venema.*

*Verse 2.*—"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasse." The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasse, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, went immediately

behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, Moses used to exclaim "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the Psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing.—Augustus F. Tholuck.

Verse 3.—"Turn us, and cause thy face to shine." To thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly; convert our rebellious wills to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee; show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved.—Savonarola.

Verse 4.—"Lord God of hosts." All creatures are mustered, and trained, and put into garrison, or brought forth into the field, by his command. Which way can we look beside his armies? If upward into heaven, there is a band of soldiers, even a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, Luke ii. 13. If to the lower heavens, there is a band of soldiers, Gen. ii. 1; it was *universa militia cæli*, to which those idolaters burnt incense. On the earth, not only men are marshalled to the service; so Israel was called the "host of the living God;" but even the brute creatures are ranged in arrays. So God did levy a band of flies against the Egyptians; and a band of frogs that marched into their bedchambers. He hath troops of locusts, Proverbs xxx. 27, and armies of caterpillars. Not only the chariots and horsemen of heaven to defend his prophets; but even the beast, the most indocible, and despicable creatures, wherewith to confound his enemies. If Goliath stalk forth to defy the God of Israel, he shall be confuted with a pebble. If Herod swells up to a god, God will set his vermin on him, and all the king's guard cannot save him from them. You have heard of rats that could not be beaten off till they had destroyed that covetous prelate; and of the fly that killed Pope Adrian. God hath more ways to punish than he hath creatures. "*The Lord God of hosts*" is not properly a title of creation, but of Providence. All creatures have their existence from God as their Maker; but so have they also their order from him as their Governor. It refers not so much to their being as to their marshalling; not to their natural but militant estate; not only as creatures do they owe him for their making, but as they are soldiers for their managing. Their order is warlike, and they serve under the colours of the Almighty. So that here, God would be respected, not as a creator, but as a general.

His anger, therefore, seems so much the more fearful, as it is presented to us under so great a title: "*the Lord God of Hosts*" is angry. They talk of Tamerlane that he could daunt his enemies with the very look of his countenance. Oh! then what terror dwells in the countenance of an offended God! The reprobates shall call to the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. vi. 16. If *ira agni* doth so affright them, how terrible is *ira leonis*, the wrath of the lion? It may justly trouble us all to hear that the Lord, "*the Lord God of Hosts*," is angry; in the sense whereof the prophet breaks forth here into this expostulation; "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?"—Thomas Adams.

Verse 4.—"Angry against the prayer of thy people." There may be infirmities enough in our very prayers to make them unacceptable. As if they be *Exanimæ*, without life and soul; when the heart knows not what the tongue utters. Or *Perfunctoriæ*, for God will have none of those prayers that come out of feigned lips. Or *Tentativæ*, for they that will *petere tentando*, tempt God in prayer, shall go without. Or *Fluctuantes*, of a wild and wandering discourse, ranging up and down, which the Apostle calls "beating the air," as huntsmen beat the bushes, and as Saul sought his father's asses. Such prayers will not stumble upon the kingdom of heaven. Or it they be *Preproperæ*, run over in haste, so some use to chop up their prayers, and think long till they have done. But they that pray in such haste shall be heard at leisure. Or *sine fiducia*; the faithless man had as good hold his peace as pray; he may babble, but prays not; he prays ineffectually, and receives not. He may lift up his hands, but he does not lift up his heart. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth, and only the believer is righteous. But the formal devotion

of a faithless man is not worth the crust of bread which he asks. Or *sine humilitate*, so the pharisee's prayer was not truly *supplicatio*, but *superlatio*. A presumptuous prayer profanes the name of God instead of adoring it. All, or any, of these defects may mar the success of our prayers.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 5.—“*In great measure.*” The Hebrew *shalish* is the name of a measure, so called of *three*, as containing a *third part of the greatest measure*, four times as big as the usual cup to drink in.—*Henry Ainsworth*.

Verse 7.—“*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*” See verse 3 and observe that there it was only, “*Turn us again, O God,*” here “*O God of hosts,*” and verse 19, “*O Lord God of hosts.*” As the bird by much waving gathereth wind under the wing, and mounteth higher, so doth faith in prayer: *viresque acquirit eundo.*—*John Trapp*.

Verse 7.—Salvation may be certainly expected in God's order; and if we labour to be sure of our turning to God, and living in the sense of communion with him, we need not make question of salvation, for that shall follow infallibly on the former two. “*Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*” The last is not put up by way of prayer here, but promised to themselves, and put out of question, that it shall follow: “*Turn us, so shall we be saved,*” say they.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 8.—“*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt,*” etc. The blessings are here placed before us in figurative language, taken from the *vine*, and the care usually expended upon it. They are, 1. The transplanting of the vine from an unfruitful to a very rich and fertile soil. 2. Its plantation and care. 3. Its incredible fruitfulness derived hence.—*Venema*.

Verses 8—19.—Mant's version of the passage is so exquisite that we quote it in full:—

- 8 Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine,  
And planted fair in fertile Palestine;  
9 Clear'd for its grasping roots th' unpeopled land,  
And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.  
10 Far o'er the eternal hills her shadow spread,  
Her tendrils wreath'd the cedar's towering head;  
11 And, as the centre of the land she stood,  
Her branches reach'd the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.  
12 Why hast thou now her hedges rent away,  
And left her bare, the passing traveller's prey?  
13 The field-fed beast devours each tender shoot,  
Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.  
14 Return, O God; from heaven thine eyes incline;  
Behold, and visit this neglected vine:  
15 Regard the plant, thou once didst love so well,  
And chief thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.  
16 Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe  
The deathful terrors of thy wrath shall know.  
17 But on the man, by thee with strength array'd,  
The Son of Man by thee for conquest made,  
18 Thy hand shall rest; till we thy triumph see,  
Resound thy praise, and still remember thee.  
19 Turn us again, thou God of heav'n's high powers,  
Beam with thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

Verse 10.—“*The hills,*” etc. That the sides of hills are the most commodious places for vineyards, is sufficiently known; as also that the vine hath props on which it climbs, and rests itself, and that these are lower or higher, according to the nature of the several soils or climates. In fertile soils, as now-a-days in Lombardy, the vines run up the *trees*, and *cover* them. And so here with respect to the luxuriant growth of this fruitful vine, it may not unfitly be said, in the poetical style, to run up to and reach the tops of the tall “*cedars,*” as Joseph is said to be “*a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall.*” Gen. xlix., 22.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 12.—“*Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?*” Why hast thou done this, O Lord? What is the advantage? The guard of angels thou hast removed; they used to ward off the robbers; they used to defend it. Where,

to-day, is this faithful guard? Where are the prophets? Where the apostles? Where the teachers? Where the pastors surrounding the vine? Casting out devils, excommunicating heretics, arresting perverse men, and guarding the imperfect. What is the hedge? The guard of angels, the defence of pastors, the sacred doctrine of preachers. Where is the hedge? It is destroyed. Who has destroyed it? Thou O Lord, who hast taken away the preachers, gathered the pastors into heaven, removed the angels. Why hast thou cast down her hedges? Was it that she might fill up her iniquities, complete the measure of her wickedness, that at length she might be punished and renovated? But what was wanting to her? What sin was not found in her? Behold, Lord, for her wickedness is full. And now they gather her grapes, even all who go out of the way. Not the true vine-dressers, not the true husbandmen, gather her grapes, not all good, not a few good, not partly good and partly bad, not even one good, but all who pass beyond the way, pluck her. All who keep not thy precepts, who know not the way of God, open sinners, disreputable, these are the men that are chosen to minister at the altar, to these are benefices given, these gather her grapes for themselves, not for thee. They regard not thy poor; they feed not the hungry; they clothe not the naked; they help not the stranger; they defend not the widow and orphan: they eat up the lamb of the flock, and the fatted calf from the midst of the herd. They sing to the sound of psaltery and organ, like David; they think they have the instruments of song, arranged in choirs, praising God with the lips, but in heart they are far from God. Drinking wine in cups, perfumed with the richest odours, they suffer nothing for the grief of Joseph; with no pity are they moved for the needy and poor. These, then, are the men who go out of thy way and gather the grapes of thy vine. But what shall I say, Lord? For even all who transgress thy way, gather thy vintage? Walking in thy way and seeing the hedge of thy vine broken down, they have gone out of thy way. They have not walked in a straight course, but leaving thy way, have turned their feet to thy vine, to pluck her, to gather her fruit, not the spiritual fruit, but the temporal. What is it you say? This I say, Lord: The rich men of this world walking in the way of their sins, seeking by thy will and against thy will the riches, honours, dignities, and pleasures of this world, have turned aside from thy ways. The riches of this world they have ceased to pursue; its honours they seek no longer; they are turned to thy vine, to ecclesiastical dignities and riches. The hedge is broken down which repelled the unworthy, and now even they who go out of thy way have entered, and gather her grapes. What is your indictment? This: To-day in the theatre, to-morrow in the bishop's chair. To-day at the custom-house, to-morrow a canon in the choir. To-day a soldier, to-morrow a priest. They have transgressed thy way, and turned to thy vine: not, indeed, that they might cultivate her for thee, but that they might gather her grapes for themselves.—*Savonarola*.

Verse 13.—“*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*” The very boar that laid her waste is a singular wild beast. Singular, because proud. For thus saith every proud one, It is I, it is I, and no other.—*Augustine*.

Verse 13.—“*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*” No image of a destructive enemy could be more appropriate than that which is used. We have read of the little foxes that spoil the vines, but the *wild boar* is a much more destructive enemy, breaking its way through fences, rooting up the ground, tearing down the vines themselves, and treading them under its feet. A single party of these animals will sometimes destroy an entire vineyard in a single night. We can well imagine the damage that would be done to a vineyard even by the domesticated swine, but the wild boar is infinitely more destructive. It is of very great size, often resembling a donkey rather than a boar, and is swift and active beyond conception. The wild boar is scarcely recognisable as the very near relation of the domestic species. It runs with such speed, that a high-bred horse finds some difficulty in overtaking it, while an indifferent steed would be left hopelessly behind. Even on level ground the hunter has hard work to overtake it; and if it can get upon broken or hilly ground, no horse can catch it. The wild boar can leap to a considerable distance, and can wheel and turn when at full speed, with an agility that makes it a singularly dangerous foe. Indeed, the inhabitants of countries where the wild boar flourishes would as soon face a lion as one of these animals, the stroke of whose razor-like tusks is made with lightning swiftness, and which is sufficient to rip up a horse and cut a dog nearly asunder.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Verse 13.—“*The boar.*”

In vengeance of neglected sacrifice,  
On Eneus' fields she sent a monstrous boar,  
That level'd harvests and whole forests tore.

—*Pope's Homer's Iliad.*

Verse 13.—“*The wood.*” Or rather *marsh*; that is, a moist marshy piece of ground where trees and plants flourish, and which wild beasts delight in. Such is the neighbourhood of the river Jordan, thus described by Maundrell: “After having descended the outermost bank, you go about a furlong upon a level strand, before you come to the immediate bank of the river. The second bank is so beset with bushes and trees, such as tamarisks, willows, oleanders, and the like, that you can see no water till you have made your way through them. In this thicket anciently (and the same is reported of it to this day,) several sorts of wild beasts were wont to harbour themselves.” . . . In these places, according to the same author, live many wild boars. Bp. Pococke in particular observed very large herds of them on the other side of Jordan, where it flows out of the Sea of Tiberias; and several of them on the same side on which he was, lying among the reeds by the sea.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 13.—According to the Talmud, the middle letter of the word rendered “*wood,*” in this verse, is the middle letter of the Hebrew Psalter.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 14.—“*Look down from heaven, and behold.*” This prayer is fit for none but the truly contrite, and those who are in heart returning. Otherwise, with what conscience could we entreat God to look down from heaven and behold our affairs? Should we not inflame his anger all the more, if besides living in sin, we dared to challenge the all holy eyes of God to behold from heaven our wickedness?—*Musculus.*

Verse 14.—“*Look down from heaven.*” Thou hast gone far from us, thou hast ascended to heaven. Thou hast departed from us, look down at least upon us from heaven, if thou art not willing to descend to earth, if our sins do not merit this.—*Savorarola.*

Verse 14.—“*Visit this vine.*” Still it has roots, still some branches are living. In the beginning of the world it began, and never has failed, and never will. For thou hast said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It may be diminished, it can never utterly fail. This vine is the vine which thou hast planted. There is one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Lord of all, who is all in all. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit; visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod, and with thy staff; for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning comes. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her supports, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine, as now thou visitest the earth and waterest it.—*Savorarola.*

Verse 17.—“*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*” etc. Neither the church, nor any member thereof needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced, the remnant are content to rest satisfied with this, which also they take for granted, and do subscribe unto it: “*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*” The consanguinity of Christ with the believer, and his humiliation in his human nature, are strong supporters of the faith and comfort of his people that do seek salvation through him; therefore do the faithful here fix themselves on this, that as he is God's Son, so he is a branch of their vineyard also; that as he is at the right hand of the Father as God, so he is “*the man of his right hand*” also; the Son of Man, or of *Adam*, partaker of flesh and blood with us, of the same stock that we are of, in all things like to us, except sin; for the *Son of Man* is the style whereby Christ styled himself in his humiliation. The perpetuity of the church, and the perseverance of the saints, is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through him. “*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*” etc.; “*so will not we go back from thee.*”—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—“*The man of thy right hand.*” “*The Son of Man.*” These striking expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If the *Man of*

*God's right hand* be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to him ? for, "to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit on my right hand ?" (Heb. i. 5) ; and much less has he said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of Man*, it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times ; in sixty-seven instances by himself ; once by Daniel, once by the martyr Stephen ; and twice by the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made strong for the salvation of his church, and who will yet turn away captivity from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the church, so that henceforth they "*will not go back from God.*"—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

*Verse 17.*—"The man of thy right hand." The man of the right hand is, I. *Most dear*, whom one holds equally dear with his own right hand, Matt. v. 29, 30. Jacob called the son of his most beloved wife, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, Gen. xxxv. 18, who was so dear to him that his life was bound up in the lad's life, chap. xlv. 30. II. *Most honoured* ; a man upon whom one wishes to confer the highest honour, is placed at the right hand as Solomon placed his mother, 1 Kings ii. 19, and the spouse stands at the right hand, Ps. xlv. 10. Sitting down at the right hand is in Scripture a proof of the greatest honour. III. *Allied*, because covenants and mutual agreements are ratified by giving the right hand, 2 Kings x. 15. Jehu said to Jehonadab, *Is thy heart right ?* and Jehonadab answered, *It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand.* The right hand used to be given, as in Gal. ii. 9. *The man of God's right hand*, therefore, is one most dear to God, most honoured, and joined with him in covenant.—*James Atting.* 1618—1679.

*Verse 17.*—Though the phrase, "*man of thy right hand*," may have an immediate reference to the King who ruled in Judah when this psalm was penned, it must ultimately and most properly intend Jesus Christ, the great antitype of all the kings of David's line. The New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old ; and it assures us that this highly dignified man is the Son of God. Heb. i. 1, 3, 13. But if we would understand the genuine import of the phrase, we must attend to a custom which obtained in Judea and other eastern countries. At meals, the master of the feast placed the person whom he loved best on his right hand, as a token of love and respect ; and as they sat on couches, in the intervals between the dishes, when the master leaned on his left elbow, the man at his right hand, leaning also on his, would naturally repose his head on the master's bosom, while at the same time the master laid his right hand on the favourite's shoulder or side, in testimony of his favourable regards. This custom is obviously referred to in John xxi. 20, where John is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper." Now, since Christ is called *the man of God's right hand*, this says that he is the object of his warmest and most honourable regards. In him he is well pleased, and in token of this, he has set him in the most honourable place. He is the Son of Man, whom the Father made to stand strong for himself, *i.e.*, to support the honour and dignity of the divine character amidst a perverse and crooked generation : the consideration of the Father's right hand being upon him, or of the Father's satisfaction in him as our Surety, serves to animate and embolden our addresses to his throne, and is the keenest incitement to put in practice that resolution, "*Henceforth will we not go back from thee.*"—*Alexander Pirie.*

*Verse 18.*—"So will not we," etc. How are we to understand the connection between this and the preceding words ? It may be understood two ways. 1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of steadfast obedience* ; it would lay them under a special engagement never to revolt any more, as they had done ; if God would grant this request, it would be a most eminent tie and bond upon them to the most constant and faithful service. 2. *As it would enable them to yield such obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at ; if God would lay such help upon Christ for them, they should receive power by that means to discharge their duty to him better than ever heretofore ; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful remedy.—*Timothy Cruso.*

*Verse 19.*—"Turn us again." How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that he may turn us, and so his face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance to his people.—*J. N. Darby.*

*Verse 19.*—During distress God comes ; and when he comes it is no more distress.—*Gaelic Proverb.*

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—In what respects the Lord acted as a Shepherd to Israel, as illustrative of his dealings with his Church.

*Verse 2.*—Salvation expected in connection with the people of God, their prayers, labours, and daily service.

*Verse 3.*—The double work in salvation, (1) Turn us ; (2) Turn to us.

*Verse 4.*—What prayers they are which make God angry.

*Verse 5.*—Unpalatable provender. I. Analyse the Provision. II. Note the hand which sends it. III. Consider the healthfulness of the diet. IV. Remember the alleviating accompaniments.

*Verse 7.*—Conversion, communion, confidence of salvation.

*Verses 8—15.*—Parallel between the Church and a vine.

*Verse 12.*—I. The hedges of the Church. II. Their removal. III. The deplorable consequences.

*Verse 13.*—What are the greatest enemies of the Church ? Where do they come from ? How shall we defeat them ?

*Verses 17, 18.*—The power of God seen in Jesus, the cause of the perseverance of the saints.

*Verse 18 (last clauses.)*—The need of quickening in order to acceptable worship.

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