

PSALM LXXXIV.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—To the chief musician upon Gittith. A Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This Psalm well deserved to be committed to the noblest of the sons of song. No music could be too sweet for its theme, or too exquisite in sound to match the beauty of its language. Sweeter than the joy of the wine press, (for that is said to be the meaning of the word rendered upon Gittith), is the joy of the holy assemblies of the Lord's house; not even the favoured children of grace, who are like the sons of Korah, can have a richer subject for song than Zion's sacred festivals.*

It matters little when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called The Pearl of Psalms. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace.

Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a great feature of Jewish life. In our own country, pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury, and our Ladye of Walsingham, were so general as to affect the entire population, cause the formation of roads, the erection and maintenance of hostleries, and the creation of a special literature; this may help us to understand the influence of pilgrimage upon the ancient Israelites. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and, as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.

DIVISION.—We will make our pauses where the poet or the musician placed them, namely, at the *Selahs*.

EXPOSITION.

HOW amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. *Selah*.

1. "*How amiable,*" or, *How lovely!* He does not tell us how lovely they were, because he could not. His expressions show us that his feelings were inexpressible. *Lovely* to the memory, to the mind, to the heart, to the eye, to the whole soul, are the assemblies of the saints. Earth contains no sight so refreshing to us as the gathering of believers for worship. Those are sorry saints who see nothing amiable in the services of the Lord's house. "*Are thy tabernacles.*" The tabernacle had been pitched in several places, and, moreover, was divided into several courts and portions; hence, probably, the plural number is here used. It was all and altogether lovely to David. Outer court, or inner court, he loved every portion of it. Every cord and curtain was dear to him. Even when at a distance, he rejoiced to remember the sacred tent where Jehovah revealed himself, and he cried out with exultation while he pictured in fond imagination its sacred services, and solemn

rites, as he had seen them in bygone times. Because they are *thy* tabernacles, "*O Lord of hosts,*" therefore are they so dear to thy people. Thy pavilion is the centre of the camp, around which all thy creatures gather, and towards which their eyes are turned, as armies look to the tent of the king. Thou rulest all the companies of creatures with such goodness, that all their hosts rejoice in thy dwelling-place, and the bands of thy saints especially hail thee with joyful loyalty as Jehovah of hosts.

2. "*My soul longeth,*"—it pines, and faints to meet with the saints in the Lord's house. The desire was deep and insatiable—the very soul of the man was yearning for his God. "*Yea, even fainteth;*" as though it could not long hold out, but was exhausted with delay. He had a holy lovesickness upon him, and was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place. "*For the courts of the Lord.*" To stand once again in those areas which were dedicated to holy adoration was the soul-longing of the Psalmist. True subjects love the courts of their king. "*My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" It was God himself that he pined for, the only living and true God. His whole nature entered into his longing. Even the clay-cold flesh grew warm through the intense action of his fervent spirit. Seldom, indeed, does the flesh incline in the right direction, but in the matter of Sabbath services our weary body sometimes comes to the assistance of our longing heart, for it desires the physical rest as much as the soul desires the spiritual repose. The Psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his desires, but began to cry out for God and his house; he wept, he sighed, he pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, while here is David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in, he carried his bell in his own bosom: holy appetite is a better call to worship than a full chime.

3. "*Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.*" He envied the sparrows which lived around the house of God, and picked up the stray crumbs in the courts thereof; he only wished that he, too, could frequent the solemn assemblies and bear away a little of the heavenly food. "*And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.*" He envied also the swallows whose nests were built under the eaves of the priests' houses, who there found a place for their young, as well as for themselves. We rejoice not only in our personal religious opportunities, but in the great blessing of taking our children with us to the sanctuary. The church of God is a house for us and a nest for our little ones. "*Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts.*" To the very altars these free birds drew near, none could restrain them nor would have wished to do so, and David wished to come and go as freely as they did. Mark how he repeats the blessed name of Jehovah of Hosts; he found in it a sweetness which helped him to bear his inward hunger. Probably David himself was with the host, and, therefore, he dwelt with emphasis upon the title which taught him that the Lord was in the tented field as well as within the holy curtains. "*My King and my God.*" Here he utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.

4. "*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.*" Those he esteems to be highly favoured who are constantly engaged in divine worship—the canons residentiary, yea, the pew-openers, the menials who sweep and dust. To come and go is refreshing, but to abide in the place of prayer must be heaven below. To be the guests of God, enjoying the hospitalities of heaven, set apart for holy work, screened from a noisy world, and familiar with sacred things—why this is surely the choicest heritage a son of man can possess. "*They will be still praising thee.*" So near to God, their very life must be adoration. Surely their hearts and tongues never cease from magnifying the Lord. We fear David here drew rather a picture of what should be than of what is; for those occupied daily with the offices needful for public worship are not always among the most devout; on the contrary, "the nearer the church the further from God." Yet in a spiritual sense this is most true, for those children of God who in spirit abide ever in his house, are also ever full of the praises of God. Communion is the mother of adoration. They fail to praise the Lord who wander far from him, but those who dwell in him are always magnifying him.

"*Selah.*" In such an occupation as this we might be content to remain for ever. It is worth while to pause and meditate upon the prospect of dwelling with God and praising him throughout eternity.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength *is* in thee ; in whose heart *are* the ways of *them*.

6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer : give ear, O God of Jacob. *Selah.*

5. "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.*" Having spoken of the blessedness of those who reside in the house of God, he now speaks of those who are favoured to visit it at appointed seasons, going upon pilgrimage with their devout brethren : he is not, however, indiscriminate in his eulogy, but speaks only of those who heartily attend to the sacred festivals. The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half-hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcases, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God. "*In whose heart are the ways of them,*" or far better, "*in whose heart are thy ways.*" Those who love the ways of God are blessed. When we have God's ways in our hearts, and our heart in his ways, we are what and where we should be, and hence we shall enjoy the divine approval.

6. "*Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well.*" Traversing joyfully the road to the great assembly, the happy pilgrims found refreshment even in the dreariest part of the road. As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable. Probably there is here a local allusion, which will never now be deciphered, but the general meaning is clear enough. There are joys of pilgrimage which make men forget the discomforts of the road. "*The rain also filleth the pools.*" God gives to his people the supplies they need while traversing the roads which he points out for them. Where there were no natural supplies from below, the pilgrims found an abundant compensation in waters from above, and so also shall all the sacramental host of God's elect. Ways, which otherwise would have been deserted from want of accommodation, were made into highways abundantly furnished for the travellers' wants, because the great annual pilgrimages led in that direction ; even so, Christian converse and the joy of united worship make many duties easy and delightful which else had been difficult and painful.

7. "*They go from strength to strength.*" So far from being wearied they gather strength as they proceed. Each individual becomes happier, each company becomes more numerous, each holy song more sweet and full. We grow as we advance if heaven be our goal. If we spend our strength in God's ways we shall find it increase. "*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" This was the end of the pilgrims' march, the centre where all met, the delight of all hearts. Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless we realise the presence of God we have done nothing ; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.

8. "*O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.*" Give me to go up to thy house, or if I may not do so, yet let my cry be heard. Thou listenest to the united supplications of thy saints, but do not shut out my solitary petition, unworthy though I be. "*Give ear, O God of Jacob.*" Though Jehovah of hosts, thou art also the covenant God of solitary pleaders like Jacob ; regard thou, then, my plaintive supplication. I wrestle here alone with thee, while the company of thy people have gone on before me to happier scenes, and I beseech thee bless me ; for I am resolved to hold thee till thou speak the word of grace into my soul. The repetition of the request

for an answer to his prayer denotes his eagerness for a blessing. What a mercy it is that if we cannot gather with the saints, we can still speak to their Master.

Selah.—A pause was needed after a cry so vehement, a prayer so earnest.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

9. "*Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*" Here we have the nation's prayer for David; and the believer's prayer for the Son of David. Let but the Lord look upon our Lord Jesus, and we shall be shielded from all harm; let him behold the face of his Anointed, and we shall be able to behold his face with joy. We also are anointed by the Lord's grace, and our desire is that he will look upon us with an eye of love in Christ Jesus. Our best prayers when we are in the best place are for our glorious King, and for the enjoyment of his Father's smile.

10. "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*" Of course the Psalmist means a thousand days spent elsewhere. Under the most favourable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. To feel his love, to rejoice in the person of the anointed Saviour, to survey the promises and feel the power of the Holy Ghost in applying precious truth to the soul, is a joy which worldlings cannot understand, but which true believers are ravished with. Even a glimpse at the love of God is better than ages spent in the pleasures of sense. "*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" The lowest station in connection with the Lord's house is better than the highest position among the godless. Only to wait at his threshold and peep within, so as to see Jesus, is bliss. To bear burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to reign among the wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury. Note how he calls the tabernacle "*the house of my God;*" there's where the sweetness lies: if Jehovah be our God, his house, his altars, his doorstep, all become precious to us. We know by experience that where Jesus is within, the outside of the house is better than the noblest chambers where the Son of God is not to be found.

11. "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield.*" Pilgrims need both as the weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the sun, and foes are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were without a shield. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomforted or unprotected. The pilgrim nation found both sun and shield in that fiery cloudy pillar which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy; the sunny and the shady side of life are alike happy to them. "*The Lord will give grace and glory.*" Both in due time, both as needed, both to the full, both with absolute certainty. The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance; Jesus is the fulness of both, and, as his chosen people, we shall receive both as a free gift from the God of our salvation. What more can the Lord give, or we receive, or desire. "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "*All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*" God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical,—we must walk in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things shall be in our actual possession; and, meanwhile, according to our capacity for receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.

12. "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, his house, his Son, or his ways. Dear reader, how fares it with thy soul?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Title.—Here note, that the sons, that is, the posterity of wicked and rebellious Korah, have an honourable place in God's sacred and solemn service: for to them sundry of David's psalms are commended. . . . Here see the verifying of God's word, for the comfort of all godly children, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Ezek. xviii. 14, 17, 20, if he sees his father's sins and turn from them.—*Thomas Pierson* (1570—1633) in "*David's Heart's Desire.*"

Whole Psalm.—

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where thou dost dwell!
For thine abode my spirit fains and sighs;
The courts I love so well.
My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.

The sparrow, Lord, hath found a shelter'd home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to thine altar flying,
Would there for ever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!

How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.

From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;
Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilise the land,
And wayside grace is given
Till they in Zion stand.

Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!
O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our Shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!
Look thou upon the glory
Of thine Anointed's face;
In him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!

One day with thee excelleth o'er and o'er
 A thousand days apart ;
 In thine abode, within thy temple-door,
 Would stand my watchful heart.
 Men tell me of the treasure
 Hid in their tents of sin ;
 I look not there for pleasure,
 Nor choose to enter in.

Own thou the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
 No good will he withhold ;
 He giveth grace, and soon shall be reveal'd
 His glory, yet untold.
 His mighty name confessing,
 Walk thou at peace and free ;
 O Lord, how rich the blessing
 Of him who trusts in thee !

—German Choral Music.

Verse 1.—"How amiable are thy tabernacles." What was there in them that appeared so amiable? Perchance, the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed on it? But the temple of extraordinary beauty was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to the end that they should love the house of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"How amiable are thy tabernacles." What made the tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, which was very mean, as the Church of God outwardly is, through persecution, affliction, and poverty ; but what was within, having many golden vessels in it, and those typical of things much more precious : moreover, here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and, at certain times, the high priest in his rich apparel ; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ : here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets : but much more amiable are the Church of God and its ordinances in gospel times, where Christ, the great High-Priest, is seen in the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace ; where Zion's priests, or the ministers of the gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation, and the tidings of it ; where Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances ; here the gospel trumpet is blown, and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers ; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are, the presence of God here, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven ; the provisions that are here made, and the company that is here enjoyed.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"Amiable." The adjective is rendered by the English versions "*amiable*," in the sense of the French *amiable*, lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear*, *beloved*, which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural, *dwelling*s, has reference to the subdivisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Ps. xlviii. 3. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 35. The divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes his sovereignty the ground of a prayer for his protection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"Tabernacles." By the name of "*tabernacles*" we are put in mind of the church's peregrination and wandering from one place unto another, until she come unto her true country. For as tabernacle and tents of war be removed hither and thither, so the Church of God in this life hath no sure and quiet abode, but often is compelled to change her seat. This pilgrimage, whereby indeed every man, as Augustine doth say, is a pilgrim in this world, doth admonish us of sin, which is the cause of this peregrination. For, because of sin we are cast with our first parents out of Paradise into the land wherein we sojourn. So that we are removed from Jerusalem, that is, from the sight and fruition of peace, into Babylon, that is, into confusion and exile, wherein we wander far and wide.—*Nicholas Heminge [Hemmingius]* (1513—1600), in "*The Faith of the Church Militant.*"

Verses 1, 2.—When we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder, and so doth David here, because he cannot express

sufficiently how amiable the Tabernacles of the Lord are, he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question; How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts should be so wonderfully amiable? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all? For are not his tabernacles, tents of war? and is there anything in war that can be amiable? If he had said: How *terrible* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; his wonder had been with some congruity; for the Lord of Hosts is terrible in all his works; but to say, How *amiable* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, seems to imply a contradiction; for though they may be amiable, as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible, as they are Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness; what place will be left for wonder, to give cause to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But if he had said, How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind: for what wonder is it, if the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; this is not only wonderful in the degree, but in the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful, than that being Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it not, that God is in himself so amiable, that all things of His, even his terrors themselves, are amiable; his tabernacles and his tents, his sword and his spear, his darts and his arrows, all amiable; terrible no doubt to his enemies, but amiable, wonderfully amiable to all that love and fear him, and great reason they should be so seeing they are all in their defence, and for their safeguard; though they be Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts to the wicked, yet they are Courts of the Prince of Peace to the godly, and this makes *my soul to long for the courts of the Lord*. For I desire indeed to be a courtier, yet not as I am now: God knows I am very unfit for it, but because God's Courts are such, they make any one fit, that but comes into them; they receive not men fit, but make them fit; and he that was before but a shrub in Baca, as soon as he comes into the Courts of the Lord is presently made a cedar in Lebanon.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 2.—"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth," etc. Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor every longing so great to make a fainting; nor every fainting so great, to make the soul to faint; Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing! And blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault for not restraining my longing; for seeing his Tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must needs work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me, which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth, but with condition to want the Courts of the Lord; this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment: for seeing his Tabernacles are so amiable, where He is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be, where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his Courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 2.—"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth." The word פָּתַח (fainteth) signifies to be consumed with longing, as the Latins say, *deperire aliquem amore* (he is dying of love), that is, he so vehemently loves, and is enflamed with so great a desire to obtain the loved object, that he wastes and pines away unless his wish is gratified. Therefore, an ardent longing is meant, which so torments and burns the mind, that flesh and marrow waste away, so long as it is not permitted to enjoy the things desired.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 2.—"Soul . . . heart . . . flesh." Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first, "*longeth*," means literally, "hath grown pale," as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, "*fainteth*," is more exactly "faileth," or "is consumed." Job. xix. 27.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 2.—"Crieth." The word that is here rendered "*crieth*," is from קָרַע , that signifies to shout, shrill, or cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle, when they cry out, Fall on, fall on, fall on, or when they cry out after a victory, Victory, victory, victory! The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries

when it is sadly hungry, for now every whit of the child cries, hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2.—“*Living God.*” Ps. xlii. 2, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God,” is the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *El Chay*, occurs but twice beside in the Bible, Josh. iii. 10; Hosea i. 10.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—“*The sparrow hath found an house,*” etc. The tender care of God, over the least of his creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The Psalmist, while in exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling-place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God’s altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of his minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. “God fails not,” as one has beautifully said, “to find a house for the most worthless, and a nest for the most restless of birds.” What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression of “nest” conveys, just as well as that of “a house.” Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, “a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in”? But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strikes us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither his heart nor his hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of his tender care; he thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek and find and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God himself. “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.”—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—“*The swallow a nest,*” etc. The confidence which these birds place in the human race is not a little extraordinary. They not only put themselves, but their offspring in the power of men. I have seen their nests in situations where they were within the reach of one’s hand, and where they might have been destroyed in an instant. I have observed them under a doorway, the eaves of a low cottage, against the wall of a tool-shed, on the knocker of a door, and the rafter of a much-frequented hay-loft.—*Edward Jesse, in “Gleanings in Natural History.”* 1856.

Verse 3.—“*Even thine altars.*” There were two altars; the “brazen altar,” and the “golden altar;” to those, no doubt, the Psalmist refers. Both were of shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity—the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all his work for us, and of all our blessing in him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The overlaying shadows forth his Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—“*Thine altars.*” There is in the original a pathetic, a vehement, a broken expressing, expressed, *O thine altars.* It is true, (says David) thou art here in the wilderness, and I may see thee here, and serve thee here, but *O thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.*—*John Donne.*

Verse 3.—“*Thine altars*” is a poetical way of saying “*Thy house.*” It is manifestly a special term, instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. *A parte potiori fit denominatio.* We say, “There goes a sail.” What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go? The altars mean the temple. There was

“no jutting frieze,
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but these birds
Had made their pendant bed;”

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds, whose nests chanced to be

die." His life was sought after by the cruelty of his enemies; and he desireth God to keep him alive.

2ndly. His argument from the aim of his life; "*And it shall praise thee.*" The glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits is to profit us, and praise God. David profeseth that all the days of his life he would live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a benefit.

3rdly. The ground of his hope and confidence in the last clause: "*And let thy judgments help me.*" Our hopes of help are grounded on God's judgments, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed, and judgments executed; doctrinal judgments, and providential judgments. That place intimateth the distinction: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:" Eccl. viii. 11. There is *sententia lata et dilata*. Here God's judgments are put for the sentence pronounced; and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of grace. As also, "I have hoped in thy judgments:" Ps. cxix. 43. Promises are the objects of hope.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 175.—"Let my soul live." What is the life that the Psalmist is now praying for, but the salvation for which he had just expressed his longing? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and more continued enjoyment—not for selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the praise of his God. Indeed, as we have drawn towards the close of this Psalm, we cannot but have observed that character of praise to pervade his experience, which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. Much do we lose of spiritual strength for want of occupying ourselves more in the exercise of praise.—*Charles Bridges*.

Verse 175.—"Live and praise." The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous appetite, thy hawks and thy hounds; or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness? To strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but "*live and praise God.*" When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire and hope were, 2 Sam. xv. 25: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Mark, not shew me my crown, my palace, but the ark, the house of God.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 175.—"Live and praise." Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding praises.—*Henry Law*.

Verse 175.—"Let thy judgments help me." In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word "*judgments*" of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems, then, that the prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities—even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves,—calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amidst so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them.—*John Calvin*.

Verses 175, 176—

Though like a sheep estranged I stray,
Yet have I not renounced thy way.
Thine hand extend; thine own reclaim;
Grant me to live, and praise thy name.

Richard Mant.

Verse 176.—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Though a sheep go astray, yet it is soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice." Thus David when he went against Nabal was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman; and when he had slain Uriah he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometimes go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 4.—"Still praising." It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising him still, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet to praise him still, will be found a busy work, indeed to flesh and blood a miserable work, for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasure? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure, thy chief, thy only pleasure to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the Gospel saith as much: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory and praise of God."—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"In whose heart are thy ways." That is, who love the ways that lead to thy house.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 5.—"In whose heart are the ways of them." Literally, "The steeps are on their hearts." The steep ascents on which the tabernacle stood. Horsley renders, "They are bent on climbing the steep ascents." Perhaps the *מַעֲרֹב* were more properly the raised causeways or stairs leading up to Mount Zion, or all through the mountain country on the road to Jerusalem.—*John Fry.*

Verse 5.—"In whose heart are the ways." The natural heart is a pathless wilderness, full of cliffs and precipices. When the heart is renewed by grace, a road is made, a highway is prepared for our God. See *Isai. xl. 3, 4.*—*Frederick Fysh.*

Verse 6.—"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well," etc. I consider the valley here mentioned to be the same as the valley of *Bochim*, mentioned in *Judges ii. 1, 5*, which received its name from the weeping of the Jews, when they were rebuked by an angel for their disobedience to the commands of God. This valley is called *בְּאֵר בָּכָה*, *Habb'caim*, in *2 Sam. v. 24*, the *ב* of *בָּכָה*, to weep being changed into *כ*. *Josephus* mentions, that the circumstance there related occurred *ἐν τοῖς ἄλυσσι τοῖς καλουμένοις Κλαυθμῶσι*. *Antiquit. Jud. lib. vii. c. 4.* *בְּאֵר בָּכָה*, *Habb'caim*, is rendered in that verse by the *LXX.* *Κλαυθμῶν*, *weepings*; and in *Judges ii. 1* *בְּאֵר בָּכָה*, *Habbocim*, is also rendered by the *LXX.* *Κλαυθμῶν*, *weepings*. The valley mentioned in *Ps. lxxxiv. 6* is called by the *LXX.* *Κλαυθμῶν*. I am inclined therefore to think, that in this place, joining to *בָּכָה* the *ב* of the following word, and supplying 'before it, we ought to read *בְּאֵר בָּכָה* instead of *בְּאֵר בָּכָה*. . . All the ancient versionists seem to have thought, that the valley in this verse received its name from *בָּכָה*, *bachah*, to weep. I translate the verse, "Passing through the valley of *Bochim*, they will make it a fountain even of blessings; it shall be covered with the former rain." The Psalm has been supposed to have been written by *Jehoshaphat*. Probably he passed through *Bochim*, which seems to have been an arid valley, when he marched against the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*: see *2 Chron. xx.* After the victory, the army of *Jehoshaphat* assembled in a valley, where they blessed the Lord; and from this circumstance it received the name of *Berachah*: see *ver. 26*. Perhaps the word *בְּרָכָה* in this verse has an allusion to that circumstance; and perhaps the valley of *Berachah* was, before that glorious occasion, called the valley of *Bochim*.—*Richard Dixon.*

Verse 6.—"Passing through the valley of weeping make him, that is, Jehovah, a fountain. That is, they trust, and from him look for help, who having plain paths in their mind must pass through many difficulties. Similar help is sought by those, who, suffering from a scanty supply of water, press on through a dry valley, and yet do not despair or grow weary, but have God for their fountain, from which they drink and are refreshed.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"The valley of Baca." Valley of tear-shrubs.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"Baca," signifieth a mulberry-tree, which loves to grow in dry places that be sandy and barren, *2 Sam. v. 23, 24*, or *1 Chron. xiv. 14, 15*. Now they whose hearts be set upon God's house and holy worship, when they go thitherward through a sandy, dry, barren valley, do make it a well,—that is, repute and count it as a well; the word *בְּאֵר*; signifieth to put or set, as *Gen. iii. 15*; *Ps. xxi. 6, 12*, and *lxxxiii. 11, 13*. For thus will they say with themselves, thinking upon the comfort of God's favour to whom they go, that it shall be to them as the rain of blessings, a plentiful and liberal rain upon the ground.—*Thomas Pierson.*

Verse 6.—"Make it a well." That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well, out of which to draw forth water of comfort; either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance; or water to cool, and make it a way

to patience; or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, *yet the rain shall fill their pools*, and supply them with water from above. If natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them, that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none, they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at, they hinder us not from being made members of Zion, they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God. No, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means *we go from strength to strength*, from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here; "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are.*"—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—"The rain." Little as there may be of water, that little suffices on their way. It is "*a well*" to them. They find only "*pools (which) the early rain has (barely) covered*"—but are content with the supply by the way. It is as good and sufficient to them as if showers of the heavy autumnal rains had filled the well. Pilgrims forget the scanty supply at an inn, when they have abundance in view at the end. Israelites going up to the Passover made light of deficient water, for their hearts were set on reaching Jerusalem.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 6, 7.—The most gloomy present becomes bright to them: passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe.

Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on his part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness: a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn, descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing. . . . the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment (Isai. xxxv. 1—19), not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances, the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; "*they go from strength to strength.*"—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7.—"They go from strength to strength." Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, "They go from company to company." As they went up to Jerusalem they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength, because much of our safety consisteth in good society.—*George Swincock.*

Verse 7.—"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." That is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God; but not to enjoy his presence, and receive tokens of his favour. Blessedness was now to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them. "*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint-hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to his heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost." "They are all here before God."—*William Makebie.* 1863.

Verse 8.—There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of *divine majesty*, and the consciousness of

divine relationship. As "Lord of hosts," he is almighty in power; as the "God of Jacob," he is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ himself. It is the knowledge of his person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, "Look upon the face of thine Anointed." We cannot always say, *Look on us*; but we may always say, *Look on Him.* In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to his name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with him—ever occupied with him as risen from the dead and exalted to his own right hand in heaven; and he would have us also to be occupied with him as the heart's exclusive object. True faith can only rest on *God's estimate* of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—"Look upon the face of thine anointed." For I shall never come to look upon thy face, if thou vouchsafest not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes, to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"A day." The least good look that a man hath from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God, is exceedingly precious to that man that hath God for his portion. "*One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*" He doth not say, One year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but *One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One quarter of a year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but "*One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere"; nor doth he say, One month is better than a thousand elsewhere, but "*One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere," to shew that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul that hath God for his portion.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—Another sign of God's children is, to delight to be much in God's presence. Children are to be in the presence of their father; where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances, they are the Ark of his presence. Now, if we are his children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God, we come into our Father's presence; in prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying, is as it were parlying with God. In the word we hear God speaking from heaven to us; and how doth every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisseth his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face, and a privy-seal of his love: oh, it is good to draw near to God. It is sweet being in his presence: every true child of God saith, "*A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—"I had rather be a doorkeeper," etc. Some read it, "I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of the wicked;" alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Exod. xxi. 5, 6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"I had rather be a doorkeeper." In the sense that Christ is a Door, David may well be content to be a Door-keeper, and though in God's house there be many mansions, yet seeing all of them are glorious, even the door-keeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is, for even a door-keeper is an officer in God's house, and God never dis-

placeth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher ; whereas, in the courts of princes, the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced, turned off often with disgrace.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—“*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,*” etc. Happy are those persons, whom God will use as besoms to sweep out the dust from his temple ; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and his church are embarked.—*William Secker, in “The Nonsuch Professor.”*

Verse 10.—“*Doorkeeper.*” This is a Korhite Psalm, and the descendants of Korah were, in fact, porters, and “keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and keepers of the entry,” as well as being permitted to swell the chorus of the inspired singers of Israel.—*Bossuel, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 10.—Instead of, “*I had rather be a doorkeeper,*” the margin has, according to the Hebrew, “*I would choose rather to sit at the threshold.*” Ainsworth’s translation is : “*I have chosen to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God ;*” and Dr. Boothroyd’s is : “*Abide, or sit, at the threshold.*” See 2 Kings xii. 9 ; xxii. 4 ; xxv. 18 ; 1 Chron. ix. 19 ; 2 Chron. xxiii. 4 ; Esther ii. 21 ; vi. 2. In all these passages the marginal reading is *threshold*. I think the word “*door-keeper*” does not convey the proper meaning of the words, “*to sit at the threshold*” ; because the preference of the Psalmist was evidently given to a very *humble* position ; whereas that of a door-keeper, in Eastern estimation, is truly respectable and confidential.

The marginal reading, however, “*to sit at the threshold,*” at once strikes on an Eastern mind as a situation of deep humility.

See the poor heathen devotee : he goes and sits near the threshold of his temple. Look at the beggar : he sits, or prostrates himself, at the threshold of the door or gate, till he shall have gained his suit.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 10.—“*House.*” “*Tents.*” Observe the force of the contrasted expressions. The “*house*” is the Lord’s ; the “*tents*” are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only ; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 10.—“*The tents.*” It is not any tents, or tents of any ordinary kind, that are understood, but rich, powerful, glorious, and splendid tents.—*Venema.*

Verse 11.—“*The Lord God is a sun,*” conveys a striking and impressive truth, when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn from astronomy that he is a grand centre of attraction, and when we, in addition, take in that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source of every form of power existing in the world ! The wind wafts the commerce of every nation over the mighty deep ; but the heat of the sun has rarefied that air, and set that wind in motion. The descending stream yields a power which grinds your grain, turns your spindles, works your looms, drives your forges ; but it is because the sun gathered up the vapour from the ocean, which fell upon the hills, and is finding its way back to the source whence it came. The expansive energy of steam propels your engine ; but the force with which it operates is locked up in the coal (the remains of extinct forests stored among your hills), or is derived from the wood that abounds in your forests, which now crown and beautify their summits. Both these primeval and these existing forests drew their subsistence from the sun : it is the chemical force resident in his rays which disengaged their carbon from the atmosphere, and laid it up as a source of power for future use. The animal exerts a force by muscular contraction ; he draws it from the vegetable on which he feeds ; the vegetable derives it from the sun, whose rays determine its growth. Every time you lift your arm, every time you take a step, you are drawing on the power the sun has given you. When you step into the railway carriage, it is the sun-power that hurries you along. When gentle breezes fan your languid cheek, and when the resistless tornado levels cities in his fury, they are the servants of the sun. What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being !—*Professor Green.*

Verse 11.—The “*sun,*” which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent, notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity ; and the “*shield,*” which among all artificial creatures is the chiefest, notes all manner of protection whatsoever. Under the name of “*grace,*” all spiritual good is wrapped up ; and under the name of “*glory,*” all eternal good is wrapped up ; and under the last clause, “*No good thing will he withhold,*” is wrapped up all temporal good : all put together speaks out God to be an all-sufficient portion.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11.—“*The Lord God is a shield.*” He is a shield to our persons : “*Touch*

not," said he, "mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." "The Lord," said Moses in his name, "the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" said God to Satan:—"Yes," replied Satan, "I have: thou hast set a hedge about him. Yes, brethren; *"the Lord God is a shield."* He is a shield to our *graces*. The dislike and malice of Satan is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence "Simon, Simon," said our Saviour, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but," he adds, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There was a shield to the good man's faith, or he and it too had been gone. You may remember the name of Little Faith in Bunyan's Pilgrim. It appears that Hopeful was greatly surprised that the robbers had not taken his jewels from him; but he was given to understand that *they* were not in his own keeping. Yes, Christian, we shall be thy "*shield*" to cover thy hope when it appears to thee to be giving up the ghost. . . . Yes, and He will be a shield to *thy property*. "Hast thou not set a hedge about *all* that he hath?" Though Job was tried a little while, his property was only put out to interest; by and by it came back cent. per cent.; and he gained, besides, a vast increase of knowledge and of grace.—*Matthew Wilks. 1746—1829.*

Verse 11.—Turn your thoughts to the combination; "*the Lord God is a sun and shield.*" As a sun he shows me more and more of my sinfulness; but then as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it and assurance that I shall conquer. As a sun, he discloses so much of the enormity of guilt, that I am forced to exclaim, "Mine iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;" but then as a shield, he shows me that he has laid the load on a Surety, who bore it into a land of forgetfulness. As a sun, he makes me daily more and more sensible of the utter impossibility of my working out a righteousness of my own; but then, as a shield, he fastens constantly my thoughts on that righteousness of his Son, which is meritoriously conveyed to all who believe on his name. As a sun, in short, he brings facts to my knowledge, (inasmuch as he brings myself and mine enemies to my knowledge,) which would make the matter of deliverance seem out of reach and hopeless if he were not at the same time a shield; but seeing that he is both, a shield as well as a sun, the disclosures which he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessing which he imparts as a shield. Who then shall wonder, that after announcing the character of God, the Psalmist should break into expressions of confidence and assurance? It may be, that as the corruption of nature is brought continually before me, deeper and wider and darker, Satan will ply me with the suggestion; "The guiltiness is too inveterate to be eradicated, and too enormous to be pardoned"; and if God were a sun, and nothing more, it might be hard to put away the suggestion as a device of the father of lies. I might then fear. I might fear God's holiness, thinking I should never be fitted for communion with Deity; I might fear God's justice, thinking I should never find acquittal at the last dread assize. But can I fear either, when besides a sun, God is also a shield? Can I fear God's justice, when as a shield he places sufferings to my account, which satisfy the law, even to the last penalty? Can I fear his holiness, when he gives me interest in an obedience, which fulfils every precept? Does not the one character, that of a shield, help me to scatter those solicitudes, which may well be excited through the operation of the other character, that of a sun? And am I not warranted—nay, am I not living far below my privilege—if I fail in deriving from the combination of character a boldness and a confidence, not to be overborne by those suspicions, which have Satan for their author? As a sun, God shows me myself; as a shield, God shows me himself. The sun discloses mine own nothingness; the shield, Divine sufficiency. The one enables me to discern that I deserve nothing but wrath, and can earn nothing but shame; the other, that I have a title to immortality, and may lay claim to an enduring inheritance in heaven. I learn, in short, from God as "*a Sun*," that if I have "*wages*," I must have eternal death; but from God as "*a Shield*," that if I will receive the "*free gift*" I may have "*eternal life*." Whom then shall I fear? Myself—confessedly my worst enemy? "The Sun" makes a man start from himself; the "*Shield*" assures him that he shall be protected against himself and builded up "*for a habitation of God through the Spirit*." Shall I shrink from Satan and the hosts of principalities and powers? The "*Sun*" shows them awful in their might, and vehement in their malice; but the "*Shield*" exhibits them spoiled and led captive, when Christ died and rose again. Shall I dread death?

Indeed the "Sun" makes death terrible, forcing me to read God's curse in the motionless limbs and mouldering features; but then the "Shield" displays the open sepulchre, the quickened dust, the marvels of a resurrection, the mountain and the ocean and the valley yielding up the sleeping generations. Is death to be dreaded? Take the catalogue of things, which, inasmuch as we are fallen creatures, God, as our "Sun," instructs us to fear; and we shall find, that inasmuch as we are redeemed creatures, God as our "Shield" enables us to triumph over all our fears. Who therefore shall hesitate to agree, that there results from this combination of character exactly that system of counterpoise, which we affirm to be discoverable in grace as well as in providence? Who can fail, if indeed we have been disciplined by that twofold tuition, which informs man first that he has destroyed himself and then that God hath "laid help on One that is mighty," the former lesson humiliating, the latter encouraging, the one making way for the other, so that the scholar is emptied of every false confidence that he may be fitted to entertain the true—oh! who, we say, can fail to gather from the combination of Divine character the inference drawn by the Psalmist? to exclaim (that is), after recording that "the Lord God is a Sun and Shield"—"He will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly?"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—The words of the text are as a voice from heaven, inviting me up thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe and follow the joyful sound. Am I in *darkness*, and fear I shall never find the way? Open thine eye, O my soul! look up to the Father of lights: *the Lord is a sun*, whose steady beams shall direct thy steps. Is there an inward veil to be removed from my mind, as well as obscurity from my path? He is sufficient for both. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) He can make the day dawn, and the day star to arise in our hearts; (2 Peter i. 19), and by *both*, guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke i. 79.) Doth the same light that discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what enemies and dangers I am to go through? Hear, O my soul, *the Lord is a shield*. Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth Abraham. Gen. xv. 1, "*Fear not: I am thy shield.*" Do I groan under a sense of my unmeanness for the heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, "*the Lord will give grace.*" Am I altogether unworthy of so high happiness? It springs from his own most free, unbounded love; "*the Lord will give glory.*" Am I urged with a thousand wants that need supply, what more can be added? "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a fountain opened; here thy eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be ever at rest.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 11.—Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him?—*William Secker.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord will give glory.*" "Man," says a wise author, "is the glory of this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to infinite perfection; there we shall see his face, and have his name written in our foreheads; and we shall reign with him for ever and ever.—*Matthew Wilks.*

Verse 11.—"*No good thing will he withhold,*" etc. But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honours and riches and bodily strength are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face in the next, and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly, and they are all cast up in one sum where it is said, *Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*: "Blessed are the pure of heart (and such are only they that walk uprightly) for they shall see God." But is walking uprightly such a matter with God, that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking upright, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is no doubt a hard matter to stoop and go upright both at once, yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly; but when I say

they are done both at once, I mean not of the body, I know two such postures in the body both at once are impossible; but the soul can do it, the soul can stoop and go upright both at once; for then doth the soul walk upright before God, when it stoops in humility before God and men.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 11.—This is an immense fountain; the Lord fill all the buckets of our hearts at the spring, and give us capacious souls, as he hath a liberal hand.—*Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Why called Tabernacles? To include (1) the holiest of all; (2) The holy place; (3) The court and precincts of the Tabernacle. "*Amiable*" is predicated of these. The courts amiable—the holy place more amiable—the holiest of all most amiable. II. Why called the Tabernacles of the Lord of hosts? To denote (1) Its connection with the boundless universe; (2) Its distinction from it. Present everywhere where God is peculiarly present here. III. Why called *amiable*? (1) Because of the character in which God dwells here. Is condescension amiable? Is love? Is mercy? Is grace? These are displayed here. (2) Because of the purpose for which he resides here. To save sinners; to comfort saints.

Verse 2.—I. The Object of Desire: (1) The house of the Lord; (2) The Lord of the house; the life of God in us and our life in him. II. The Occasion of the Desire. Exclusion from the Sanctuary. David says not, Oh how I long for my palace, my crown, my sceptre, my kingdom; but, Oh how I long to return to the house of God! III. The Strength of the Desire. (1) It was an inward longing, "my soul longeth," etc.; (2) A painful longing, "yea, fainteth;" (3) A prayerful longing, "my heart crieth out;" (4) An entire longing, "my heart and my flesh," etc.; Or, I. The value of God's house is known by attending it. II. It is better known by being afterwards banished from it. III. It is best known by being restored to it.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—The Titles for God in these three verses are worth dwelling upon. "Jehovah of Hosts;" "the living God;" "my King and my God."

Verse 3.—I. The Eloquence of Grief. David in his banishment envies the sparrows and the swallows that had built their nests by the house of God, more than Absalom who had usurped his palace and his throne. II. The Ingenuity of Prayer. Why should sparrows and swallows be nearer to thy altars than I am, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God! "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Verse 4.—I. The Privilege suggested—dwelling in the house of God. Some birds fly over the house of God—some occasionally alight upon it—others build their nests and train up their young there. This was the privilege which the Psalmist desired. II. The Fact asserted. "Blessed are they that dwell," etc., who make it the spiritual home of themselves and their children. III. The Reason given. "They will be still," etc. (1) They will have much for which to praise God; (2) They will see much to praise in God.

Verse 5.—Man is blessed, I. When his strength is in God. Strength to believe, strength to obey, strength to suffer. II. When God's ways are in him. "In whose heart," etc. When the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God are deeply engraved upon the heart.

Verse 6.—I. Trusting God in trouble brings present comfort—"Who passing," etc. II. Present comfort ensures still larger supplies—"The rain also," etc.

Verse 7.—There is, I. Progression. "They go:" (1) The people of God cannot remain stationary; (2) They must not recede; (3) They should always be advancing. II. Invigoration. "From strength to strength." (1) From one ordinance to another; (2) from one duty to another; (3) from one grace to another; (4) from one degree of grace to another. Add faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge," etc. III. Completion. "Every one of them," etc.

Verse 8.—I. Prayer is not confined to the Sanctuary. David, in his banishment, says, "Hear my prayer." II. Help is not confined to the sanctuary. The Lord of hosts is "here," as well as in his tabernacles. See verse 1. III. Grace is not confined

to the Sanctuary. Here, too, in the wilderness is the covenanting God, the God of Jacob.

Verse 9.—Observe, I. The Faith. Our shield is thine Anointed—Thine Anointed is our Shield. This is not David, because he says *our* Shield, but David's greater Son. A gleam of Gospel light through the thick clouds. II. The Prayer. "Behold, O God," etc. "Look," etc. Look upon him as our Representative, and look upon us in him. III. The Plea. (1) He has engaged to be our defence from thine anger; (2) he has been anointed to this office by thee.

Verse 10.—Here is, I. A comparison of places. "A day in thy courts," etc. How much more a day in heaven! What, then, must an eternity in heaven be! II. A comparison of Persons. "I would rather be a doorkeeper," etc. Better be the least in the Church than the greatest in the world. If "better reign in hell than serve in heaven" was Satan's first thought after he fell, it was the first thought only.

Verse 11.—I. What God is to his people. "A sun and shield." (1) The source of all good; (2) a defence from all evil. II. What he gives. (1) Grace here; (2) glory hereafter. III. What he withholds. All that is not good. If he withholds health or wealth, or his own smiles from us, it is because they are not good for us at that particular time.

Verse 12.—I. The one thing that makes man blessed. Trust in God. "Blessed," etc. (1) For all things; (2) at all times; (3) in all circumstances. II. The Blessing contained in that one thing. God himself becomes ours; (1) his mercy for our pardon; (2) his power for our protection; (3) his wisdom for our guidance; (4) his faithfulness for our preservation; (5) his all-sufficiency for our supply. III. The certainty of the blessing. (1) From David's own experience; (2) from his solemn appeal to God respecting it. "O Lord God of hosts," etc.

[All the above are by Rev. George Rogers.]

Verse 5.—The preciousness of intensity and enthusiasm in religious belief, worship, and life.

Verses 5, 6, 7.—The blessed people are described, 1. By their earnest desire and resolution to take this journey, though they dwelt far off from the tabernacle, ver. 5. 2. By their painful passage, yet some refreshments by the way, ver. 6. 3. By their constant progress, till they came to the place they aimed at, ver. 7.—*T. Mantou.*

Verse 6.—As the valley of weeping symbolizes dejection, so a "well" symbolizes ever-flowing salvation and comfort (compare John iv. 14; also Isa. xii. 3).

Verse 6.—I. "*The valley of Baca.*" Of this valley we may observe, 1. It is much frequented. 2. Unpleasant to flesh and blood. 3. Very healthful. 4. Very safe. 5. Very profitable. II. The toilsome effort: "make it a well." 1. Comfort may be obtained in the deepest trouble. 2. Comfort must be obtained by exertion. 3. Comfort obtained by one is of use to others, as a well may be. III. The heavenly supply. "The rain also filleth the pools." All is from God; effort is of no avail without him.

Verse 8.—Pleas for answers to prayer in the titles here used. I. He is JEHOVAH, the living, all-wise, all-powerful, faithful, gracious, and immutable God. II. He is God of hosts, having abundant agencies under his control; he can send angels, restrain devils, actuate good men, overrule bad men, and govern all other agents. III. He is the God of Jacob, of chosen Jacob, as seen in Jacob's dream; God of Jacob in his banishment, in his wrestling (and so a God overcome by prayer), God pardoning Jacob's sins, God preserving Jacob and his seed after him.

Verse 9.—I. What god is to us. II. What we would have him look at. III. Where we would be: hidden behind the shield—seen in the person of Christ.

Verse 10.—I. Days in God's courts. Days of hearing, of repenting, of believing, of adoration, of communion, of revival, etc. II. Their preciousness. Better than a thousand days of victory, of pleasure, of money-making, of harvest, of discussion, of travelling amid beauties of nature. III. Reasons for this preciousness. They are more pleasurable, more profitable now, and more preparatory for the future and for heaven. The employment, the society, the enjoyment, the result, etc., are all better.

Verse 12.—The blessedness of the life of faith over that of carnal enjoyment, religious feeling, self-confidence, living upon marks and evidences, trusting in man, etc.