

PSALM CV.

This historical Psalm was evidently composed by King David, for the first fifteen verses of it were used as a hymn at the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obededom, and we read in 1 Chron. xvi. 7. "Then on that day David delivered first this Psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Such a song was suitable for the occasion, for it describes the movements of the Lord's people and his guardian care over them in every place, and all this on account of the covenant of which the ark, then removing, was a symbol. Our last Psalm sang the opening chapters of Genesis, and this takes up its closing chapters and conducts us into Exodus and Numbers.

The first verses are full of joyful praise, and call upon the people to extol Jehovah, 1—7; then the earliest days of the infant nation are described, 8—15; the going into Egypt, 16—23, the coming forth from it with the Lord's outstretched arm, 24—38, the journeying through the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan.

We are now among the long Psalms, as at other times we have been among the short ones. These varying lengths of the sacred poems should teach us not to lay down any law either of brevity or prolixity in either prayer or praise. Short petitions and single verses of hymns are often the best for public occasions, but there are seasons when a whole night of wrestling or an entire day of Psalm singing will be none too long. The Spirit is ever free in his operations, and is not to be confined within the rules of conventional propriety. The wind bloweth as it listeth, and at one time rushes in short and rapid sweep, while at another it continues to refresh the earth hour after hour with its reviving breath.

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

2 Sing unto him, sing Psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

7 He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.

1. "O give thanks unto the Lord." Jehovah is the author of all our benefits, therefore let him have all our gratitude. "Call upon his name," or call him by his name; proclaim his titles and fill the world with his renown. "Make known his deeds among the people," or among the nations. Let the heathen hear of our God, that they may forsake their idols and learn to worship him. The removal of the ark was a fit occasion for proclaiming aloud the glories of the Great King, and for publishing to all mankind the greatness of his doings, for it had a history in connection with the nations which it was well for them to remember with reverence. The rest of the Psalm is a sermon, of which these first verses constitute the text.

2. "Sing unto him." Bring your best thoughts and express them in the best language to the sweetest sounds. Take care that your singing is "unto him," and not merely for the sake of the music or to delight the ears of others. Singing is so delightful an exercise that it is a pity so much of it should be wasted upon trifles or worse than trifles. O ye who can emulate the nightingale, and almost rival the angels, we do most earnestly pray that your hearts may be renewed that so your floods of melody may be poured out at your Maker's and Redeemer's feet. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works." Men love to speak of marvels, and others are generally glad to hear of surprising things; surely the believer in the living God has before him the most amazing series of wonders ever heard of or imagined, his themes are inex-

haustible and they are such as should hold men spellbound. We ought to have more of this "talk": no one would be blamed as a Mr. Talkative if this were his constant theme. Talk ye, all of you: you all know something by experience of the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord—"talk ye." In this way, by all dwelling on this blessed subject, "all" his wondrous works will be published. One cannot do it, nor ten thousand times ten thousand, but if all speak to the Lord's honour, they will at least come nearer to accomplishing the deed. We ought to have a wide range when conversing upon the Lord's doings, and should not shut our eyes to any part of them. Talk ye of his wondrous works in creation and in grace, in judgment and in mercy, in providential interpositions and in spiritual comfortings; leave out none, or it will be to your damage. Obedience to this verse will give every sanctified tongue some work to do: the trained musicians can sing, and the commoner voices can talk, and in both ways the Lord will receive a measure of the thanks due to him, and his deeds will be made known among the people.

3. "*Glory ye in his holy name.*" Make it a matter of joy that you have such a God. His character and attributes are such as will never make you blush to call him your God. Idolaters may well be ashamed of the actions attributed to their fancied deities, their names are foul with lust and red with blood, but Jehovah is wholly glorious; every deed of his will bear the strictest scrutiny; his name is holy, his character is holy, his law is holy, his government is holy, his influence is holy. In all this we may make our boast, nor can any deny our right to do so. "*Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*" If they have not yet found him so fully as they desire, yet even to be allowed and enabled to seek after such a God is cause for gladness. To worship the Lord and seek his kingdom and righteousness is the sure way to happiness, and indeed there is no other. True seekers throw their hearts into the engagement, hence their hearts receive joy; according to the text they have a permit to rejoice and they have the promise that they shall do so. How gladsome all these sentences are! Where can men's ears be when they talk of the gloom of Psalm-singing? What worldly songs are fuller of real mirth? One hears the sound of the timbrel and the harp in every verse. Even seekers find bliss in the name of the Lord Jesus, but as for the finders, we may say with the poet,

"And those who find thee find a bliss,
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

4. "*Seek the Lord and his strength.*" Put yourselves under his protection. Regard him not as a puny God, but look unto his omnipotence, and seek to know the power of his grace. We all need strength; let us look to the strong One for it. We need infinite power to bear us safely to our eternal resting-place, let us look to the Almighty Jehovah for it. "*Seek his face evermore.*" Seek, seek, seek, we have the word three times, and though the words differ in the Hebrew, the sense is the same. It must be a blessed thing to seek, or we should not be thus stirred up to do so. To seek his face is to desire his presence, his smile, his favour consciously enjoyed. First we seek *him*, then *his strength*, and then *his face*; from the personal reverence, we pass on to the imparted power, and then to the conscious favour. This seeking must never cease—the more we know the more we must seek to know. Finding him, we must "our minds inflame to seek him more and more." He seeks spiritual worshippers, and spiritual worshippers seek him; they are therefore sure to meet face to face ere long.

5. "*Remember his marvellous works that he hath done.*" Memory is never better employed than upon such topics. Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense. Shame upon us that we should let slip what it would seem impossible to forget. We ought to need no exhortation to remember such wonders, especially as he has wrought them all on the behalf of his people. "*His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth*"—these also should be had in memory. The judgments of his mouth are as memorable as the marvels of his hand. God had but to speak and the enemies of his people were sorely afflicted; his threats were not mere words, but smote his adversaries terribly. As the Word of God is the salvation of his saints, so is it the destruction of the ungodly: out of his mouth goeth a two-edged sword with which he will slay the wicked.

6. "*O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.*" Should all the world forget, ye are bound to remember. Your father Abraham saw his wonders and judgments upon Sodom, and upon the kings who came from far, and Jacob also saw the Lord's marvellous works in visiting the nations with famine, yet providing for his chosen a choice inheritance in a goodly land; therefore let the children praise their father's God. The Israelites were the Lord's elect nation, and they were bound to imitate their progenitor, who was the Lord's faithful servant and walked before him in holy faith: the seed of Abraham should not be unbelieving, nor should the children of so true a servant become rebels. As we read this pointed appeal to the chosen seed we should recognise the special claims which the Lord has upon ourselves, since we too have been favoured above all others. Election is not a couch for ease, but an argument for seven-fold diligence. If God has set his choice upon us, let us aim to be choice men.

7. "*He is the Lord our God.*" Blessed be his name. Jehovah condescends to be *our* God. This sentence contains a greater wealth of meaning than all the eloquence of orators can compass, and there is more joy in it than in all the sonnets of them that make merry. "*His judgments are in all the earth,*" or *in all the land*, for the whole of the country was instructed by his law, ruled by his statutes, and protected by his authority. What a joy it is that our God is never absent from us, he is never non-resident, never an absentee ruler, his judgments are in all the places in which we dwell. If the second clause of this verse refers to the whole world, it is very beautiful to see the speciality of Israel's election united with the universality of Jehovah's reign. Not alone to the one nation did the Lord reveal himself, but his glory flashed around the globe. It is wonderful that the Jewish people should have become so exclusive, and have so utterly lost the missionary spirit, for their sacred literature is full of the broad and generous sympathies which are so consistent with the worship of "the God of the whole earth." Nor is it less painful to observe that among a certain class of believers in God's election of grace there lingers a hard exclusive spirit, fatal to compassion and zeal. It would be well for these also to remember that their Redeemer is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.

9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;

10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:

11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

12 When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

13 When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people;

14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;

15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

8. "*He hath remembered his covenant for ever.*" Here is the basis of all his dealings with his people: he had entered into covenant with them in their father Abraham, and to this covenant he remained faithful. The exhortation to *remember* (in verse 5) receives great force from the fact that God has remembered. If the Lord has his promise in memory, surely we ought not to forget the wonderful manner in which he keeps it. To us it should be matter for deepest joy that never in any instance has the Lord been unmindful of his covenant engagements, nor will he be so world without end. O that we were as mindful of them as he is. "*The word which he commanded to a thousand generations.*" This is only an amplification of the former statement, and serves to set before us the immutable fidelity of the Lord during the changing generations of men. His judgments are threatened upon the third and fourth generations of them that hate him, but his love runs on for ever, even to "a thousand generations." His promise is here said to be *commanded*, or vested

with all the authority of a law. It is proclamation from a sovereign, the *firman* of an Emperor, whose laws shall stand fast in every jot and tittle though heaven and earth shall pass away. Therefore let us give thanks unto the Lord and talk of all his wondrous works, so wonderful for their faithfulness and truth.

9. "*Which covenant he made with Abraham.*" When the victims were divided and the burning lamp passed between the pieces (Gen. xv.) then the Lord made, or ratified, the covenant with the patriarch. This was a solemn deed, performed not without blood, and the cutting in pieces of the sacrifice: it points us to the greater covenant which in Christ Jesus is signed, sealed, and ratified, that it may stand fast for ever and ever. "*And his oath unto Isaac.*" Isaac did not in vision see the solemn making of the covenant, but the Lord renewed unto him his oath (Gen. xxvi. 2—5). This was enough for him, and must have established his faith in the Most High. We have the privilege of seeing in our Lord Jesus both the sacrificial seal, and the eternal oath of God, by which every promise of the covenant is made yea and amen to all the chosen seed.

10. "*And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law.*" Jacob in his wondrous dream (Gen. xxviii. 10—15) received a pledge that the Lord's mode of procedure with him would be in accordance with covenant relations: for said Jehovah, "I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Thus, if we may so speak with all reverence, the covenant became a law unto the Lord himself by which he bound himself to act. O matchless condescension, that the most free and sovereign Lord should put himself under covenant bonds to his chosen, and make a law for himself, though he is above all law. "*And to Israel for an everlasting covenant.*" When he changed Jacob's name he did not change his covenant, but it is written, "he blessed him there" (Gen. xxxii. 29), and it was with the old blessing, according to the unchangeable word of abiding grace.

11, 12. "*Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.*" This repetition of the great covenant promise is recorded in Gen. xxxv. 9—12 in connection with the change of Jacob's name, and very soon after that slaughter of the Shechemites, which had put the patriarch into such great alarm and caused him to use language almost identical with that of the next verse. "*When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.*" Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, and my house." Thus the fears of the man of God declared themselves, and they were reasonable if we look only at the circumstances in which he was placed, but they are soon seen to be groundless when we remember that the covenant promise, which guaranteed the possession of the land, necessarily implied the preservation of the race to whom the promise was made. We often fear where no fear is.

The blessings promised to the seed of Abraham were not dependent upon the number of his descendants, or their position in this world. The covenant was made with one man, and consequently the number could never be less, and that one man was not the owner of a foot of soil in all the land, save only a cave in which to bury his dead, and therefore his seed could not have less inheritance than he. The smallness of a church, and the poverty of its members, are no barriers to the divine blessing, if it be sought earnestly by pleading the promise. Were not the apostles few, and the disciples feeble, when the good work began? Neither because we are strangers and foreigners here below, as our fathers were, are we in any the more danger: we are like sheep in the midst of wolves, but the wolves cannot hurt us, for our shepherd is near.

13. "*When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people.*" Migrating as the patriarchs did from the region of one tribe to the country of another they were singularly preserved. The little wandering family might have been cut off root and branch had not a special mandate been issued from the throne for their protection. It was not the gentleness of their neighbours which screened them; they were hedged about by the mysterious guardianship of heaven. Whether in Egypt, or in Philistia, or in Canaan, the heirs of the promises, dwelling in their tents, were always secure.

14. "*He suffered no man to do them wrong.*" Men cannot wrong us unless he suffers them to do so; the greatest of them must wait his permission before they can place a finger upon us. The wicked would devour us if they could, but they cannot even cheat us of a farthing without divine sufferance. "*Yea, he reproveth kings for*

their sakes." Pharaoh and Abimelech must both be made to respect the singular strangers who had come to sojourn in their land, the greatest kings are very second-rate persons with God in comparison with his chosen servants.

15. "*Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*" Abraham and his seed were in the midst of the world a generation of priests anointed to present sacrifice unto the Most High God; since to them the oracles were committed, they were also the prophets of mankind; and they were kings too—a royal priesthood; hence they had received a threefold anointing. Their holy offices surrounded them with a sacredness which rendered it sacrilege to molest them. The Lord was pleased to impress the wild tribes of Canaan with a respectful awe of the pious strangers who had come to abide with them, so that they came not near them to do them ill. The words here mentioned may not have been actually spoken, but the impression of awe which fell upon the nations is thus poetically described. God will not have those touched who have been set apart unto himself. He calls them his own, saying, "*Mine anointed;*" he declares that he has "*anointed*" them to be prophets, priests, and kings unto himself, and yet again he claims them as *his* prophets—"Do *my* prophets no harm." All through the many years in which the three great fathers dwelt in Canaan no man was able to injure them: they were not able to defend themselves by force of arms, but the eternal God was their refuge. Even so at this present time the remnant according to the election of grace cannot be destroyed, nay, nor so much as touched, without the divine consent. Against the church of Christ the gates of hell cannot prevail. In all this we see reasons for giving thanks unto the Lord, and proclaiming his name according to the exhortation of the first verse of the Psalm. Here ends the portion which was sung at the moving of the ark: its fitness to be used for such a purpose is very manifest, for the ark was the symbol both of the covenant and of that mystic dwelling of God with Israel which was at once her glory and her defence. None could touch the Lord's peculiar ones, for the Lord was among them, flaming forth in majesty between the cherubims.

16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

17 He sent a man before them, *even Joseph, who* was sold for a servant:

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

20 The king sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

The presence of God having remained with his chosen ones while they sojourned in Canaan, it did not desert them when they were called to go down into Egypt. They did not go there of their own choice, but under divine direction, and hence the Lord prepared their way and prospered them until he saw fit to conduct them again to the land of promise.

16. "*Moreover he called for a famine upon the land.*" He had only to call for it as a man calls for his servant, and it came at once. How grateful ought we to be that he does not often call in that terrible servant of his, so meagre and gaunt, and grim, so pitiless to the women and the children, so bitter to the strong men, who utterly fail before it. "*He brake the whole staff of bread.*" Man's feeble life cannot stand without its staff—if bread fail him he fails. As a cripple with a broken staff falls to the ground, so does man when bread no longer sustains him. To God it is as easy to make a famine as to break a staff. He could make that famine universal, too, so that all countries should be in like case: then would the race of man fall indeed, and its staff would be broken for ever. There is this sweet comfort in the matter, that the Lord has wise ends to serve even by famine: he meant his people to go down into Egypt, and the scarcity of food was his method of leading them there, for "they heard that there was corn in Egypt."

17. "*He sent a man before them, even Joseph.*" He was the advance guard and pioneer for the whole clan. His brethren sold him, but God sent him. Where the hand of the wicked is visible God's hand may be invisibly at work, overruling

their malice. No one was more of a man, or more fit to lead the van than Joseph : an interpreter of dreams was wanted, and his brethren had said of him, " Behold, this dreamer cometh." " *Who was sold for a servant,*" or rather for a slave. Joseph's journey into Egypt was not so costly as Jonah's voyage when he paid his own fare : his free passage was provided by the Midianites, who also secured his introduction to a great officer of state by handing him over as a slave. His way to a position in which he could feed his family lay through the pit, the slaver's caravan, the slave market and the prison, and who shall deny but what it was the right way, the surest way, the wisest way, and perhaps the shortest way. Yet assuredly it seemed not so. Were we to send a man on such an errand we should furnish him with money—Joseph goes as a pauper ; we should clothe him with authority—Joseph goes as a slave ; we should leave him at full liberty—Joseph is a bondman : yet money would have been of little use when corn was so dear, authority would have been irritating rather than influential with Pharaoh, and freedom might not have thrown Joseph into connection with Pharaoh's captain and his other servants, and so the knowledge of his skill in interpretation might not have reached the monarch's ear. God's way is *the way*. Our Lord's path to his mediatorial throne ran by the cross of Calvary ; our road to glory runs by the rivers of grief.

18. "*Whose feet they hurt with fetters.*" From this we learn a little more of Joseph's sufferings than we find in the book of Genesis : inspiration had not ceased, and David was as accurate an historian as Moses, for the same Spirit guided his pen. "*He was laid in iron,*" or "*into iron came his soul.*" The prayer book version, "*the iron entered into his soul,*" is ungrammatical, but probably expresses much the same truth. His fetters hurt his mind as well as his body, and well did Jacob say, "*The archers shot at him, and sorely grieved him.*" Under the cruelly false accusation, which he could not disprove, his mind was, as it were, belted and bolted around with iron, and had not the Lord been with him he might have sunk under his sufferings. In all this, and a thousand things besides, he was an admirable type of him who in the highest sense is "*the Shepherd, the stone of Israel.*" The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places. It is even so with all the Lord's afflicted ones, they too shall one day step from their prisons to their thrones.

19. "*Until the time that his word came.*" God has his times, and his children must wait till his "*until*" is fulfilled. Joseph was tried as in a furnace, until the Lord's assaying work was fully accomplished. The word of the chief butler was nothing, he had to wait until God's word came, and meanwhile "*the word of the Lord tried him.*" He believed the promise, but his faith was sorely exercised. A delayed blessing tests men, and proves their metal, whether their faith is of that precious kind which can endure the fire. Of many a choice promise we may say with Daniel "*the thing was true, but the time appointed was long.*" If the vision tarry it is good to wait for it with patience. There is a trying word and a delivering word, and we must bear the one till the other comes to us. How meekly Joseph endured his afflictions, and with what fortitude he looked forward to the clearing of his slandered character we may readily imagine : it will be better still if under similar trials we are able to imitate him, and come forth from the furnace as thoroughly purified as he was, and as well prepared to bear the yet harder ordeal of honour and power.

20. "*The king sent and loosed him.*" He was thrust into the roundhouse by an officer, but he was released by the monarch himself. "*Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.*" The tide had turned, so that Egypt's haughty potentate gave him a call from the prison to the palace. He had interpreted the dreams of captives, himself a captive ; he must now interpret for a ruler and become a ruler himself. When God means to enlarge his prisoners, kings become his turnkeys.

21. "*He made him lord of his house.*" Reserving no power, but saying "*only in the throne will I be greater than thou.*" The servitor of slaves becomes lord over nobles. How soon the Lord lifteth his chosen from the dunghill to set them among princes. "*And ruler of all his substance.*" He empowered him to manage the storing of the seven plenteous harvests, and to dispense the provisions in the coming days of scarcity. All the treasures of Egypt were under his lock and key, yea, the granaries of the world were sealed or opened at his bidding. Thus was he in the best conceivable position for preserving alive the house of Israel with whom the covenant was made. As our Lord was himself secured in Egypt from Herod's enmity, so, ages before, the redeemed race found an equally available shelter in the

hour of need. God has always a refuge for his saints, and if the whole earth could not afford them sanctuary, the Lord himself would be their dwelling-place, and take them up to lie in his own bosom. We are always sure to be fed if all the world should starve. It is delightful to think of our greater Joseph ruling the nations for the good of his own household, and it becomes us to abide in quiet confidence in every political disaster, since Jesus is on the throne of providence, King of kings and Lord of lords, and will be so till this dispensation ends.

22. "*To bind his princes at his pleasure.*" He who was bound obtains authority to bind. He is no longer kept in prison, but keeps all the prisons, and casts into them the greatest nobles when justice demands it. "*And teach his senators wisdom.*" The heads of the various peoples, the elders of the nations, learned from him the science of government, the art of providing for the people. Joseph was a great instructor in political economy, and we doubt not that he mingled with it the purest morals, the most upright jurisprudence, and something of that divine wisdom without which the most able senators remain in darkness. The king's authority made him absolute both in the executive and in the legislative courts, and the Lord instructed him to use his power and discretion. What responsibilities and honours loaded the man who had been rejected by his brothers, and sold for twenty pieces of silver! What glories crown the head of that greater one who was "separated from his brethren."

23. "*Israel also came into Egypt.*" The aged patriarch came, and with him that increasing company which bore his name. He was hard to bring there. Perhaps nothing short of the hope of seeing Joseph could have drawn him to take so long a journey from the tombs of his forefathers; but the divine will was accomplished and the church of God was removed into an enemy's country, where for a while it was nourished. "*And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.*" Shem the blessed came to lodge awhile with Ham the accursed: the dove was in the vulture's nest. God so willed it for a time, and therefore it was safe and right: still it was only a sojourn, not a settlement. The fairest Goshen in Egypt was not the covenant blessing, neither did the Lord mean his people to think it so; even so to us "earth is our lodge," but only our lodge, for heaven is our home. When we are best housed we ought still to remember that here we have no continuing city. It were ill news for us if we were doomed to reside in Egypt for ever, for all its riches are not worthy to be compared with the reproach of Christ.

Thus the song rehearsed the removals of the Lord's people, and was a most fit accompaniment to the upbearing of the ark, as the priests carried it into the city of David, where the Lord had appointed it a resting-place.

24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts.

32 He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.

33 He smote their vines also and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number,

35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold : and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.

38 Egypt was glad when they departed : for the fear of them fell upon them.

24. "*And he increased his people greatly.*" In Goshen they seem to have increased rapidly from the first, and this excited the fears of the Egyptians, so that they tried to retard their increase by oppression, but the Lord continued to bless them, "*And make them stronger than their enemies.*" Both in physical strength and in numbers they threatened to become the more powerful race. Nor was this growth of the nation impeded by tyrannical measures, but the very reverse took place, thus giving an early instance of what has since become a proverb in the church—"the more they oppressed them the more they multiplied." It is idle to contend either with God or his people.

25. "*He turned their heart to hate his people.*" It was his goodness to Israel which called forth the ill-will of the Egyptian court, and so far the Lord caused it, and moreover he made use of this feeling to lead on to the discomfort of his people, and so to their readiness to leave the land to which they had evidently become greatly attached. Thus far but no further did the Lord turn the hearts of the Egyptians. God cannot in any sense be the author of sin so far as to be morally responsible for its existence, but it often happens through the evil which is inherent in human nature that the acts of the Lord arouse the ill-feelings of ungodly men. Is the sun to be blamed because while it softens wax it hardens clay? Is the orb of day to be accused of creating the foul exhalations which are drawn by its warmth from the pestilential marsh? The sun causes the reek of the dunghill only in a certain sense, had it been a bed of flowers his beams would have called forth fragrance. The evil is in men, and the honour of turning it to good and useful purposes is with the Lord. Hatred is often allied with cunning, and so in the case of the Egyptians, they began "*to deal subtilly with his servants.*" They treated them in a fraudulent manner, they reduced them to bondage by their exactions, they secretly concerted the destruction of their male children, and at length openly ordained that cruel measure, and all with the view of checking their increase, lest in time of war they should side with invaders in order to obtain their liberty. Surely the depths of Satanic policy were here reached, but vain was the cunning of man against the chosen seed.

26. "*He sent Moses his servant ; and Aaron whom he had chosen.*" When the oppression was at the worst, Moses came. For the second time we have here the expression, "*he sent*"; he who sent Joseph sent also Moses and his eloquent brother. The Lord had the men in readiness and all he had to do was to commission them and thrust them forward. They were two, for mutual comfort and strength, even as the apostles and the seventy in our Lord's day were sent forth two and two. The men differed, and so the one became the supplement of the other, and together they were able to accomplish far more than if they had been exactly alike : the main point was that they were both *sent*, and hence both clothed with divine might.

27. "*They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.*" The miracles which were wrought by Moses were the Lord's, not his own ; hence they are here called "*his signs*," as being the marks of Jehovah's presence and power. The plagues were "*words of his signs*" (see margin), that is to say, they were speaking marvels, which testified more plainly than words to the omnipotence of Jehovah, to his determination to be obeyed, to his anger at the obstinacy of Pharaoh. Never were discourses more plain, pointed, personal, or powerful, and yet it took ten of them to accomplish the end designed. In the preaching of the gospel there are words, and signs, and wonders, and these leave men without excuse for their impenitence ; to have the kingdom of God come nigh unto them, and yet to remain rebellious is the unhappy sin of obstinate spirits. Those are wonders of sin who see wonders of grace, and yet are unaffected by them : bad as he was, Pharaoh had not this guilt, for the prodigies which he beheld were marvels of judgment and not of mercy.

28. "*He sent darkness, and made it dark.*" It was no natural or common darkness to be accounted for by the blinding dust of the simoon, it was beyond all precedent and out of the range of ordinary events. It was a horrible palpable obscurity which men felt clinging about them as though it were a robe of death. It was a thick darkness, a total darkness, a darkness which lasted three days, a darkness in which no

one dared to stir. What a condition to be in ! This plague is first mentioned, though it is not first in order, because it fitly describes all the period of the plagues : the land was in the darkness of sorrow, and in the darkness of sin all the time. If we shudder as we think of that long and terrible gloom, let us reflect upon the gross darkness which still covers heathen lands as the result of sin, for it is one of the chief plagues which iniquity creates for itself. May the day soon come when the people which sit in darkness shall see a great light. "*And they rebelled not against his word.*" Moses and Aaron did as they were bidden, and during the darkness the Egyptians were so cowed that even when it cleared away they were anxious for Israel to be gone, and had it not been for the pride of Pharaoh they would have rejoiced to speed them on their journey there and then. God can force men to obey, and even make the stoutest heart eager to pay respect to his will, for fear his plagues should be multiplied. Possibly, however, the sentence before us neither refers to Moses nor the Egyptians, but to the plagues which came at the Lord's bidding. The darkness, the hail, the frogs, the murrain, were all so many obedient servants of the great Lord of all.

29. "*He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.*" So that the plague was not a mere colouring of the water with red earth, as some suppose, but the river was offensive and fatal to the fish. The beloved Nile and other streams were all equally tainted and ensanguined. Their commonest mercy became their greatest curse. Water is one of the greatest blessings, and the more plentiful it is the better, but blood is a hideous sight to look upon, and to see rivers and pools of it is frightful indeed. Fish in Egypt furnished a large part of the food supply, and it was no small affliction to see them floating dead and white upon a stream of crimson. The hand of the Lord thus smote them where all classes of the people would become aware of it and suffer from it.

30. "*Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.*" If fish could not live frogs might, yea, they multiplied both on land and in the water till they swarmed beyond all count. "*In the chambers of their kings.*" They penetrated the choicest rooms of the palace, and were found upon the couches of state. The Lord called for them and they marched forth. Obnoxious and even loathsome their multitudes became, but there was no resisting them ; they seemed to spring out of the ground, the very land brought them forth. Their universal presence must have inspired horror and disgust which would cause sickness and make life a burden ; their swarming even in the king's own chambers was a rebuke to his face, which his pride must have felt. Kings are no more than other men with God, nay less than others when they are first in rebellion ; if the frogs had abounded elsewhere, but had been kept out of his select apartments, the monarch would have cared little, for he was a heartless being, but God took care that there should be a special horde of the invaders for the palace ; they were more than ordinarily abundant in the chambers of their kings.

31. "*He spake.*" See the power of the divine word. He had only to say it and it was done : "*and there came divers sorts of flies.*" Insects of various annoying kinds came up in infinite hordes, a mixture of biting, stinging, buzzing gnats, mosquitos, flies, beetles, and other vermin such as make men's flesh their prey, the place of deposit for their eggs, and the seat of peculiar torments. "*And lice in all their coats.*" These unutterably loathsome forms of life were as the dust of the ground, and covered their persons, their garments, and all they ate. Nothing is too small to master man when God commands it to assail him. The sons of Ham had despised the Israelites and now they were made to loathe themselves. The meanest beggars were more approachable than the proud Egyptians ; they were reduced to the meanest condition of filthiness, and the most painful state of irritation. What armies the Lord can send forth when once his right arm is bared for war ! And what scorn he pours on proud nations when he fights them, not with angels, but with lice ! Pharaoh had little left to be proud of when his own person was invaded by filthy parasites. It was a slap in the face which ought to have humbled his heart, but, alas, man, when he is altogether polluted, still maintains his self-conceit, and when he is the most disgusting object in the universe he still vaunts himself. Surely pride is moral madness.

32. "*He gave them hail for rain.*" They seldom had rain, but now the showers assumed the form of heavy, destructive hail-storms, and being accompanied with a hurricane and thunderstorm, they were overwhelming, terrible, and destructive. "*And flaming fire in their land.*" The lightning was peculiarly vivid, and seemed to run along upon the ground, or fall in fiery flakes. Thus all the fruit of the trees and the harvests of the fields were either broken to pieces or burned on the spot,

and universal fear bowed the hearts of men to the dust. No phenomena are more appalling to the most of mankind than those which attend a thunderstorm; even the most audacious blasphemers quail when the dread artillery of heaven opens fire upon the earth.

33. "*He smote their vines also and their fig trees.*" So that all hope of gathering their best fruits was gone, and the trees were injured for future bearing. All the crops were destroyed, and these are mentioned as being the more prominent forms of their produce, used by them both at festivals and in common meals. "*And brake the trees of their coasts.*" From end to end of Egypt the trees were battered and broken by the terrible hailstorm. God is in earnest when he deals with proud spirits, he will either end them or mend them.

34, 35. "*He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.*" One word from the Captain and the armies leaped forward. The expression is very striking, and sets forth the immediate result of the divine word. The caterpillar is called *the licker*, because it seems to lick up every green thing as in a moment. Perhaps the caterpillar here meant is still the locust in another form. That locusts swarm in countless armies is a fact of ordinary observation, and the case would be worse on this occasion. We have ourselves ridden for miles through armies of locusts, and we have seen with our own eyes how completely they devour every green thing. The description is not strained when we read, "*And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.*" Nothing escapes these ravenous creatures, they even climb the trees to reach any remnant of foliage which may survive. Commissioned as these were by God, we may be sure they would do their work thoroughly, and leave behind them nothing but a desolate wilderness.

36. "*He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.*" Now came the master blow. The Lord spoke before, but now he smites; before he only smote vines, but now he strikes men themselves. The glory of the household dies in a single night, the prime and pick of the nation are cut off, the flower of the troops, the heirs of the rich, and the hopes of the poor all die at midnight. Now the target was struck in the centre, there was no confronting this plague. Pharaoh feels it as much as the woman-slave at the mill; he had smitten Israel, the Lord's firstborn, and the Lord repaid him to his face. What a cry went up throughout the land of Egypt when every house wailed its firstborn at the dead of night! O Jehovah, thou didst triumph in that hour, and with an outstretched arm didst thou deliver thy people.

37. "*He brought them forth also with silver and gold.*" This they asked of the Egyptians, perhaps even demanded, and well they might, for they had been robbed and spoiled for many a day, and it was not meet that they should go forth empty handed. Glad were the Egyptians to hand over their jewels to propitiate a people who had such a terrible friend above; they needed no undue pressure, they feared them too much to deny them their requests. The Israelites were compelled to leave their houses and lands behind them, and it was but justice that they should be able to turn these into portable property. "*And there was not one feeble person among their tribes*"—a great marvel indeed. The number of their army was very great and yet there was not one in hospital, not one carried in an ambulance, or limping in the rear. Poverty and oppression had not enfeebled them. JEHOVAH ROPHI had healed them; they carried none of the diseases of Egypt with them, and felt none of the exhaustion which sore bondage produces. When God calls his people to a long journey he fits them for it; in the pilgrimage of life our strength shall be equal to our day. See the contrast between Egypt and Israel—in Egypt one dead in every house, and among the Israelites not one so much as limping.

38. "*Egypt was glad when they departed,*" which would not have been the case had the gold and silver been borrowed by the Israelites, for men do not like to see borrowers carry their goods into a far country. The awe of God was on Egypt, and they feared his people and were glad to pay them to be gone. What a change from the time when the sons of Jacob were the drudges of the land, the offscouring of all things, the brickmakers whose toil was only requited by the lash or the stick. Now they were revered as prophets and priests; "*for the fear of them fell upon them,*" the people proceeded even to a superstitious terror of them. Thus with cheers and good wishes their former taskmasters sent them on their way: Pharaoh was foiled and the chosen people were once more on the move, journeying to the place which the Lord had given to them by a covenant of salt. "O give thanks unto Jehovah; call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people."

- 39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.
 40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
 41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.
 42 For he remembered his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant.
 43 And he brought forth his people with joy, *and* his chosen with gladness:
 44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;
 45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

39. "*He spread a cloud for a covering.*" Never people were so favoured. What would not travellers in the desert now give for such a canopy? The sun could not scorch them with its burning ray; their whole camp was screened like a king in his pavilion. Nothing seemed to be too good for God to give his chosen nation, their comfort was studied in every way. "*And fire to give light in the night.*" While cities were swathed in darkness, their town of tents enjoyed a light which modern art with all its appliances cannot equal. God himself was their sun and shield, their glory and their defence. Could they be unbelieving while so graciously shaded, or rebellious while they walked at midnight in such a light? Alas, the tale of *their* sin is as extraordinary as this story of *his* love; but this Psalm selects the happier theme and dwells only upon covenant love and faithfulness. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good. We, too, have found the Lord all this to us, for he has been our sun and shield, and has preserved us alike from the perils of joys and the evils of grief;

"He hath been my joy in woe,
 Cheered my heart when it was low;
 And with warnings softly sad
 Calm'd my heart when it was glad."

So has the promise been fulfilled to us, "the sun shall not hurt thee by day, nor the moon by night."

40. "*The people asked.*" But how badly, how wickedly! And yet his grace forgave the sin of their murmuring and heard its meaning: or perhaps we may consider that while the multitude murmured there were a few, who were really gracious people, who prayed, and therefore the blessing came. "*He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.*" He gave them what they asked amiss as well as what was good for them, mingling judgment with goodness, for their discipline. The quails were more a curse than a blessing in the end, because of their greed and lust, but in themselves they were a peculiar indulgence, and favour: it was their own fault that the dainty meat brought death with it. As for the manna it was unmingled good to them, and really satisfied them, which the quails never did. It was bread *from* heaven, and the bread *of* heaven, sent *by* heaven; it was a pity that they were not led to look up to heaven whence it came, and fear and love the God who out of heaven rained it upon them. Thus they were housed beneath the Lord's canopy and fed with food from his own table; never people were so lodged and boarded. O house of Israel, praise ye the Lord.

41. "*He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out.*" With Moses' rod and his own word he cleft the rock in the desert, and forth leaped abundant floods for their drinking where they had feared to die of thirst. From most unlikely sources the all-sufficient God can supply his people's needs; hard rocks become springing fountains at the Lord's command. "*They ran in the dry places like a river*": so that those at a distance from the rock could stoop down and refresh themselves, and the stream flowed on, so that in future journeyings they were supplied. The desert sand would naturally swallow up the streams, and yet it did not so, the refreshing river ran "in the dry places." We know that the rock set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom there flows a fountain of living waters which shall never be exhausted till the last pilgrim has crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan.

42. "*For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.*" Here

is the secret reason for all this grace. The covenant and he for whose sake it was made are ever on the heart of the Most High. He remembered his people because he remembered his covenant. He could not violate that gracious compact for it was sacred to him,—“his holy promise.” A holy God must keep his promise holy. In our case the Lord’s eye is upon his beloved Son, and his engagements with him on our behalf, and this is the source and well-head of those innumerable favours which enrich us in all our wanderings through this life’s wilderness.

43. “*And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.*” Up from the wilderness he led them, rejoicing over them himself and making them rejoice too. They were *his* people, *his* chosen, and hence in them he rejoiced, and upon them he showered his favours, that they might rejoice in him as their God, and their portion.

44. “*And gave them the lands of the heathen.*” He drove out the Canaanites and allotted the lands to the tribes. They were called on to fight, but the Lord wrought so wonderfully that the conquest was not effected by their bow or spear—the Lord gave them the land. “*And they inherited the labour of the people,*” they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and gathered fruit from vines and olives which they had not planted. They were not settled in a desert which needed to be reclaimed, but in a land fertile to a proverb, and cultivated carefully by its inhabitants. Like Adam, they were placed in a garden. This entrance into the goodly land was fitly celebrated when the ark was being moved to Zion.

45. “*That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.*” This was the practical design of it all. The chosen nation was to be the conservator of truth, the exemplar of morality, the pattern of devotion: everything was so ordered as to place them in advantageous circumstances for fulfilling this trust. Theirs was a high calling and a glorious election. It involved great responsibilities, but it was in itself a distinguished blessing, and one for which the nation was bound to give thanks. Most justly then did the music close with the jubilant but solemn shout of HALLELUJAH. “*Praise ye the Lord.*” If this history did not make Israel praise God, what would?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is the first of a series of “*Confitemini Domino*” Psalms, “O give thanks unto the Lord” (cv. 1; cvi. 1; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1; and cxxxvi. 1).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—The 105th Psalm is a meditation on the covenant as performed on the part of God, the 106th on the covenant as kept by Israel. They both dwell on the predestinating will of God, electing men to holiness and obedience, and the mode in which human sin opposes itself to that will, and yet cannot make it void.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 1—15.—The first fifteen verses were written at the bringing up of the Ark, 1 Chron. xvi. They tell that it is sovereign grace that ruleth over all—it is a sovereign God. Out of a fallen world he takes whom he pleases—individuals, families, nations. He chose *Israel* long ago, that they might be the objects of grace, and their land the theatre of its display. He will yet again return to Israel, when the days of his Kingdom of Glory draw near; and Israel shall have a full share—the very fullest and richest—in his blessings, temporal and spiritual.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—“*Call upon his name.*” The original meaning of this phrase is *call (him) by his name*, i.e., give him the descriptive title most expressive of his divine perfections; or more specifically, call him by his name Jehovah, i.e., ascribe to him the attributes which it denotes, to wit, eternity and self-existence, together with that covenant relation to his people, which though not denoted by the name was constantly associated with it, and therefore necessarily suggested by it. The meaning of the next phrase is obscured, if not entirely concealed in the common version, “*among the people.*” The plural form and sense of the original expression are essential to the writer’s purpose, which is to glorify the God of Israel among the nations.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—“*Make known his deeds among the people.*” The people of God were

not shut up in that narrow corner of the earth for the purpose of confining within their straitened territories the true knowledge and worship of God : but God wished that to be the fixed seat of the church, from which the sound of heavenly doctrine should go forth into all nations. Therefore he chose Canaan, which is interjected among the most powerful nations of the world, that from it as from a fountain might more easily issue the doctrine of God to the rest of the nations: as Isaiah says, "*Out of Zion shall go forth the law.*"—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2.—"*Talk ye of all his wondrous works,*" *תִּדְבַרְוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו*, "*of his miracles.*" Who have so many of these to boast of as Christians! Christianity is a tissue of miracles; and every part of the work of grace on the soul is a miracle. Genuine Christian converts may talk of miracles from morning to night; and they should talk of them, and recommend to others their miracle-working God and Saviour.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing*" . . . "*talk,*" etc. Music and conversation are two things by which the mind of man receiveth much good, or a great deal of harm. They who make "Jehovah" and his "wondrous works" the subjects of both, enjoy a heaven upon earth. And they who do in reality love the Saviour, will always find themselves inclined to "*sing to him,*" and to "*talk of him.*"—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing Psalms.*" It is not sufficient to offer the empty vessel of our joy unto God, or our singing voice in musical tune only; but also it is required that we fill our joyful voice with holy matter and good purpose, whereby God only may be reasonably praised: "*Sing Psalms unto him.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Sing Psalms.*" Psalmody is the calm of the soul, the repose of the spirit, the arbiter of peace. It silences the wave, and conciliates the whirlwind of our passions, soothing the impetuous, tempering the unchaste. It is an engenderer of friendship, a healer of dissension, a reconciler of enemies. For who can longer count him his enemy, with whom to the throne of God he hath raised the strain? Psalmody repels the demons, and lures the ministry of angels. It is a weapon of defence in nightly terrors and a respite from daily toil. To the infant it is a presiding genius; to manhood a crown of glory; a balm of comfort to the aged; a congenial ornament to women.—*Basil.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek the Lord, and be strengthened*"; so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be "strengthened in the inward man," must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. "*Seek his strength,*" and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Hosea xii. 3. "*Seek his face evermore,*" i. e., seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*His strength.*" In classical language, his ægis, or protection, his ark, the symbol of the divine presence.—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek his face evermore.*" It is added "*evermore,*" lest they should imagine that they had performed their duty, if they assembled twice or three times in the year at the tabernacle, and observed the external rites according to the law.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*Seek . . . seek.*" None do seek the Lord so earnestly, but they have need of stirring up to seek him more earnestly; neither have any attained to such a measure of communion with God, but they have need to seek for a further measure: therefore it is said, "*Seek the Lord, seek his strength, seek his face evermore.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Remember.*" How others may be affected I do not ask. For myself, I confess, that there is no care or sorrow, by which I am so severely harassed, as when I feel myself guilty of ingratitude to my most kind Lord. It not seldom appears to be a fault so inexplicable, that I am alarmed when I read these words, inasmuch as I consider them addressed to myself, and others like me. Remember, O ye forgetful, thoughtless, and ungrateful, the works of God, which he hath done to us, with so many signs and proofs of his goodness. What more could he have done, which he hath not done?—*Folengius.*

Verse 6.—"O ye seed of Abraham his servant." Consider the relation ye stand in to him. Ye are "the seed of Abraham his servant"; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8.—"He hath remembered his covenant." As a long series of years had elapsed between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word "remember," intimating that the Divine promise does not become obsolete by length of time, but that even when the world imagines that they are extinguished and wholly forgotten, God retains as distinct a remembrance of them as ever, that he may accomplish them in due season.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"The word which he commanded." All that God says must of necessity be said with authority, so that even his promises partake of the nature of commands.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 11.—"The lot of your inheritance:" literally חֵטְךָ, *the cord of your inheritance*, an expression taken from the ancient method of measuring land by the cord or line; whence the measuring cord is *metonymically* put for the part measured, and divided by the cord. Thus, "the lines, חֵטְךָ, the cords, are fallen unto me in pleasant places," i.e., as the Psalmist explains it: "I have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi. 6.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 11.—"Your inheritance." The change of the number (from "thee" to "your") points out that God made a covenant with all the people in general, though he spake the words only to a few individuals; even as we have seen a little before, that it was a decree or an everlasting law. The holy patriarchs were the first and principal persons into whose hands the promise was committed; but they did not embrace the grace which was offered to them as belonging only to themselves, but as a blessing which their posterity in common with them were to become sharers of.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 12.—"When they were but a few men in number." מְעַט סָפָר. Literally, *homines numeri*, men of number; so few as easily to be numbered: in opposition to what their posterity afterwards were, as the sand of the sea, without number.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verses 12-14.—One would think that all the world would have been upon them; but here was the protection, God has a negative voice, "He suffered no man to do them wrong." Many had (as we say) an aching tooth at the people of God, their finger itched to be dealing with them, and the text shews four advantages the world had against them. First, "They were few." Secondly, "very few." Thirdly, "strangers." Fourthly, "unsettled." What hindered their enemies? It was the Lord's negative voice. "He reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." We see an instance of this (Gen. xxxv. 5). When Jacob and his family journeyed, "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." They had a mind to pursue after them, to revenge the slaughter of the Shechemites; but God said, *Pursue not*, and then they could not pursue, they must stay at home. And when his people the Jews were safe in Canaan he encourages them to come up freely to worship at Jerusalem, by this assurance, "No man shall desire the land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year" (Exod. xxxiv. 24). God can stop not only hands from spoiling, but hearts from desiring.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"From one kingdom to another people." Where we might have expected *from kingdom to kingdom*, the ear is somewhat disappointed by the phrase, "from one kingdom to another people," which may have been intended to distinguish the Egyptian and other monarchies from the more democratical or patriarchal institutions of the Arabians and other nations.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 13.—Though frequent flitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best men.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—"He suffered no man to do them wrong." As many rose up, one after another, in troops against them, the Psalmist says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for אָדָם, *Adam*, is the word here used, which is the one most generally employed to signify *man*.—*John Calvin*.

Verses 14, 15.—I resolve the words into these three parts. 1. Here is the nearness and the dearness of the saints unto God. They are dearer to him than kings and states, simply considered; that is, otherwise than as they in their persons are also saints; for you see that for their sakes he reproveth kings, and so sheweth that he preferreth them to kings.

2. Here is the great danger to kings and states, to deal with his saints otherwise than well. Which appeareth many ways; for he doth not only in words give a charge not to touch them, but he carries it in a high way (for so God will do when he pleads their cause). Touch them not; as if he had said, Let me see if you dare so much as touch them; and it is with an intimation of the highest threatening if they should; upon your peril if you do so; for that is the scope of such a speech. And accordingly in deeds he made this good; for the text saith he suffered no man to do them wrong; not that he did altogether prevent all wrong and injuries, for they received many as they went through those lands; but at no time did he let it go unpunished. In that sense he suffered them not. You know how he plagued Pharaoh, king of Egypt, with great plagues, and all his household, for Abraham's wife's sake, Gen. xii. And so Abimelech, king of Gerar, the Lord cometh upon him with a greatness, and his first word is in Gen. xx. 3, "Behold, thou art but a dead man," afore he had first told him why or wherefore, though then he adds the reason; he brings him upon his knees, verse 4, bids him look to it, that he give satisfaction to Abraham, and restore his wife to him again, verse 7; and well he escaped so; and tells him also that he must be beholden to Abraham's prayers for his life. "He is a prophet," saith he, "and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."

3. The third is the care and protection which God had over them, set and amplified, 1, by the number and condition of the persons whom he defended; though "*few men in number*," that is, soon reckoned, for their power and strength a few, or very small, εἰς ὀλίγους, so the Septuagint in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xvi. 19; as also, 2, by what he did for them: He suffered no man, how great soever, to do them any wrong, how small soever; not without recompense and satisfaction; not to do it, though they had a mind to it. Though the people had an ill eye at them, Gen. xxvi. 11, God causeth Abimelech to make a law on purpose; Abimelech charged all his people in Isaac's behalf, and spake in the very words of the text, "He that toucheth this man or his wife shall be put to death."—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 15.—"Mine anointed." Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had no external anointing. They were, however, called "*anointed*," because they were separated by God from the multitude of wicked men, and endowed with the Spirit and his gifts, of which the oil was an emblem.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 15.—"Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." We see here a vivid description of the people of God. They are "his anointed ones," "having the residue of his Spirit"; they are his prophets, to whom is intrusted the word of life, that they may be witnesses in the world. To these he gives as it were a safe passport through the world. Though they have ever been but men of number, accounted as a vile thing, they are precious in his sight. They are not distinguished by external dignity, numbers and power, as Rome sets forth the marks of her communion. They are in the midst of kingdoms, but not of them. They form usually the humblest portions of most communities, and yet they receive honour from God. Despised by the world, but unto God kings and priests, ordained and anointed to reign with Christ for ever.—*W. Wilson*.

Verse 15.—"Prophets." The נָבִיא is the prophet, or forth-speaker; the term laying stress on the utterance, and not upon the vision. The Hebrew word comes from a root which means to bubble up and overflow as from a full fountain. But the fulness of the true prophets of Jehovah was not that of their own thoughts and emotions. It was of the Divine Spirit within them. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter i. 21. The first application of the word is to Abraham (Gen. xx. 7); although, long before Abraham, "Enoch the seventh from Adam, prophesied," Jude 14.—*Donald Fraser*, in "*Synoptical Lectures on the Books of Holy Scripture*." 1873.

Verse 16.—"He called for a famine." As a master calls for a servant ready to do his bidding. On the contrary, God says (Ezek. xxxvi. 29), "I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you." Compare the centurion's words as to sickness being Christ's servant, ready to come or go at his call, Matt. viii. 8, 9.—A. R. Fausset.

Verses 17—22.—Joseph may be a fit type to us of our spiritual deliverance. Consider him sold into Egypt, not without the determinate counsel of God, who pre-ordained this to good; "God did send me before you to preserve life," Gen. xlv. 5. Here is the difference, the brethren sold Joseph, we sold ourselves. Consider us thus sold unto sin and death; God had a purpose to redeem us; there is election. Joseph was delivered out of prison, and we ransomed out of the house of bondage; there was redemption. Joseph's cause was made known, and himself acquitted; we could not be found innocent ourselves, but were acquitted in Christ; wherein consists our justification. Lastly, Joseph was clothed in glorious apparel, and adorned with golden chains, and made to ride in the second chariot of Egypt; so our last step is to be advanced to high honour, even the glory of the celestial court; "This honour have all the saints," Psalm cxlix. 9.—Thomas Adams.

Verses 17—22.—In many circumstances concerning Joseph—in his being beloved of his father—in his being hated of his brethren—in his sufferings and deep abasement—in his being brought out of prison—in his advancement and exaltation—in his wisdom and prudence—in his providing for his father's family—in his free forgiveness of the injuries he had sustained from his brethren—it may be truly said, we have Christ delineated therein, and set forth thereby, in type, figure, and representatively. But I have nothing to do with this here; I only give this hint to the reader.—Samuel Eyles Pierce, 1817.

Verse 18.—"His soul came into iron" (margin). The whole person is denoted by the *soul*, because the soul of the captive suffers still more than the body. Imprisonment is one of the most severe trials to the soul. Even to spiritual heroes, such as a Savonarola and St. Cyran, the waters often go over the soul.—E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 18.—"His soul came into iron." Till we have felt it, we cannot conceive that sickness of heart, which at times will steal upon the patient sufferer; that sense of loneliness, that faintness of soul, which comes from hopes deferred and wishes unshared, from the selfishness of brethren and the heartlessness of the world. We ask ourselves, If the Lord were with me, should I suffer thus, not only the scorn of the learned and the contempt of the great, but even the indifference and neglect of those whom I have served, who yet forget me? So Joseph might have asked; and so till now may the elect ask, as they stand alone without man's encouragement or sympathy, not turned aside by falsehood or scorn, with their face set as a flint, yet deeply feeling what it costs them.—Andrew Jukes, in "The Types of Genesis," 1858.

Verse 19.—"Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him." This verse forms the key to the whole meaning of Joseph's mysterious trial, and at the same time illustrates a deep mystery in the spiritual life of man. By "the word of the Lord" that "tried him," the Psalmist evidently refers to the dreams of his future destiny which were sent to Joseph from God; and in saying that they tried him "until his word came," he evidently means that his faith in those promises was tested by his long imprisonment, until the day of his deliverance dawned. Consider for a moment his position, and you will see the purpose of that trial. A youth educated amidst all the quiet simplicity of the early patriarchal life, he was haunted by dream-visions of a mighty destiny. Those visions were mysteriously foretelling his government in Egypt, and the blessings which his wise and just rule would confer on the land; but while unable to comprehend them, he yet believed that they were voices of the future, and promises of God. But the quietude of that shepherd life was not the preparation for the fulfilment of his promised destiny. The education that would form the man who could withstand, firmly, the temptations of Egyptian life with its cities and civilization; the education that would form the ruler whose clear eye should judge between the good and the evil, and discern the course of safety in the hour of a nation's peril—all this was not to be gained under the shadow of his father's tent; it must come through trial, and through trial arising from the very promise of God in which he believed. Hence, a great and startling change

crossed his life, that seemed to forbid the fulfilment of that dream-promise, and tempted him to doubt its truth. Sold into Egypt as a slave, cast into prison through his fidelity to God, the word of the Lord most powerfully tried his soul. In the gloom of that imprisonment it was most hard to believe in God's faithfulness, when his affliction had risen from his obedience; and most hard to keep the promise clearly before him, when his mighty trouble would perpetually tempt him to regard it as an idle dream. But through the temptation, he gained the strong trust which the pomp and glory of the Egyptian court would have no power to destroy; and when the word of deliverance came, the man came forth, strong through trial, to fulfil his glorious destiny of ruling Egypt in the name of God, and securing for it the blessings of heaven. Thus his trial by the word of the Lord—his temptation to doubt its truth—was a divine discipline preparing him for the fulfilment of the promise.

And looking at it in this aspect, this verse presents to us a deep spiritual truth: The promises of God try man, that through the trial he may be prepared for their fulfilment. Our subject then is this: The trial of man by the promises of God. This verse suggests three great facts which exhibit the three aspects of that trial.

I. God's promises must try man. Every promise of the Lord is of *necessity* a trial. Now, this necessity arises from two sources; from man's secret unbelief, and from God's purposes of discipline.

1. *God's word must try man by revealing his secret unbelief.* We never know our want of faith till some glorious promise rouses the soul into the attitude of belief; then the coldness and unfaithfulness of the heart are lighted up by that flash of belief, and the promise is a trial. Thus Paul with his profound insight into the facts of spiritual experience, says, "The word of the Lord is sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" In illustration of this we may observe that many promises of the Lord come to us, as they came to Joseph, like dream-visions of the future. Visions come to the Christian soul, as grand and wonderful as those which came to the Hebrew youth of old; and they, too, are prophecies of what we are destined to be. There comes a time when the voice of God is more clearly heard, and the great inheritance revealed. No dream of the night—no spirit of the dead—has visited us; but like a spirit some truth of God has entered the soul's presence-chamber, and summoned it to noble aspiration and Christ-like endeavour. Then the earnest of the future gleams on life's horizon. The Sabbath of eternity, with all its balm and music, seems near, and rapt with its glory, we are roused to all-surrendering zeal. But I appeal to your experience whether it is not true that such revelations of the promise rapidly become times of trial. Then the mocking voice of unbelief tells us that aspiration is vain. The cold cross-currents of indifference chill the fiery impulses of the heart. We are prisoned like Joseph, by no material bars indeed, but by the invisible bonds of unbelief; and we find it most hard to keep the promise clear and bright, while tempted to believe that our aspirations were merely idle dreams. And *there* is that arousing, by the promise, of the soul's hidden unbelief, which makes every promise an inevitable trial.

2. Again: *God causes his promises to try us, that he may accomplish his own purposes of discipline.* It is a law of our nature that no belief in any unseen thing can ever pass into the active form of strong endeavour to attain it, until we are tempted to disbelieve it. Thus the great idea of an undiscovered land across the wastes of the Atlantic smote the soul of Columbus; but it remained a dreamy faith until by opposition and ridicule he was tempted to regard it as a dream, and then it became heroic endeavour, and the land was found. Thus with all men of genius. They stand in the front of their age, with thoughts which the world cannot understand; but those thoughts are dreams until suffering and scorn try the men, and then they are awakened into effort to realise them. Hence God leads us into circumstances in which we are tempted to doubt his promises, that by temptation he may discipline faith into power. There is a wilderness of temptation in every life, and like Christ, we are often led into it, from the solemn hour when we heard the voice, "Thou art my son;" but like Christ, we come forth strong, through the long, silent wrestling with temptation, to do our Father's will.

II. God sends the Hour of Deliverance: "*until the time that his word came.*" When the discipline was *perfected*, Joseph came forth ready for his mission. But our deliverance does not always come in *this* way. Take from the Bible histories the four great methods by which God sends deliverance. *Sometimes by death.* Thus with Elijah. Weariness, loneliness, failure, had wrung from the strong man the

cry, "Take away my life for I am not better than my fathers." The temptation was becoming too strong, and God sent deliverance in the chariot of fire. *Sometimes by transforming the height of trial into the height of blessing.* The three youths in Babylon had clenched their nerves for the climax of agony, when the fire became a Paradise. So, now, God makes the climax of trial the herald of spiritual blessedness. By suffering we are loosened from the bonds of time and sense; there is one near us like the Son of God; and deliverance has come. *Sometimes by the glance of love on the falling soul.* Thus with Peter. The temptation was mastering him: one glance of that eye, and he went out weeping and delivered. *Sometimes by continuing the trial, but increasing the power to endure it.* Thus with Paul. After the vision of the third heaven came "the thorn in the flesh." The temptation made him cry thrice to God; the trial remained, but here was the deliverance—"my grace is sufficient for thee." The suffering lost none of its pressure, but he learned to glory in infirmity; and then came his delivering hour.

III. God makes the Trial by Promise fulfil the Promise itself. In Joseph the temptation to doubt the word of God silently metened him for its fulfilment. So with us all. We hope not for an Egyptian kingdom, our dream-vision is of a heavenly inheritance, and the palace of a heavenly King. But every temptation resisted, every mocking voice of doubt overcome, is an aid upwards and onwards. Trials, sufferings, struggles, are angels arraying the soul, in the white robes of the heavenly world, and crowning it with the crown that fadeth not away. And when the end comes, then it will be seen that the long dreary endeavour to hold fast the dream-promise—the firm resolute "no" to the temptation to disbelieve, are all more than recompensed with "the exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—*Edward Luscombe Hull, in "Sermons preached at King's Lynn," 1867.*

Verse 19.—"The word of the Lord tried him." As we try God's word, so God's word tries us; and happy it is, when we are tried, we come forth as gold; and the trial of our faith proves more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire.—*William Jay.*

Verse 19.—"Tried him." I doubt not that Joseph's brethren were humbled, yet Joseph may be more, he must be cast into the ditch, and into the prison, and the iron must enter not only into his legs, but into his soul. He must be more affected in spirit, because he was to do greater work for God, and was to be raised up higher than the rest, and therefore did need the more ballast.—*Thomas Shepard, in "The Sound Believer," 1649.*

Verse 19.—"Tried." *נָסָה*, "assayed;" Ps. xii. 6; xvii. 3; xviii. 30. He came out of the ordeal, as gold from the fining-pot, more pure and lustrous.—*William Kay.*

Verses 19—21.—"Tried him." "Made him lord of his house." Joseph's feet were hurt in irons, to fit him to tread more delicately in the King's Palace at Zoan; and when the Lord's time was come, by the same stairs which wined him into the dungeon he climbs up into the next chariot to Pharaoh's. Few can bear great and sudden mercies without pride and wantonness, till they are hampered and humbled to carry it moderately.—*Samuel Lee, in "The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise," 1677.*

Verse 20.—"The king sent and loosed him." And that by his own master, Potiphar, who had clapt him up there by his wanton wife's wicked instigation. He had been bound ignominiously, but now comes he to be loosed honourably.—*Christopher Ness.*

Verse 21.—"Ruler of all his substance," or "possession." Herein also he was a type of Jesus Christ, who, as God, is possessor of heaven and earth, being the creator of them.—*John Gill.*

Verses 21—22.—He was received into the Royal Society of the right honourable the king's privy councillors, and was constituted as Chairman of the council-table, which, though Moses doth not express, yet David intimateth in Ps. cv. 21, 22. All the privy-councillors, as well as the private people were bound (possibly by oath) to obey him in all things, and, as out of the chair, he magisterially taught these senators wisdom. Thus the Hebrew reading runs: *He bound the princes to his soul (or according to his will) and made wise his elders*; teaching them not only civil and moral, but also divine wisdom, for which cause God sent Joseph (saith he) into Egypt, that some sound of the redemption of fallen mank'ud might be heard in that kingdom,

at that time the most flourishing in the world: neither is Moses altogether silent herein, for he calls him a *master of wisdom*, or *father to Pharaoh* (Gen. xlv. 8). Much more to his counsellors, and he says that no hand or foot shall move (to wit, in affairs of state, at home, or, in foreign embassies, abroad) without Joseph's order; he was the king's plenipotentiary, Gen. xli. 44.—*Christopher Ness*.

Verse 22.—"To bind his princes." The meaning of *וַיִּבְדֹּל* signifies to exercise control over the greatest men in the kingdom, which power was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh: see Gen. xli. 40; also verses 43, 44. The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience; or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment.—*George Phillips*, 1846.

Verse 22.—"At his pleasure." Literally, *with his soul*, which some explain as a bold metaphor, describing Joseph's mind or soul as the cord or chain with which he bound the Egyptians, *i.e.*, forced them to perform his will. But see Ps. xvii. 9; xxvii. 12; xli. 2.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 22.—"And teach his senators wisdom." That is that wisdom wherein he had been instructed of God he might also instruct the princes, and teach prudence to those who were much his seniors. Herein some sparks of divine wisdom shine, that he should order even the princes and old men to learn wisdom from one who was a slave and a foreigner, although the Egyptians are always wont to boast that Egypt is the native place of wisdom.—*Jansenius*.

Verse 23.—"Egypt" . . . "the land of Ham." The Egyptians were a branch of the race of Ham. They came from Asia through the desert of Syria to settle in the valley of the Nile. This is a fact clearly established by science, and entirely confirms the statements of the book of Genesis.—*F. Lenormant and E. Chevalier*, in "A Manual of Ancient History," 1869.

Verse 24.—"He increased his people greatly." Behold here the concealed blessing in the secret of the cross. Under it the people of God are in the most fruitful state.—*Berleb. Bible*.

Verse 25.—"He turned their heart to hate his people." Not by putting this wicked hatred into them, which is not consistent either with the holiness of God's nature, or with the truth of his word, and which was altogether unnecessary, because they had that and all other wickedness in them by nature; but partly, by withdrawing the common gifts and operations of his Spirit, and all the restraints and hindrances to it, and wholly leaving them to their own mistakes, and passions, and corrupt affections, which of their own accord were ready to take that course; and partly, by directing and governing that hatred, which was wholly in and from themselves, so as it should fall upon the Israelites rather than upon other people.—*Matthew Pool*.

Verses 25—26.—When by the malice of enemies God's people are brought to greatest straits, there is deliverance near to be sent from God unto them. "*They dealt subtilly with his servants. He sent Moses his servant.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 26.—"Moses and Aaron."—God usually sendeth his servants by two and two for mutual helps and comfort.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 28.—"He sent darkness." The darkness here stands at the beginning (not in the historical order that the particular plague of darkness stood), to mark how God's wrath hung over Egypt as a *dark cloud* during all the plagues.—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 28.—"Darkness." There is an awful significance in this plague of darkness. The sun was a leading object of devotion among the Egyptians under the name of Osiris. The very name Pharaoh means not only the king but also the sun, and characterises the king himself as the representative of the sun and entitled in some sort of divine honours. But now the very light of the sun has disappeared and primeval chaos seems to have returned. Thus all the forms of Egyptian will-worship were covered with shame and confusion by the plagues.—*James G. Murphy*, in "A Commentary on Exodus," 1866.

Verse 28.—"Made it dark." God is often described as manifesting his displeasure in a cloud. Joel speaks of the day of God's vengeance as "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel ii. 2); and Zephaniah em-

ploys nearly the same language (i. 15). The pillar that went before the Israelites, and gave them light, was to the Egyptians "a cloud and darkness" (Exod. xiv. 20). The darkness which was upon the face of the earth "in the beginning," is described by Jehovah in the book of Job as a cloud: "When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it" (Job. xxxviii. 9). So now the land of Egypt may have been wrapped about by a thick palpable cloud, cold, damp, impenetrable: the people would feel it upon their limbs, as swaddling-bands; the sun would be blotted out by it, and all things reduced almost to a state of death—of which this ninth plague was in a certain sense the shadow cast before. Such a cloud would be even more terrible in Egypt, sunny Egypt, than in other countries; for there the sky is almost always clear, and heavy rains unknown. But in any place, and under any conditions, it must have been full of horror and misery. Nothing could represent this more forcibly than the short sentence, "Neither rose any from his place for three days." It was an horror of great darkness; it rested on them like a pall; they knew not what dangers might be around them, what judgment was next to happen: they had not been forewarned of this plague, and they could not tell but it might be only a prelude to some more awful visitation: their soul melted in them, for fear of those things that might come upon them: they dared not move from chamber to chamber, nor even from seat to seat: wherever they chanced to be at the moment when the darkness fell upon them, there they must remain. Pharaoh might call in vain for his guards; they could not come to him. Moses and Aaron were no longer within reach, for none could go to seek them. Masters could not command their slaves, nor slaves hasten to obey their master's call; the wife could not flee to her husband, nor the child cling to its parents: the same fear was upon all, both high and low; the same paralysing terror and dismay possessed them every one. As says the patriarch Job, they "laid hold on horror" (Job xviii. 20). And this continued for three days and nights: they had no lamps nor torches; either they could not kindle them, or they dared not move to procure them: they were silent in darkness, like men already dead. Hope and expectation of returning light might at first support them; but hope delayed through seventy-two weary hours would presently die out, and leave them to despair. The darkness would become more oppressive and intolerable the longer it continued; "felt" upon their bodies as a physical infliction, and "felt" even more in their souls in agonies of fear and apprehension; such a darkness as that which, in the book of Revelation, the fifth angel pours out upon the seat of the beast—"Whose kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Rev. xvi. 10, 11). If there be any truth in the traditions of the Jews on this subject, there were yet greater alarms under this canopy of darkness, this palpable obscurity, than any which would arise out of the physical infliction. Darkness is a type of Satan's kingdom; and Satan had some liberty in Egypt to walk up and down upon the land, and to go to and fro in it. The Jewish Rabbis tell us that the devil and his angels were let loose during these three dreadful days; that they had a wider range and greater liberty than usual for working mischief. They describe these evil spirits going among the wretched people, glued to their seats as they were, with terror; frightening them with fearful apparitions; piercing their ears with hideous shrieks and groans; driving them almost to madness with the intensity of their fears; making their flesh creep, and the hair of their head to stand on end. Such a climax seems to be referred to by the Psalmist, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them" (Ps. lxxviii. 49).—*Thomas S. Millington, in "Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham," 1873.*

Verse 28.—"And they rebelled not against his word." The plague of darkness and the rest of the plagues which God commanded; these as they were his servants, were not disobedient to him, they came at his word. See verses 31, 34.—*John Gill.*

Verse 28.—"They rebelled not against his word"; as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians; but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 29.—"He turned their waters into blood," etc. The Nile begins to rise about the end of June, and attains its highest point at the end of September. About the commencement of the rise it assumes a greenish hue, is disagreeable to the taste, unwholesome, and often totally unfit for drinking. It soon, however, becomes red and turbid, and continues in this state for three or more weeks. In this condition it is again healthy and fit for use. The miracle now performed was totally different from this annual change. For, 1, it occurred after the winter, not the summer, solstice; 2, the water was turned into blood, and not merely reddened by an admixture of red clay or animalcula; 3, the fish died, a result which did not follow from the periodical change of colour; 4, the river stank, and became offensive, which it ceased to be when the ordinary redness made its appearance; 5, the stroke was arrested at the end of seven days, whereas the natural redness continued for at least three weeks; and 6, the change was brought on instantly at the word of command before the eyes of Pharaoh. The calamity was appalling. The sweet waters of the Nile were the common beverage of Egypt. It abounded in all kinds of fish, which formed a principal article of diet for the inhabitants. It was revered as a god by Egypt. And now it was a putrid flood, from which they turned away with loathing.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 29.—"He turned their waters into blood." By the miraculous change of the waters into blood, a practical rebuke was given to their superstitions. This sacred and beautiful river, the benefactor and preserver of the country, this birthplace of their chief gods, this abode of their lesser deities, this source of all their prosperity, this centre of all their devotion, is turned to blood: the waters stink; the canals and pools, the vessels of wood and vessels of stone, which were replenished from the river, all are alike polluted. The Nile, according to Pliny, was the "only source from whence the Egyptians obtained water for drinking" (*Hist. Nat.* 76, c. 33). This water was considered particularly sweet and refreshing; so much so that the people were in the habit of provoking thirst in order that they might partake more freely of its soft and pleasant draughts. Now it was become abominable to them, and they loathed to drink it.—*Thomas S. Millington.*

Verse 29.—"And slew their fish." Besides the fish cured, or sent to market for the table, a very great quantity was set apart expressly for feeding the sacred animals and birds,—as the cats, crocodiles, ibises, and others; and some of the large reservoirs, attached to the temples, were used as well for keeping fish as for the necessary ablutions of the devout, and for various purposes connected with religion. The quantity of fish in Egypt was a very great boon to the poor classes, and when the Nile overflowed the country inhabitants of the inland villages benefited by this annual gift of the river, as the land did by the fertilizing mud deposited upon it. The canals, ponds, and pools, on the low lands, continued to abound in fish, even after the inundation had ceased; and it was then that their return to the Nile was intercepted by closing the mouths of the canals.—*Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, in "A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians," 1854.*

Verse 30.—"Their land brought forth frogs in abundance." This is the natural appearance next in the order of occurrence to the Red Nile, and of it also the God of nature availed himself to vindicate his power before Pharaoh, and before Egypt. The Nile, its branches, and the great canals of irrigation are all bank-full, and the exuberant moisture has aroused from their summer torpor, into life and activity, the frogs of the Nile, in numbers inconceivable to those who have not been in hot countries. Even in ordinary years the annoyance of these loathsome creatures night and day, gives some idea of what this plague must have been, and renders abundantly reasonable the creation of a goddess, *Ranipula*,* at the very commencement of the mythology of ancient Egypt. In the whole of this fearful succession of judgments there is not one more personally revolting than the plague of frogs.—*William Osburn.*

Verse 30.—"Their land brought forth frogs in abundance." It is not difficult for an Englishman, in an Eastern wet monsoon, to form a tolerable idea of that plague of Egypt, in which frogs were in the "houses, bed-chambers, beds and kneading-troughs," of the Egyptians. In the rainy season, myriads of them send forth their

* "Driver away of frogs." Her name was Heki; *Birch* ap. *Bunsen*. She was the *Buto* of the Greek authors.

constant croak in every direction ; and a man not possessed of over-much patience, becomes as petulant as was the licentious god, and is ready to exclaim,

" *Croak, croak !* Indeed I shall choke,
If you pester and bore my ears any more
With your *croak, croak, croak !* "

A new-comer, on seeing them leap about the rooms, becomes disgusted, and forthwith begins an attack upon them ; but the next evening will bring a return of his active visitors. It may appear almost incredible, but in one evening we killed upwards of forty of these guests in the Jaffna Mission-house. They had principally concealed themselves in a small tunnel connected with the bathing room, where their noise had become almost insupportable.—*Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations," 1844.*

Verse 30.—" *Chambers of their kings.*" God plagued Pharaoh in his *bed-chamber* : it may be because he would show that his judgments can penetrate the greatest privacy ; for the field, and the hall, and the *bed-chamber*, and the closet are all one to God.

It is like enough that it would not move Pharaoh much that his borders were filled with frogs ; but they must come into his *house, and into his bed-chamber*. My observation is—the greatest princes in the world if they offend God are not exempted from judgments. Princes and great persons, are usually exempted from the reproof of men. As for the laws, ofttimes they are as cobwebs, the great flies break through them. Who dare say to a prince, "Thou art wicked" ? Nay, one saith concerning the Pope, it is not lawful to say, "What doth he so ?" Now when they are not within the compass of human reproof, God strikes them.—*Josias Shute, in "Judgment and Mercy : or, the Plague of Frogs," 1645.*

Verse 31.—" *Flies.*" This term serves to denote a kind of insect that alights on the skin or leaves of plants, by its bite inflicting pain in the one case, and causing destruction in the other. The swarms of flies in Egypt are usually numerous and excessively annoying. They alight on the moist part of the eyelids and nostrils, and inflict wounds that produce great pain, swelling and inflammation. They are also ruinous to the plants in which they lay their eggs. Philo (vit. Mos. ii. p. 110) describes the dog-fly or gad-fly as a grievous pest of Egypt. Gnats and mosquitoes are also abundant and virulent. A plague of such creatures would cause immense suffering and desolation.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 31.—As an illustration of the power of flies we give an extract from Charles Marshall's "Canadian Dominion." "I have been told by men of unquestioned veracity, that at mid-day the clouds of mosquitoes on the plains would sometimes hide the leaders in a team of four horses from the sight of the driver. Cattle could only be recognised by their shape ; all alike becoming black with an impenetrable crust of mosquitoes. The line of the route over the Red River plains would be marked by the carcasses of oxen stung to death by this insignificant foe."

Verse 31.—" *Lice in all their coasts.*" The priests, being polluted by this horrible infection, could not stand to minister before their deities. The people could not, in their uncleanness, be admitted within the precincts of their temples. If they would offer sacrifice, there were no victims fit for the purpose. Even the gods, the oxen, and goats, and cats, were defiled with the vermin. The Egyptians not only writhed under the loathsome scourge, but felt themselves humbled and disgraced by it. Josephus notices this :—"Pharaoh," he says, "was so confounded at this new plague, that, what with the danger, the *scandal*, and the nastiness of it, he was half sorry for what he had done" (b. ii. c. 14). The plague assumed the form of a disease, being "in the people." Exod. viii. 17. As Josephus says again, "The bodies of the people bred them, and they were all covered over with them, gnawing and tearing intolerably, and no remedy, for baths and ointments did no good." But, however distressing to their bodies, the foul and disgraceful character of the plague, and the offence brought upon their religion by the defilement of their deities and the interruption of all their religious ceremonies, was its most offensive feature.—*Thomas S. Millington.*

Verse 31.—" *Lice.*" Vermin of the kind is one of the common annoyances of Egypt. Herodotus tells us (ii. 37) that the priests shave their whole body every other day, that no lice or other impure thing may adhere to them when they are

engaged in the service of the gods. It is manifest that this species of vermin was particularly disgusting to the Egyptians.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 32.—“*He gave them hail for rain.*” I had ridden out to the excavations [at Gizeh], when seeing a large black cloud approaching, I sent a servant to the tents to take care of them, but as it began to rain slightly, I soon rode after him myself. Shortly after my arrival a storm of wind began; I therefore ordered the cords of the tents to be secured, but soon a violent shower of rain came in addition, which alarmed all our Arabs, and drove them into the rock-tomb, in which is our kitchen. . . . Suddenly the storm became a regular hurricane, such as I had never witnessed in Europe, and a hailstorm came down on us, which almost turned the day into night. . . . It was not long before first our common tent fell down, and when I had hastened from that into my own, in order to hold it from the inside, this also broke down above me.—*Carl Richard Lepsius, in “Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai.” 1853.*

Verse 32.—“*Hail.*” Extraordinary reports of the magnitude of hailstones, which have fallen during storms so memorable as to find a place in general history, have come down from periods of antiquity more or less remote. According to the “Chronicles,” a hailstorm occurred in the reign of Charlemagne, in which hailstones fell which measured fifteen feet in length by six feet in breadth, and eleven feet in thickness; and under the reign of Tippoo Sahib, hailstones equal in magnitude to elephants are said to have fallen. Setting aside these and like recitals, as partaking rather of the character of fable than of history, we shall find sufficient to create astonishment in well authenticated observations on this subject.

In a hailstorm which took place in Flintshire on the 9th April, 1672, Halley saw hailstones which weighed five ounces.

On the 4th May, 1697, Robert Taylor saw fall hailstones measuring fourteen inches in circumference.

In the storm which ravaged Como on 20th August, 1787, Volta saw hailstones which weighed nine ounces.

On 22nd May, 1822, Dr. Noggerath saw fall at Bonn hailstones which weighed from twelve to thirteen ounces.

It appears, therefore, certain that in different countries hailstones have occurred in which stones weighing from half to three-quarters of a pound have fallen.—*Dionysius Lardner, in “The Museum of Science and Art,” 1854.*

Verse 34.—“*Locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.*” In this country, and in all the dominions of Prete Janni, is a very great and horrible plague, which is an innumerable company of locusts, which eat and consume all the corn and trees; and the number of them is so great, as it is incredible; and with their multitude they cover the earth, and fill the air in such wise, that it is a hard matter to be able to see the sun. . . . We travelled five days’ journey through places wholly waste and destroyed, wherein millet had been sown, which had stalks as great as those we set in our vineyards, and we saw them all broken and beaten down as if a tempest had been there; and this the locusts did. The trees were without leaves, and the bark of them was all devoured; and no grass was there to be seen, for they had eaten up all things; and if we had not been warned and advised to carry victual with us, we and our cattle had perished. This country was all covered with locusts without wings; and they told us these were the seed of them which had eaten up all, and that as soon as their wings were grown they would seek after the old ones. The number of them was so great, that I shall not speak of it, because I shall not be believed: but this I will say, that I saw men, women, and children sit as forlorn and dead among the locusts.—*Samuel Purchas, 1577—1628.*

Verse 34.—“*Locusts and caterpillars.*” God did not bring the same plague twice; but when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 34.—“*Without number.*” A swarm [of locusts], which was observed in India in 1825, occupied a space of forty English square miles, contained at least forty millions of locusts in one line, and cast a long shadow on the earth. And Major Moore thus describes an immense army of these animals which ravaged the Mahratta country: “The column they composed extended five hundred miles; and so compact was it when on the wing, that like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun, so that no shadow was cast by any object.” Brown, in his travels in Africa, states that an

area of nearly two thousand square miles was literally covered by them ; and Kirby and Spence mention that a column of them was so immense, that they took four hours to fly over the spot where the observer stood.—*M. Kalisch.*

Verse 34.—" *Came . . . and that without number.*"

Onward they came, a dark continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless ;
The rushing of whose wings was as the sound
Of some broad river, headlong in its course,
Plunged from a mountain summit ; or the roar
Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks,
Onward they came, the winds impelled them on.

Robert Southey, 1774—1843.

Verse 35.—" *Did eat up all the herbs.*" The locusts had devoured every green herb and every blade of grass ; and had it not been for the reeds, on which our cattle entirely subsisted while we skirted the banks of the river, the journey must have been discontinued, at least in the line that had been proposed. The larvæ, as generally is the case in this class of nature, are much more voracious than the perfect insect ; nothing that is green seems to come amiss to them. . . . The traces of their route over the country are very obvious for many weeks after they have passed it, the surface appearing as if swept by a broom, or as if a harrow had been drawn over it.—*John Barrow, 1764—1840.*

Verse 36.—" *He smote also all the firstborn.*" Did you hear that cry ? 'Tis the moment of midnight, and some tragedy is enacted in that Egyptian dwelling, for such an unearthly shriek ! and it is repeated and re-echoed, as doors burst open and frantic women rush into the street, and, as the houses of priests and physicians are beset, they only shake their heads in speechless agony, and point to the death-sealed features of their own first-born. Lights are flashing at the palace gates, and flitting through the royal chambers ; and as king's messengers hasten through the town enquiring where the two venerable Hebrew brothers dwell, the whisper flies, "The prince-royal is dead !" Be off, ye sons of Jacob ! speed from your house of bondage, ye oppressed and injured Israelites ! And in their eagerness to "thrust forth" the terrible because Heaven-protected race, they press upon them gold and jewels, and bribe them to be gone.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 37.—" *There was not one feeble person among their tribes,*" when Israel came out of Egypt ; there was while dwelling there : so there shall be no *feeble saint* to heaven, but they shall be perfect when carried hence by the angels of God, though they complain of feebleness here. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die an hundred years old ;" Isa. lxxv. 20. As there is in all *dying* or departed persons a great *shooting* in their stature observed ; so is there in the *soul* much more. The least infant shoots in the *instant of dissolution* to such a perfect knowledge of God, and such a measure of grace as is not attainable here, that he is "as David ;" and the tallest Christian comes to such a height, that he is "as an angel of God," Zech. xii. 8.—*John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun," 1654.*

Verse 37.—" *There was not one feeble person among their tribes.*" They came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like ; that among so many thousands there was not one sick ! so false was the representation which the Jews' enemies in after ages gave to the matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 37.—" *Feeble person.*" A *totterer* or *stumbler*. The word denotes a person unfit for military service.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 39.—In the army of Alexander the Great, the march was begun by a great beacon being set upon a pole as a signal from head-quarters, so that "the fire was seen at night, the smoke in the day-time ;" and the plan is still found in use amongst the caravans of Arabia. It is probable enough, in that unchanging land, that such may have been the custom at the time of the Exodus, and that God taught the

people by parable in this wise, as well as by fact, that he was their true leader, and heaven the general pavilion, whence the order of march was enjoined.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 39.—

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out of the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame

By day, along the astonished lands,
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
By night, Arabia's crimson sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answered keen,
And Zion's daughters poured their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.

But present still, though now unseen,
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen,
To temper the deceitful ray !

And oh, when stoops on Judah's path,
In shade and storm, the frequent night,
Be Thou—long-suffering, slow to wrath—
A burning and a shining light.

—*Sir Walter Scott, 1771—1832.*

Verse 40.—“*Quails.*” The quail is met with abundantly in Syria and Judæa, and there seems to be little doubt of its identity with the quails so frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. “We have,” says Tristram, “a clear proof of the identity of the common quail with the Hebrew *selav*, in its Arabic name, *salwa*, from a root signifying ‘to be fat’—very descriptive of the round, plump form and fat flesh of the quail. . . . It migrates in vast flocks, and regularly crosses the Arabian desert, flying for the most part at night, and when the birds settle they are so utterly exhausted that they may be captured in any numbers by the hand. Notwithstanding their migratory habits, they instinctively select the shortest sea passages, and avail themselves of any island as a halting-place. Thus in Spring and Autumn they are slaughtered in numbers on Malta and many of the Greek islands, very few being seen till the period of migration comes round. They also fly with the wind, never facing it like many other birds.” “The Israelites ‘spread them out’ when they had taken them before they were sufficiently refreshed to escape ; exactly as Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians were in the habit of doing with quails—drying them in the sun.” Brehm mentions having been a witness to the arrival of a huge flock of quails upon the coast of North Africa, and tells us that the weary birds fell at once to the ground completely exhausted by their toilsome journey, and remained therefore some minutes as though stupefied.—*Cassell's “Book of Birds.”*

Verse 40—42.—

Brought from his store, at sute of Israell,
Quailles, in whose beavies each remove pursue ;
Himself from skies their hunger to repell,
Candies the grasse with swete congealed dew.
He woundes the rock, the rock doth wounded, swell ;
Swelling affoordes new streames to channells new,
All for God's mindfull will can not be dryven,
From sacred word once to his Abraham given.

—*Sir Phllip Sidney, 1554—1586.*

Verse 44.—“*They inherited the labour of the people.*” In like manner the heavenly Canaan is enjoyed by the saints without any labour of theirs ; this inheritance is not of the law, nor of the works of it ; it is the gift of God. Rom. iv. 14 and vi. 23.
—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Praise God for former mercies. II. Pray for further mercies. III. Publish his famous mercies.

Verses 1—5.—A series of holy exercises. "Give thanks"—"call upon his name"—"make known"—"sing"—"talk"—"glory"—"rejoice"—"seek"—"remember."

Verse 2.—I. The pleasure of talking to God—"Sing," etc.; making melody in the heart. II. The duty of talking of God—"Talk ye," etc.—G. R.

Verse 2.—The Christian's table-talk.

Verse 3.—I. Those who find: or—"glory ye," etc. II. Those who seek: or—"rejoice."

Verse 3 (second clause).—Let the seeker rejoice that there is such a God to seek, that he invites us to seek, that he moves us to seek, enables us to seek, and promises to be found of us. The tendency of the seeker is to despond, but there are many grounds of comfort.

Verse 4.—How can we seek the Lord's strength? 1. By desiring to be subject to it. 2. By being supported by it. 3. By being equipped with it for service. 4. By seeing its results upon others.

Verse 4.—Threefold seeking. I. The Lord for mercy. II. His strength for service. III. His face for happiness.—A. G. Brown.

Verse 4 (last clause).—Seeking the Lord the perpetual occupation of a believer.

Verse 5.—Themes for memory. I. What God has done. II. What he has said.

Verses 5 and 8.—Our memory and God's memory. "Remember." "He hath remembered."

Verse 7.—God's relation to his elect and to all mankind.

Verses 9, 10.—The making, swearing, and confirming of the covenant. See our comment on these verses with the passages referred to.

Verse 12.—Comfort to the few. The typical and spiritual Israel few at first. A few in the ark peopled the world. Small companies have done wonders. Christ's presence is promised to two or three. God saveth not by many or by few, etc.

Verses 13, 14.—I. God's people may be often removed. II. They can never be injured. III. God's property in them will not be renounced.

Verses 14, 15. Dr. T. Goodwin has an excellent sermon on these verses, entitled "*The Interest of England*," in which he condenses the history of the world, to show, that those nations which have persecuted and afflicted the people of God have invariably been broken in pieces.—(*Goodwin's Works*, vol. xii. pp. 34—60, Nichol's edition).

Verse 15.—In what respect Abraham was a prophet, and how far believers are the same.

Verse 16.—I. All things come at the call of God. He called for plenty, and it came; for famine, and it came; for captivity, and it came; for deliverance, and it came. II. The most unlikely means of accomplishing an end with man is often the direct way with God. He fulfilled the promise of Canaan to Abraham by banishing him from it; of plenty, by sending a famine; of freedom, by bringing into captivity.—G. R.

Verse 19.—The duration of our troubles, the testing power of the promise, the comfortable issue which is secured to us.

Verse 24.—Church prosperity desirable. Increase of numbers, increase of vigour. Attainable under great persecution and opposition. *Divine in its origin*—"he increased." *Satisfactory as a test*—it is only true of "his people."

Verse 24 (second clause).—In what respects grace can make believers stronger than their enemies.

Verse 25.—I. The natural hatred of the world to the church. II. God's permitting it to be shown. When? Why? III. The subtle manner in which this enmity seeks its object.

Verse 32.—"He gave them hail for rain." Judgment substituted for mercy.

Verse 37 (first clause).—Wealth found upon us after affliction.

Verse 37 (second clause).—A consummation to be desired. This was the direct result of the divine presence. The circumstances out of which it grew were hard labour and persecution. It enabled them to leave Egypt, to journey far, to carry burdens, to fight enemies, etc.

Verse 39.—I. A dark cloud of providence is the guide of the people of God by day. II. A bright cloud of promises is their guide by night.—*G. R.*

Verse 39.—The Lord's goodness exemplified in our varying conditions. I. For prosperity—a cloud. II. For adversity—a light. A good text would be found in "light in the night."

Verse 40.—I. God often gives in love what is not asked. So the bread from heaven which was beyond all they could ask or think. II. He sometimes gives in anger what is asked. They asked for flesh to eat—"and he brought quails." *G. R.*

Verse 41.—We have, I. A type of the person of Christ, in the rock 1. Un-sightily as Horeb—"When we shall see him, there is no beauty," etc. (Isai. liii. 2). 2. Firm and immovable—"Who is a rock, save our God?" (2 Sam. xxi. 32). II. A type of the sufferings of Christ, in the smitten rock. 1. Smitten by the rod of the Law. 2. Smitten to the heart. III. A type of the benefits of Christ, in the water flowing from the rock—pure, refreshing, perpetual, abundant.—*James Bennett, 1828.*

Verse 41.—I. The miraculous energy of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner: "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out." II. The effect in relation to others, which demonstrates at once the excellence and the reality of the miracle in ourselves: "They ran in the dry places like a river."—*Thomas Dale, 1836.*

Verse 41.—I. The grand source—the rock opened. II. The liberal stream—"gushed out." III. The continued flow—"in dry places."

Verse 42.—I. The Lord mindful of his promise. II. The Lord mindful of our persons. III. The Lord working wonders as the result of both.

Verse 45.—Obedience to God the design of his mercies to us.