

PSALM CVII.

SUBJECT, ETC.—*This is a choice song for the redeemed of the Lord (verse 2). Although it celebrates providential deliverances, and therefore may be sung by any man whose life has been preserved in time of danger; yet, under cover of this, it mainly magnifies the Lord for spiritual blessings, of which temporal favours are but types and shadows. The theme is thanksgiving, and the motives for it. The construction of the Psalm is highly poetical, and merely as a composition it would be hard to find its compeer among human productions. The bards of the Bible hold no second place among the sons of song.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalmist commences by dedicating his poem to the redeemed who have been gathered from captivity, 1—3; he then likens their history to that of travellers lost in the desert, 4—9; to that of prisoners in iron bondage, 10—16; to that of sick men, 17—22; and to that of mariners tossed with tempest, 23—32. In the closing verses the judgment of God on the rebellious, and the mercies of God to his own afflicted people are made the burden of the song, 33—42; and then the Psalm closes with a sort of summing up, in verse 43, which declares that those who study the works and ways of the Lord shall be sure to see and praise his goodness.*

EXPOSITION.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

1. "*O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.*" It is all we can give him, and the least we can give; therefore let us diligently render to him our thanksgiving. The Psalmist is in earnest in the exhortation, hence the use of the interjection "O," to intensify his words: let us be at all times thoroughly fervent in the praises of the Lord, both with our lips and with our lives, by thanksgiving and thanks-living. *ΓΕΙΟΝΑΗ*, for that is the name here used, is not to be worshipped with groans and cries, but with thanks, for he is good; and these thanks should be heartily rendered, for his is no common goodness: he is good by nature, and essence, and proven to be good in all the acts of his eternity. Compared with him there is none good, no, not one: but he is essentially, perpetually, superlatively, infinitely good. We are the perpetual partakers of his goodness, and therefore ought above all his creatures to magnify his name. Our praise should be increased by the fact that the divine goodness is not a transient thing, but in the attribute of mercy abides for ever the same, "*for his mercy endureth for ever.*" The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, "*for his mercy for ever.*" That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end. Our sin required that goodness should display itself to us in the form of mercy, and it has done so, and will do so evermore; let us not be slack in praising the goodness which thus adapts itself to our fallen nature.

2. "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.*" Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed have overwhelming reasons for declaring the goodness of the Lord. Theirs is a peculiar redemption, and for it they ought to render peculiar praise. The Redeemer is so glorious, the ransom price so immense, and the redemption so complete, that they are under sevenfold obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and to exhort others to do so. Let them not only feel so but *say so*; let them both sing and bid their fellows sing. "*Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*" Snatched by superior power away from fierce oppressions, they are bound above all men to adore the Lord, their Liberator. Theirs is a divine redemption, "*he hath redeemed*" them, and no one else has done it. His own unaided arm has wrought

out their deliverance. Should not emancipated slaves be grateful to the hand which set them free? What gratitude can suffice for a deliverance from the power of sin, death, and hell? In heaven itself there is no sweeter hymn than that whose burden is, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

3. "And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." Gathering follows upon redeeming. The captives of old were restored to their own land from every quarter of the earth, and even from beyond the sea; for the word translated *south* is really *the sea*. No matter what divides, the Lord will gather his own into one body, and first on earth by "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," and then in heaven by one common bliss they shall be known to be the one people of the One God. What a glorious Shepherd must he be who thus collects the blood-bought flock from the remotest regions, guides them through countless perils, and at last makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Paradise. Some have wandered one way and some another, they have all left Immanuel's land and strayed as far as they could, and great are the grace and power by which they are all collected into one flock by the Lord Jesus. With one heart and voice let the redeemed praise the Lord who gathers them into one.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

8 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

4. "They wandered in the wilderness." They wandered, for the track was lost, no vestige of a road remained; worse still, they wandered in a wilderness, where all around was burning sand. They were lost in the worst possible place, even as the sinner is who is lost in sin; they wandered up and down in vain searches and researches as a sinner does when he is awakened and sees his lost estate; but it ended in nothing, for they still continued in the wilderness, though they had hoped to escape from it. "In a solitary way." No dwelling of man was near, and no other company of travellers passed within hail. Solitude is a great intensifier of misery. The loneliness of a desert has a most depressing influence upon the man who is lost in the boundless waste. The traveller's way in the wilderness is a waste way, and when he leaves even that poor, barren trail, to get utterly beyond the path of man, he is in a wretched plight indeed. A soul without sympathy is on the borders of hell: a solitary way is the way of despair. "They found no city to dwell in." How could they? There was none. Israel in the wilderness abode under canvas, and enjoyed none of the comforts of settled life; wanderers in the Sahara find no town or village. Men when under distress of soul find nothing to rest upon, no comfort and no peace; their efforts after salvation are many, weary, and disappointing, and the dread solitude of their hearts fills them with dire distress.

5. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." The spirits sink when the bodily frame becomes exhausted by long privations. Who can keep his courage up when he is ready to fall to the ground at every step through utter exhaustion? The supply of food is all eaten, the water is spent in the bottles, and there are neither fields nor streams in the desert, the heart therefore sinks in dire despair. Such is the condition of an awakened conscience before it knows the Lord Jesus; it is full of unsatisfied cravings, painful needs, and heavy fears. It is utterly spent and without strength, and there is nothing in the whole creation which can minister to its refreshment.

6. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." Not till they were in extremities did they pray, but the mercy is that they prayed *then*, and prayed in the right manner, with a cry, and to the right person, even to the Lord. Nothing else

remained for them to do ; they could not help themselves, or find help in others, and therefore they cried to God. Supplications which are forced out of us by stern necessity are none the less acceptable with God ; but, indeed, they have all the more prevalence, since they are evidently sincere, and make a powerful appeal to the divine pity. Some men will never pray till they are half-starved, and for their best interests it is far better for them to be empty and faint than to be full and stout-hearted. If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting ; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joy ; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty. " *And he delivered them out of their distresses.*" Deliverance follows prayer most surely. The cry must have been very feeble, for they were faint, and their faith was as weak as their cry ; but yet they were heard, and heard at once. A little delay would have been their death ; but there was none, for the Lord was ready to save them. The Lord delights to come in when no one else can be of the slightest avail. The case was hopeless till Jehovah interposed, and then all was changed immediately ; the people were shut up, straitened, and almost pressed to death, but enlargement came to them at once when they began to remember their God, and look to him in prayer. Those deserve to die of hunger who will not so much as ask for bread, and he who being lost in a desert will not beg the aid of a guide cannot be pitted even if he perish in the wilds and feed the vultures with his flesh.

7. " *And he led them forth by the right way.*" There are many wrong ways, but only one right one, and into this none can lead us but God himself. When the Lord is leader the way is sure to be right ; we never need question that. Forth from the pathless mazes of the desert he conducted the lost ones ; he found the way, made the way, and enabled them to walk along it, faint and hungry as they were. " *That they might go to a city of habitation.*" The end was worthy of the way : he did not lead them from one desert to another, but he gave the wanderers an abode, the weary ones a place of rest. They found no city to dwell in, but he found one readily enough. What we can do and what God can do are two very different things. What a difference it made to them to leave their solitude for a city, their trackless path for well-frequented streets, and their faintness of heart for the refreshment of a home ! Far greater are the changes which divine love works in the condition of sinners when God answers their prayers and brings them to Jesus. Shall not the Lord be magnified for such special mercies ? Can we who have enjoyed them sit down in ungrateful silence ?

8. " *Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness.*" Men are not mentioned here in the original, but the word is fitly supplied by the translators ; the Psalmist would have all things in existence magnify Jehovah's name. Surely men will do this without being exhorted to it when the deliverance is fresh in their memories. They must be horrible ingrates who will not honour such a deliverer for so happy a rescue from the most cruel death. It is well that the redeemed should be stirred up to bless the Lord again and again, for preserved life deserves life-long thankfulness. Even those who have not encountered the like peril, and obtained the like deliverance, should bless the Lord in sympathy with their fellows, sharing their joy. " *And for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" These favours are bestowed upon our race, upon children of the family to which we belong, and therefore we ought to join in the praise. The children of men are so insignificant, so feeble, and so undeserving, that it is a great wonder that the Lord should do anything for them ; but he is not content with doing little works, he puts forth his wisdom, power, and love to perform marvels on the behalf of those who seek him. In the life of each one of the redeemed there is a world of wonders, and therefore from each there should resound a world of praises. As to the marvels of grace which the Lord has wrought for his church as a whole there is no estimating them, they are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are high above the earth. When shall the day dawn when the favoured race of man shall be as devoted to the praise of God as they are distinguished by the favour of God ?

9. " *For he satisfieth the longing soul.*" This is the summary of the lost traveler's experience. He who in a natural sense has been rescued from perishing in a howling wilderness ought to bless the Lord who brings him again to eat bread among men. The spiritual sense is, however, the more rich in instruction. The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us. That longing leads us into solitude, separation, thirst, faintness, and self-despair, and all these conduct us to prayer, faith, divine guidance, satisfying of the soul's thirst, and rest : the good hand of the Lord

is to be seen in the whole process and in the divine result. "*And filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" As for thirst he gives satisfaction, so for hunger he supplies filling. In both cases the need is more than met, there is an abundance in the supply which is well worthy of notice : the Lord does nothing in a niggardly fashion ; satisfying and filling are his peculiar modes of treating his guests ; none who come under the Lord's providing ever complain of short commons. Nor does he fill the hungry with common fare, but with *goodness* itself. It is not so much good, as the essence of goodness which he bestows on needy suppliants. Shall man be thus royally supplied and return no praise for the largesses of love ? It must not be so. We will even now give thanks with all the redeemed church, and pray for the time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron ;

11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High :

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour ; they fell down, and *there was* none to help.

13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

15 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men !

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

10. "*Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.*" The cell is dark of itself, and the fear of execution casts a still denser gloom over the prison. Such is the cruelty of man to man that tens of thousands have been made to linger in places only fit to be tombs ; unhealthy, suffocating, filthy sepulchres, where they have sickened and died of broken hearts. Meanwhile the dread of sudden death has been the most hideous part of the punishment ; the prisoners have felt as if the chill shade of death himself froze them to the very marrow. The state of a soul under conviction of sin is forcibly symbolized by such a condition ; persons in that state cannot see the promises which would yield them comfort, they sit still in the inactivity of despair, they fear the approach of judgment, and are thereby as much distressed as if they were at death's door. "*Being bound in affliction and iron.*" Many prisoners have been thus doubly fettered in heart and hand ; or the text may mean that affliction becomes as an iron band to them, or that the iron chains caused them great affliction. None know these things but those who have felt them ; we should prize our liberty more if we knew by actual experience what manacles and fetters mean. In a spiritual sense affliction frequently attends conviction of sin, and then the double grief causes a double bondage. In such cases the iron enters into the soul, the poor captives cannot stir because of their bonds, cannot rise to hope because of their grief, and have no power because of their despair. Misery is the companion of all those who are shut up and cannot come forth. O ye who are made free by Christ Jesus, remember those who are in bonds.

11. "*Because they rebelled against the words of God.*" This was the general cause of bondage among the ancient people of God, they were given over to their adversaries because they were not loyal to the Lord. God's words are not to be trifled with, and those who venture on such rebellion will bring themselves into bondage. "*And contemned the counsel of the Most High.*" They thought that they knew better than the Judge of all the earth, and therefore they left his ways and walked in their own. When men do not follow the divine counsel they give the most practical proof of their contempt for it. Those who will not be bound by God's law will, ere long, be bound by the fetters of judgment. There is too much contemning of the divine counsel, even among Christians, and hence so few of them know the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

12. "*Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.*" In eastern prisons men are frequently made to labour like beasts of the field. As they have no liberty,

so they have no rest. This soon subdues the stoutest heart, and makes the proud boaster sing another tune. Trouble and hard toil are enough to tame a lion. God has methods of abating the loftiness of rebellious looks: the cell and the mill make even giants tremble. "*They fell down, and there was none to help.*" Stumbling on in the dark beneath their weary task, they at last fell prone upon the ground, but no one came to pity them or to lift them up. Their fall might be fatal for aught that any man cared about them; their misery was unseen, or, if observed, no one could interfere between them and their tyrant masters. In such a wretched plight the rebellious Israelite became more lowly in mind, and thought more tenderly of his God and of his offences against him. When a soul finds all its efforts at self-salvation prove abortive, and feels that it is now utterly without strength, then the Lord is at work hiding pride from man and preparing the afflicted one to receive his mercy. The spiritual case which is here figuratively described is desperate, and therefore affords the finer field for the divine interposition; some of us remember well how brightly mercy shone in our prison, and what music the fetters made when they fell off from our hands. Nothing but the Lord's love could have delivered us; without it we must have utterly perished.

13. "*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Not a prayer till then. While there was any to help below they would not look above. No cries till their hearts were brought down and their hopes were all dead—*then* they cried, but not before. So many a man offers what he calls prayer when he is in good ease and thinks well of himself, but in very deed the only real cry to God is that which is forced out of him by a sense of utter helplessness and misery. We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness. "*And he saved them out of their distresses.*" Speedily and willingly he sent relief. They were long before they cried, but he was not long before he saved. They had applied everywhere else before they came to him, but when they did address themselves to him, they were welcome at once. He who saved men in the open wilderness can also save in the close prison: bolts and bars cannot shut him out, nor long shut in his redeemed ones.

14. "*He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.*" The Lord in providence fetches out prisoners from their cells and bids them breathe the sweet fresh air again, and then he takes off their fetters and gives liberty to their aching limbs. So also he frees men from care and trouble, and especially from the misery and slavery of sin. This he does with his own hand, for in the experience of all the saints it is certified that there is no jail-delivery unless by the Judge himself. "*And brake their bands in sunder.*" Set them free by force, so liberating them that they could not be chained again, for he had broken the manacles to pieces. The Lord's deliverances are of the most complete and triumphant kind, he neither leaves the soul in darkness nor in bonds, nor does he permit the powers of evil again to enthrall the liberated captive. What he does is done for ever. Glory be to his name.

15. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" The sight of such goodness makes a right-minded man long to see the Lord duly honoured for his amazing mercy. When dungeon doors fly open, and chains are snapped, who can refuse to adore the glorious goodness of the Lord? It makes the heart sick to think of such gracious mercies remaining unsung: we cannot but plead with men to remember their obligations and extol the Lord their God.

16. "*For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.*" This verse belongs to that which precedes it, and sums up the mercy experienced by captives. The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners: and spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made us free indeed. Brass and iron are as tow before the flame of Jesus' love. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us, neither shall the bars of the grave detain us. Those of us who have experienced his redeeming power must and will praise the Lord for the wonders of his grace displayed on our behalf.

17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions.

21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men !

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

17. "*Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.*" Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Thoughtless and lustful men by drunkenness, gluttony, and the indulgence of their passions fill their bodies with diseases of the worst kind. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness: men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still; and if they were brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet would not their folly depart from them. From one transgression they go on to many iniquities, and while under the rod they add sin to sin. Alas, even the Lord's own people sometimes play the fool in this sad manner.

18. "*Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.*" Appetite departs from men when they are sick: the best of food is nauseous to them, their stomach turns against it. "*And they draw near unto the gates of death.*" From want of food, and from the destructive power of their malady, they slide gradually down till they lie at the door of the grave; neither does the skill of the physician suffice to stay their downward progress. As they cannot eat there is no support given to the system, and as the disease rages their little strength is spent in pain and misery. Thus it is with souls afflicted with a sense of sin, they cannot find comfort in the choicest promises, but turn away with loathing even from the gospel, so that they gradually decay into the grave of despair. The mercy is that though near the gates of death they are not yet inside the sepulchre.

19. "*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.*" They join the praying legion at last. Saul also is among the prophets. The fool lays aside his motley in prospect of the shroud, and betakes himself to his knees. What a cure for the soul sickness of body is often made to be by the Lord's grace! "*And he saveth them out of their distresses.*" Prayer is as effectual on a sick bed as in the wilderness or in prison; it may be tried in all places and circumstance with certain result. We may pray about our bodily pains and weaknesses, and we may look for answers too. When we have no appetite for meat we may have an appetite for prayer. He who cannot feed on the word of God may yet turn to God himself and find mercy.

20. "*He sent his word and healed them.*" Man is not healed by medicine alone, but by the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God is man restored from going down to the grave. A word will do it, a word has done it thousands of times. "*And delivered them from their destructions.*" They escape though dangers had surrounded them, dangers many and deadly. The word of the Lord has a great delivering power; he has but to speak and the armies of death flee in an instant. Sin-sick souls should remember the power of *the Word*, and be much in hearing it and meditating upon it.

Spiritually considered, these verses describe a sin-sick soul: foolish but yet aroused to a sense of guilt, it refuses comfort from any and every quarter, and a lethargy of despair utterly paralyzes it. To its own apprehension nothing remains but utter destruction in many forms: the gates of death stand open before it, and it is, in its own apprehension, hurried in that direction. Then is the soul driven to cry in the bitterness of its grief unto the Lord, and Christ, the eternal Word, comes with healing power in the direst extremity, saving to the uttermost.

21. "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*" It is marvellous that men can be restored from sickness and yet refuse to bless the Lord. It would seem impossible that they should forget such great mercy, for we should expect to see both themselves and the friends to whom they are restored uniting in a lifelong act of thanksgiving. Yet when ten are healed it is seldom that more than one returns to give glory to God. Alas, where are the nine? When a spiritual cure is wrought by the great Physician, praise is one of the surest signs of renewed health. A mind rescued from the disease of sin and the weary pains of conviction, must and will adore Jehovah Rophi, the healing God: yet it were well if there were a thousand times as much even of this.

22. "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving." In such a case let there be gifts and oblations as well as words. Let the good Physician have his fee of gratitude. Let life become a sacrifice to him who has prolonged it, let the deed of self-denying gratitude be repeated again and again: there must be many cheerful sacrifices to celebrate the marvellous boon. "And declare his works with rejoicing." Such things are worth telling, for the personal declaration honours God, relieves ourselves, comforts others, and puts all men in possession of facts concerning the divine goodness which they will not be able to ignore.

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

23. "They that go down to the sea in ships." Navigation was so little practised among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high degree of mystery, and their craft was looked upon as one of singular daring and peril. Tales of the sea thrilled all hearts with awe, and he who had been to Ophir or to Tarshish and had returned alive was looked upon as a man of renown, an ancient mariner to be listened to with reverent attention. Voyages were looked on as descending to an abyss, "going down to the sea in ships;" whereas now our bolder and more accustomed sailors talk of the "high seas." "That do business in great waters." If they had not had business to do, they would never have ventured on the ocean, for we never read in the Scriptures of any man taking his pleasure on the sea: so averse was the Israelitish mind to seafaring, that we do not hear of even Solomon himself keeping a pleasure boat. The Mediterranean was "the great sea" to David and his countrymen, and they viewed those who had business upon it with no small degree of admiration.

24. "These see the works of the Lord." Beyond the dwellers on the land they see the Lord's greatest works, or at least such as stayers at home judge to be so when they hear the report thereof. Instead of the ocean proving to be a watery wilderness, it is full of God's creatures, and if we were to attempt to escape from his presence by flying to the uttermost parts of it, we should only rush into Jehovah's arms, and find ourselves in the very centre of his workshop. "And his wonders in the deep." They see wonders in it and on it. It is in itself a wonder and it swarms with wonders. Seamen, because they have fewer objects around them, are more observant of those they have than landmen are, and hence they are said to see the wonders in the deep. At the same time, the ocean really does contain many of the more striking of God's creatures, and it is the scene of many of the more tremendous of the physical phenomena by which the power and majesty of the Lord are revealed among men. The chief wonders alluded to by the Psalmist are a sudden storm and the calm which follows it.

All believers have not the same deep experience; but for wise ends, that they may do business for him, the Lord sends some of his saints to the sea of soul-trouble, and there they see, as others do not, the wonders of divine grace. Sailing over the deeps of inward depravity, the waste waters of poverty, the billows of persecu-

tion, and the rough waves of temptation, they need God above all others, and they find him.

25. "*For he commandeth:*" his word is enough for anything, he has but to will it and a tempest rages. "*And raiseth the stormy wind.*" It seemed to lie asleep before, but it knows its Master's bidding, and is up at once in all its fury. "*Which lifteth up the waves thereof.*" The glassy surface of the sea is broken, and myriads of white heads appear and rage and toss themselves to and fro as the wind blows upon them. Whereas they were lying down in quiet before, the waves rise in their might and leap towards the sky as soon as the howling of the wind awakens them.

Thus it needs but a word from God and the soul is in troubled waters, tossed to and fro with a thousand afflictions. Doubts, fears, terrors, anxieties lift their heads like so many angry waves, when once the Lord allows the storm-winds to beat upon us.

26. "*They mount up to the heaven.*" Borne aloft on the crest of the wave, the sailors and their vessels appear to climb the skies, but it is only for a moment, for very soon in the trough of the sea "*they go down again to the depths.*" As if their vessel were but a sea bird, the mariners are tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billows' crown." "*Their soul is melted because of trouble.*" Weary, wet, dispirited, hopeless of escape, their heart is turned to water, and they seem to have no manhood left.

Those who have been on the spiritual deep in one of the great storms which occasionally agitate the soul know what this verse means. In these spiritual cyclones presumption alternates with despair, indifference with agony! No heart is left for anything, courage is gone, hope is almost dead. Such an experience is as real as the tossing of a literal tempest and far more painful. Some of us have weathered many such an internal hurricane, and have indeed seen the Lord's wondrous works.

27. "*They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man.*" The violent motion of the vessel prevents their keeping their legs, and their fears drive them out of all power to use their brains, and therefore they look like intoxicated men. "*And are at their wit's end.*" What more can they do? They have used every expedient known to navigation, but the ship is so strained and beaten about that they know not how to keep her afloat.

Here too the spiritual mariner's log agrees with that of the sailor on the sea. We have staggered frightfully! We could stand to nothing and hold by nothing. We knew not what to do, and could have done nothing if we had known it. We were as men distracted, and felt as if destruction itself would be better than our horrible state of suspense. As for wit and wisdom, they were clean washed out of us; we felt ourselves to be at a nonplus altogether.

28. "*Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble.*" Though at their wit's end, they had wit enough to pray; their heart was melted, and it ran out in cries for help. This was well and ended well, for it is written, "*And he brought them out of their distresses.*" Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray staggering and reeling, and pray when we are at our wit's end. God will hear us amid the thunder and answer us out of the storm. He brought their distresses upon the mariners, and therefore they did well to turn to him for the removal of them; nor did they look in vain.

29. "*He maketh the storm a calm.*" He reveals his power in the sudden and marvellous transformations which occur at his bidding. He commanded the storm and now he ordains a calm: God is in all natural phenomena, and we do well to recognise his working. "*So that the waves thereof are still.*" They bow in silence at his feet. Where huge billows leaped aloft there is scarce a ripple to be seen. When God makes peace it is peace indeed, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. He can in an instant change the condition of a man's mind, so that it shall seem an absolute miracle to him that he has passed so suddenly from hurricane to calm. O that the Lord would thus work in the reader, should his heart be storm-beaten with outward troubles or inward fears. Lord, say the word and peace will come at once.

30. "*Then are they glad because they be quiet.*" No one can appreciate this verse unless he has been in a storm at sea. No music can be sweeter than the rattling of the chain as the shipmen let down the anchor; and no place seems more desirable than the little cove, or the wide bay, in which the ship rests in peace. "*So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*" The rougher the voyage the more the mariners long

for port, and heaven becomes more and more "a desired haven," as our trials multiply. By storms and by favourable breezes, through tempest and fair weather, the great Pilot and Ruler of the sea brings mariners to port, and his people to heaven. HE must have the glory of the successful voyage of time, and when we are moored in the river of life above we shall take care that his praises are not forgotten. We should long ago have been wrecked if it had not been for his preserving hand, and our only hope of outliving the storms of the future is based upon his wisdom, faithfulness and power. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.

31. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Let the sea sound forth Jehovah's praises because of his delivering grace. As the sailor touches the shore let him lift the solemn hymn to heaven, and let others who see him rescued from the jaws of death unite in his thanksgiving.

32. "Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people." Thanks for such mercies should be given in public in the place where men congregate for worship. "And praise him in the assembly of the elders." The praise should be presented with great solemnity in the presence of men of years, experience, and influence. High and weighty service should be rendered for great and distinguished favours, and therefore let the sacrifice be presented with due decorum and with grave seriousness. Often when men hear of a narrow escape from shipwreck they pass over the matter with a careless remark about good luck, but it should never be thus jested with.

When a heart has been in great spiritual storms and has at last found peace, there will follow as a duty and a privilege the acknowledgment of the Lord's mercy before his people, and it is well that this should be done in the presence of those who hold office in the church, and who from their riper years are better able to appreciate the testimony.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

42 The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

33. "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground." When the Lord deals with rebellious men he can soon deprive them of those blessings of which they feel most assured: their rivers and perennial springs they look upon as certain never to be taken from them, but the Lord at a word can deprive them even of these. In hot climates after long droughts streams of water utterly fail, and even springs cease to flow, and this also has happened in other parts of the world when great convulsions of the earth's surface have occurred. In providence this physical catastrophe finds its counterpart when business ceases to yield profit and sources of wealth are made to fail; as also when health and strength are taken

away, when friendly aids are withdrawn, and comfortable associations are broken up. So, too, in soul matters, the most prosperous ministries may become dry, the most delightful meditations cease to benefit us, and the most fruitful religious exercises grow void of the refreshment of grace which they formerly yielded. Since

" 'Tis God who lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave,"

it behoves us to walk before him with reverential gratitude, and so to live that it may not become imperative upon him to afflict us.

34. "*A fruitful land into barrenness.*" This has been done in many instances, and notably in the case of the Psalmist's own country, which was once the glory of all lands and is now almost a desert. "*For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*" Sin is at the bottom of sorrow. It first made the ground sterile in father Adam's day, and it continues to have a blighting effect upon all that it touches. If we have not the salt of holiness we shall soon receive the salt of barrenness, for the text in the Hebrew is—"a fruitful land into saltness." If we will not yield the Lord a harvest of obedience he may forbid the soil to yield us a harvest of bread, and what then? If we turn good into evil can we wonder if the Lord pays us in kind, and returns our baseness into our own bosoms? Many a barren church owes its present sad estate to its inconsistent behaviour, and many a barren Christian has come into this mournful condition by a careless, un sanctified walk before the Lord. Let not saints who are now useful run the risk of enduring the loss of their mercies, but let them be watchful that all things may go well with them.

35. "*He turneth the wilderness into a standing water.*" With another turn of his hand he more than restores that which in judgment he took away. He does his work of mercy on a royal scale, for a deep lake is seen where before there was only a sandy waste. It is not by natural laws, working by some innate force, that this wonder is wrought, but by himself—HE TURNETH. "*And dry ground into water-springs.*" Continuance, abundance, and perpetual freshness are all implied in water-springs, and these are created where all was dry. This wonder of mercy is the precise reversal of the deed of judgment, and wrought by the selfsame hand. Even thus in the church, and in each individual saint, the mercy of the Lord soon works wonderful changes where restoring and renewing grace begin their benign work. O that we might see this verse fulfilled in all around us, and within our own hearts: then would these words serve us for an exclamation of grateful astonishment, and a song of well deserved praise.

36. "*And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,*" where none could dwell before. They will appreciate the change and prize his grace; as the barrenness of the land caused their hunger so will its fertility banish it for ever, and they will settle down a happy and thankful people to bless God for every handful of corn which the land yields to them. None are so ready to return a revenue of praise to God for great mercies as those who have known the lack of them. Hungry souls make sweet music when the Lord fills them with his gracious gifts. Are we hungry? Or are we satisfied with the husks of this poor, swinish world? "*That they may prepare a city for habitation.*" When the earth is watered and men cultivate it, cities spring up and teem with inhabitants; when grace abounds where sin formerly reigned, hearts find peace and dwell in God's love as in a strong city. The church is built up where once all was a waste when the Lord causes the broad rivers and streams of gospel grace to flow forth.

37. "*And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.*" Men work when God works. His blessing encourages the sower, cheers the planter, and rewards the labourer. Not only necessities but luxuries are enjoyed, wine as well as corn, when the heavens are caused to yield the needed rain to fill the watercourses. Divine visitations bring great spiritual riches, foster varied works of faith and labours of love, and cause every good fruit to abound to our comfort and to God's praise. When God sends the blessing it does not supersede, but encourages and develops human exertion. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.

38. "*He blesteth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.*" God's blessing is everything. It not only makes men happy, but it makes men themselves, by causing men to be multiplied upon the earth. When the Lord made the first pair he blessed them and said, "be fruitful

and multiply," and here he restores the primeval blessing. Observe that beasts as well as men fare well when God favours his people : they share with men in the goodness or severity of divine providence. Plagues and pests are warded off from the flock and the herd when the Lord means well towards a people ; but when chastisement is intended, the flocks and herds rot from off the face of the earth. O that nations in the day of their prosperity would but own the gracious hand of God, for it is to his blessing that they owe their all.

39. "*Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.*" As they change in character, so do their circumstances alter. Under the old dispensation, this was very clearly to be observed ; Israel's ups and downs were the direct consequences of her sins and repentances. Trials are of various kinds ; here we have three words for affliction, and there are numbers more : God has many rods and we have many smarts, and all because we have many sins. Nations and churches soon diminish in number when they are diminished in grace. If we are low in love to God, it is small wonder that he brings us low in other respects. God can reverse the order of our prosperity, and give us a *diminuendo* where we had a *crescendo* ; therefore let us walk before him with great tenderness of spirit, conscious of our dependence upon his smile.

40, 41. In these two verses we see how the Lord at will turns the wheel of providence. Paying no respect to man's imaginary grandeur, he puts princes down and makes them wander in banishment as they had made their captives wander when they drove them from land to land : at the same time, having ever a tender regard for the poor and needy, the Lord delivers the distressed and sets them in a position of comfort and happiness. This is to be seen upon the roll of history again and again, and in spiritual experience we remark its counterpart : the selfsufficient are made to despise themselves and search in vain for help in the wilderness of their nature, while poor convicted souls are added to the Lord's family and dwell in safety as the sheep of his fold.

42. "*The righteous shall see it, and rejoice.*" Divine providence causes joy to God's true people ; they see the hand of the Lord in all things, and delight to study the ways of his justice and of his grace. "*And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.*" What can she say ? God's providence is often so conclusive in its arguments of fact, that there is no replying or questioning. It is not long that the impudence of ungodliness can be quiet, but when God's judgments are abroad it is driven to hold its tongue.

43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Those who notice providences shall never be long without a providence to notice. It is wise to observe what the Lord doth, for he is wonderful in counsel ; has given us eyes to see with, and it is foolish to close them when there is most to observe ; but we must observe wisely, otherwise we may soon confuse ourselves and others with hasty reflections upon the dealings of the Lord. In a thousand ways the lovingkindness of the Lord is shown, and if we will but prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it. To understand the delightful attribute of lovingkindness is an attainment as pleasant as it is profitable : those who are proficient scholars in this art will be among the sweetest singers to the glory of Jehovah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Dr. Lowth, in his 20th prelection, remarks of this Psalm :—“ No doubt the composition of this Psalm is admirable throughout ; and the descriptive part of it adds at least its share of beauty to the whole ; but what is most to be admired is its *conciseness*, and withal the expressiveness of the diction, which strikes the imagination with imitable elegance. The *weary* and *bewildered traveller*, the miserable *captiv*e in the hideous dungeon, the sick and dying man, the *seaman foundering* in a storm, are described in so affecting a manner, that they far exceed anything of the kind, though never so much laboured.” I may add that had such an Idyle appeared in Theocritus or Virgil, or had it been found as a scene in any of

the Greek tragedians, even in Æschylus himself, it would probably have been produced as their master-piece.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—I do not believe that the special care of God over his own people is here rather *indirectly* than *directly* touched upon, and that therefore this Psalm is composed to illustrate the general care of God : 1, Because the subjects of the various deliverances are called the *redeemed of Jehovah*, verse 2, which is the customary title of the people of God. 2, Because among the instances given, there are those which are peculiar to the people of God, as in verse 3 the return of the dispersed out of every part of the globe, a singular blessing, promised in the prophecies to the people of God, see Ps. cvi. 47. 3, The sick of verse 17 are those who are spiritually sick even unto death, as is clear from the fact of their being healed by the *word* of God ; which is not in the order of common providence. The *imprisoned* of verse 2 are those who on account of the worship of God fall into the power of their enemies, which you cannot well apply to any other than the people of God. If you understand the *wicked*, for others among the heathen cannot be said to be thrust into prison on account of the violation of the laws, then the *liberation* belongs not to them. 4, *Calling* upon God, especially upon *Jehovah*, under which name he was known only to his people, you cannot apply unless in a diluted and partial sense to those who are afflicted in the general course of providence. . . . 5, He commands those who are delivered to celebrate the divine goodness in the *congregation of the people and the assembly of the elders*, verse 32, which is the mark of the true Church and her usual description. 6, Lastly, instances of general providences are not wont to come under the name of חַן, *grace*, by which these deliverances are described, nor do they require such great and such careful attention in their consideration, as here the sacred poet enjoins upon the pious and the wise : such things are easily observed, and are of every day occurrence.—*Venema.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm divides itself into five parts ; the four first, as it should seem, describing four divisions of the returning Israelites, and recounting the particular accidents that had befallen each party on their journey, and the particular mercies for which they ought to be thankful. The fifth part describes what befalls the collected nations, or a part of them, when they arrive at the land which was the object of their journey—I think the first restoration or colonization before the general gathering. Whether the four divisions of travellers are supposed to come exactly from the four distinct quarters of the earth, perhaps is not quite certain. The first divisions are plainly described (verses 4, 5), as coming across the desert, and meeting with all the disasters usual on that route.—*John Fry.*

Whole Psalm.—Without insisting on an exclusive application of this Psalm to Israel, there may be traced, I think, not indistinctly, the leading incidents of the nation's changeful experience in the descriptive language of the narrative part.

In verses 4—7 the story of the wilderness is briefly told, to the praise of the glory of his grace who satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. The strong discipline of national affliction which visited the rebellious house, until the turning again of their captivity, when the appointed term of Babylonish exile was accomplished, appears to form the historical groundwork of verses 10—16 ; but in its prophetic intention this passage would demand a far wider interpretation. The resuscitation of Israel, both spiritually and politically, would alone adequately fulfil these words.

The sufferings of the " foolish nation " when, filled with Jehovah's indignation, they find a snare in that which should have fed them, and pine beneath the pressure of a more grievous famine than that of bread, until, in answer to their cry of sorrow, the word of saving health is sent them from above, seem to be indicated in the next division (verses 17—20). The language of verse 22 is in agreement with this. They who had daily gone about to establish their own righteousness are called on now to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and to declare his works with singing.

Besides the obvious force and beauty of the following verses (23—30) in their simple meaning and their general application, we have, I believe, a figure of Jacob's restless trouble when, like a vexed and frightened mariner, he wandered up and down the wide sea of nations without ease, a friendless pilgrim of the Lord's displeasure, until the long-desired rest was gained at last, under the faithful guidance of him who seeks his people in the dark and cloudy day. Accordingly we find in the hortatory remembrancer of praise which follows (verse 32), a mention of the gathered people and their elders, who are now called on to celebrate, in the quiet resting-places of Immanuel's land, his faithful goodness and his might, who had

turned their long-endured tempest of affliction to the calm sunshine of perpetual peace.—Arthur Pridham, in *“Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,”* 1869.

Verse 1.—“*O give thanks unto the Lord.*” Unto no duty are we more dull and untoward, than to the praise of God, and thanksgiving unto him; neither is there any duty whereunto there is more need that we should be stirred up, as this earnest exhortation doth import.—David Dickson.

Verse 1.—“*For he is good,*” etc. The first words of the Psalm are abundant in thought concerning Jehovah. “*For he is good.*” Is not this the Old Testament version of “*God is love*”? 1 John iv. 8. And then, “*For his mercy endureth for ever.*” Is not this the gushing stream from the fountain of Love?—the never-failing stream, on whose banks “*the redeemed of the Lord*” walk, “*those whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy*” (Hengstenberg, “*hand of trouble,*” יָצָא). Nor is the rich significance of these clauses diminished by our knowing that they were, from time to time, the burden of the *altar-song*. When the ark came to its resting-place (1 Chron. xvi. 34), they sang to the Lord—“*For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever!*” In Solomon’s temple, the singers and players on instruments were making the resplendent walls of the newly-risen temple resound with these very words, when the glory descended (2 Chron. v. 13); and these were the words that burst from the lips of the awe-struck and delighted worshippers, who saw the fire descend on the altar (2 Chron. vii. 3). And in Ezra’s days (iii. 11), again, as soon as the altar rose, they sang to the Lord—“*Because he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*” Our God is known to be “*Love,*” by the side of the atoning sacrifice. Jeremiah (xxxiii. 11) too, shows how restored Israel shall exult in this name.—Andrew A. Bonar.

Verse 1.—“*His mercy endureth for ever.*” St. Paul assures us, that the covenant of grace, which is the fountain of all mercy, was made before the foundation of the world, and this he repeats in several of his epistles. The Psalmist teaches the same doctrine, and frequently calls upon us to thank God, because his mercy is for ever and ever—because his mercy is everlasting—and in the text, because “*his mercy endureth for ever;*” the word “*endureth*” is inserted by the translators, for there is no verb in the original, neither in strictness of speech could there be any; because there was no time when this mercy was not exercised, neither will there be any time when the exercise of it will fail. It was begun before all worlds, when the covenant of grace was made, and it will continue to the ages of eternity, after this world is destroyed. So that *mercy* was, and is, and will be, “*for ever,*” and sinful miserable man may always find relief in this eternal mercy, whenever the sense of his misery disposes him to seek for it. And does not this motive loudly call upon us to “*give thanks*”? because there is mercy with God—mercy to pity the miserable—and even to relieve them—although they do not deserve it: for mercy is all free grace and unmerited love. Oh! how adorable, then, and gracious is this attribute! how sweet is it and full of consolation to the guilty.—William Romaine (1714—1795), in *“A Practical Comment on the Hundred and Seventh Psalm.”*

Verse 2.—“*Redeemed.*” Moses has given us in the law a clear and full idea of what we are to understand by the word *goel*, here rendered “*redeemed.*” If any person was either sold for a slave, or carried away for a captive, then his kinsman, who was nearest to him in blood, had the right and equity of redemption. But no other person was suffered to redeem. And such a kinsman was called “*the redeemer,*” when he paid down the price for which his relation was sold to be a slave, or paid the ransom for which he was led captive. And there is another remarkable instance in the law, wherein it was provided, that in case any person was found murdered, then the nearest to him in blood was to prosecute the murderer, and to bring him to justice, and this nearest relation thus avenging the murder is called by the same name, a *redeemer*. And how beautifully is the office of our great Redeemer represented under these three instances! he was to us such a Redeemer in spirituals, as these were in temporals: for sin had brought all mankind into slavery and captivity, and had murdered us. . . . This most high God, who was also man, united in one Christ, came into the world to redeem us, and the same person being both God and man, must merit for us as God in what he did for us as man. Accordingly, by the merits of his obedience and sufferings, he paid the price of our redemption, and we were no longer the servants of sin; and by his most precious blood shed upon the cross, by his death and resurrection, he overcame both death, and him who had

the power of death, and by delivering us in this manner from slavery and captivity, he fulfilled the third part of the Redeemer's office: for Satan was the murderer from the beginning, who had given both body and soul a mortal wound of sin, which was certain death and eternal misery, and the Redeemer came to avenge the murder. He took our cause in hand, as being our nearest kinsman, and it cost him his own life to avenge ours.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 2.—"From the hand of the enemy." From all their sins which war against their souls; from Satan their implacable adversary, who is stronger than they; from the law, which threatens and curses them with damnation and death; from death itself, the last enemy, and indeed from the hand of all their enemies, be they who they may.—*John Gill*.

Verse 3.—"And gathered." If anything can inspire us with gratitude, this motive should prevail, because we cannot but feel the force of it, as it reminds us of that misery from which we in particular were redeemed. The *Gentiles* had wandered from God, and were so lost and bewildered in the mazes of error and superstition, that nothing but the almighty love of our Lord Jesus could have gathered them together into one church.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 3.—"Gathered them." The Syriac gives as the title of this Psalm: God collects the Jews out of captivity, and brings them back out of Babylon; the only begotten Son of God also, Jesus Christ, collects the nations from the four corners of the world, by calling upon man to be baptized.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 3.—"From the west." The mention of the *west* leads the Psalmist's thoughts to Egypt; and the remembrance of the bondage and labours of the ancestors of the Israelites in Egypt, coupled with the description in a previous Psalm (cv. 17) of the imprisonment of Joseph.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

Verse 4.—"They wandered," etc. In these words it is not easy to ascertain the persons immediately intended. But this is a circumstance not to be lamented. It is even an advantage; it constrains us to a more spiritual and evangelical interpretation of the subject. And thus the whole representation is fully and easily embodied. For the people of God are "redeemed"—redeemed from the curse of the law, the powers of darkness, and the bondage of corruption. They are "gathered"—gathered by his grace out of all the diversities of the human race; "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." Whatever this world is to others, they find it to be "a wilderness"; where they are often tried, but their trials urge them to prayer, and prayer brings them relief. And being divinely conducted, they at length reach their destination: and this is the conclusion of the whole, and it applies to each of them: "And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."—*William Jay*.

Verse 4.—"Wandered." Their passage through the wilderness was not a journeying, such as when men pass on in a road to some inhabited place; but a *wandering* up and down away from all path and road, and so in an endless maze of desolation.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 4.—"Wandered in the wilderness," etc. He has *lost his way*. When he was in the world, he had no difficulties; the path was so broad that he could not mistake it. But when the work of divine grace begins in a sinner's heart, he loses his way. He cannot find his way into the world; God has driven him out of it, as he drove Lot out of Sodom. He cannot find his way to heaven; because he at present lacks those clear testimonies, those bright manifestations whereby alone he can see his path. This is his experience then, that he has lost his way; having turned his back upon the world; and yet unable to realise those enjoyments in his soul that would make heaven his home. He has so lost his way, that whether he turns to the right hand or the left, he has no plain land-marks to show him the path in which his soul longs to go.

We need not stray from the text to find where the wanderer is. "They wandered in the wilderness." The wilderness is a type and figure of what this life is to the Lord's people. There is nothing that grows in it fit for their food or nourishment. In it the fiery flying serpents—sin and Satan—are perpetually biting and stinging them: and there is nothing in it that can give them any sweet and solid rest. The barren sands of carnality below, and the burning sun of temptation above, alike deny them food and shelter.

But there is a word added which throws a further light upon the character of the

wilderness. "They wandered in the wilderness, *in a solitary way*;" a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, "*a solitary way*." This much increases his exercises, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the Wicked One are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced; the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself. It is this walking "*in a solitary way*," that makes the path of trial and temptation so painful to God's family.—*J. C. Philpot* (1802—1869), in a Sermon entitled "*The Houseless Wanderer*."

Verse 4.—"In a solitary way."—The greater part of the desert being totally destitute of water is seldom visited by any human being; unless where the trading caravans trace out their toilsome and dangerous route across it. In some parts of this extensive waste the ground is covered with low, stunted shrubs, which serve as landmarks for the caravans, and furnish the camels with a scanty forage. In other parts, the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky; a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst. Surrounded by this dreary solitude, the traveller sees the dead bodies of birds, that the violence of the wind has brought from happier regions; and, as he ruminates on the fearful length of his remaining passage, listens with horror to the driving blast, the only sound that interrupts the awful repose of the desert.*—*Mungo Park*, 1771—1806 (?).

Verse 4.—"In a solitary way." See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder *why melancholy people delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it. 1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, *that they are no more the same that they used to be*; their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them, may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be, if they knew how to help it; but the *disease of melancholy* is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it. 2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone*, is, because *people do not generally mind what they say*, nor believe them, but deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words, that is due to the rest of men. But, 3. Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone, is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job vi. 21; "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps. lxxi. 7; "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps. lxxxviii. 18; "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job; to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable, one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job ii. 12, 13: "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, that "he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence," Lam. iii. 28. *Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729) in "*Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy*."

Verse 4.—"They found no city to dwell in"; nor even to call at or lodge in, for

* "Proceedings of the African Association."

miles together; which is the case of travellers in some parts, particularly in the desert of Arabia. Spiritual travellers find no settlement, rest, peace, joy, and comfort, but in Christ; nor any indeed in this world, and the things of it; here they have no continuing city, Hebrews xiii. 14.—*John Gill*.

Verse 5.—"Their soul fainted in them." The word here used, אָפָה, *ataph*, means properly to cover, to clothe, as with a garment, Ps. lxxiii. 6; or a field with grain, Ps. lxxv. 13; then, to hide oneself, Job xxiii. 9; then, to cover with darkness, Ps. lxxvii. 3; *cii. title*; thus it denotes the state of mind when darkness seems to be in the way—a way of calamity, trouble, sorrow; of weakness, faintness, feebleness. Here it would seem from the connection to refer to the exhaustion produced by the want of food and drink.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 6.—"Then they cried," etc. In these words we find three things remarkable; first, the condition of God's church and people, *trouble and distress*: Secondly, the practice and the exercise of God's people in this state: "Then they cried unto the Lord": Thirdly, their success, and the good issue of this practice: "And he delivered them," etc.—*Peter Smith, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons, 1644*.

Verse 6.—"Then they cried." The root קָרָא has here a peculiar force: it denotes a cry of that kind into which any one, when shaken with a violent tempest of emotion, in the extremity of his grief and anxiety, breaks with a *crash* and with *complaining*, as the heavens send forth thunder and lightning. The original idea of the word being a *crash*, it indicates such complaints and cries as they send forth, who are oppressed by others, or are held fast in straits, in imploring public protection and help. See Deut. xxii. 14, 1 Kings xx. 39, Is. xix. 20.—*Venema*.

Verse 6.—"In their trouble." Observe the words, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." Not *before*, not *after*, but *in* it. When they were in the midst of it; when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah; when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it; when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind; when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed;—then it was that they cried.—*J. C. Philpot*.

Verse 6.—"Trouble." "*Distresses.*" The condition of the Church, or its most usual lot, is to be under sorrows and afflictions. I say, most usual: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made," Isai. lvii. 16. But as we say of the several callings and trades of life, this man professeth such a calling, and that man another; and as the poet said of Hermogenes, Though he hold his peace (peradventure being asleep) yet he's a good singer, and a musician by profession: so say I of the people of God, their trade of life is suffering and as Julian told the Christians, when they complained of his cruelty, 'Tis your profession to endure tribulation.—*Peter Smith*.

Verse 7.—"He led them forth." Forth out of the world—forth out of a profession—forth out of a name to live—forth out of every thing hateful in his holy and pure eyes.—*J. C. Philpot*.

Verse 7.—"And he led them forth by the right way," etc. Alexander translates this verse—"And he led them in a strait course, to go to a city of habitation"; and adds, "No exact version can preserve or imitate the paronomasia arising from the etymological affinity of the first verb and noun, analogous to that between the English *walk* and *to walk*, though the Hebrew forms are only similar and not identical. The idea of physical rectitude or straightness necessarily suggests that of moral rectitude or honesty, commonly denoted by the Hebrew word."

Verse 7.—"A city of habitation." Not a city of *inspection*! Many—(Eternal God, will it be any of this company?)—will look in; and "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and they themselves shut out." Not a city of *visitation*. Christians shall not only enter, but abide. They shall go no more out—it is "a city of *habitation*." This conveys the idea of *repose*. The Christian is now a traveller; then he will be a resident: he is now on the road; he will then be at home: "there remaineth a *rest* for the people of God." It reminds us of a *social state*. It is not a solitary condition; we shall partake of it with an innumerable company of angels, with all the saved from among men, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs,

our kindred in Christ. "These are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." It suggests *magnificence*. It is not a village, or a town, but a *city* of habitation. A city is the highest representation of civil community. There have been famous cities; but what are they all to this!—*William Jay*.

Verse 8.—*He does wonders for the children of men; and therefore, men should praise the Lord.* And he is the more to be praised because these wonders, *וְעֲשָׂה לָנוּ נִפְלְאוֹת*, *niphlaoth*, miracles of mercy and grace, are done for the *undeserving*. There are done *כִּי לִבְנֵי אָדָם*, *libney Adam*, for the children of Adam, the corrupt descendants of a rebel father.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 8.—"Oh that men would praise the Lord," etc. Hebrew, That they would confess it to the Lord, both in secret, and in society. This is all the rent that God requireth; he is content that we have the comfort of his blessings, so he may have the honour of them. This was all the fee Christ looked for for his cures: go and tell what God hath done for thee. Words seem to be a poor and slight recompense; but Christ, saith Nazienzen, called himself the Word.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 8.—"To the children of men!" We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God: to others as well as to ourselves.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 9.—"For he satisfieth the longing soul." This is the reason which the Psalmist gives for the duty of thankfulness which he prescribes. "The longing soul," *נֶפֶשׁ שׁוֹקֶקָה*, *nephesh shokekah*, the soul that pushes forward in eager desire after salvation.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 10.—"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." Every son of Adam in his natural state before he is redeemed is in "darkness" and "the shadow of death," and is fast "bound" with the chains of sin and misery, and there is no help for him upon earth—the Almighty God and Saviour alone is able to deliver him.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 11.—"Because they rebelled against the words of God." There is in the Hebrew a play upon similar sounds—*Hinru Imree*. God's words are those spoken in the Law and by the prophets. "And contemned the counsel of the Most High"—another play upon like sounds in the Hebrew—*Hatzath Naatzu*.—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 12.—"He brought down their heart." O believer, God may see you have many and strong lusts to be subdued, and that you need many and sore afflictions to bring them down. Your pride and obstinacy of heart may be strong, your distempers deeply rooted, and therefore the physic must be proportioned to them.—*John Willison*.

Verse 12.—"He brought down their heart with labour." Those towering passions by which they vainly vaunted themselves above the law and the worship of God, he weakened and curbed, so that they began to submit themselves to God. The root *רָבַב* taken from the Arabic, describes a process of *weakening* by *compressing* the wings or shrinking the fingers, and is properly applied to birds, which when their wings are compressed are obliged to fall to the ground, or to men, who by the shrivelling up of their fingers lose the power of working; whence it is transferred to *oppressions* or *depressions* of any kind.—*Venema*.

Verse 12.—"They fell down, and there was none to help." Affliction is then come to the height and its complete measure, when the sinner is made sensible of his own weakness, and doth see there is no help for him, save in God alone.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 12.—"They fell down." They threw themselves prostrate at his feet for mercy; their heart and strength failed them, as the word signifies, and is used in Ps. xxxi. 10; terrified with a sense of divine wrath, they could not stand before the Lord, nor brave it out against him. "And there was none to help." They could not help themselves, nor was there any creature that could. There is salvation in no other than in Christ; when he saw there was none to help him in that work his own arm brought salvation to him; and when sinners see there is help in no other, they apply to him.—*John Gill*.

Verse 17.—"Fools." There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 17—20.—"Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat" (they are so sick that they can relish, take down nothing,) and "they draw near unto the gates of death," they are almost in, they were on the brink of hell; what course must be used for their cure? Truly this, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." No herb in the garden of the whole world can do these distressed creatures the least good. Friends may speak, and ministers may speak, yea, angels may speak, and all in vain; the wounds are incurable for all their words; but if God please to speak, the dying soul reviveth. This word is the only balm that can cure the wounded conscience: "he sendeth his word and healeth them." Conscience is God's prisoner, he claps it in hold, he layeth it in fetters, that the iron enters the very soul; this he doth by his word, and truly he only who shuts up can let out; all the world cannot open the iron gate, knock off the shackles, and set the poor prisoner at liberty, till God speak the word.—George Swinnoek, 1627—1673.

Verse 18.—"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." Nor is it without emphasis that it is not the sick man who is said to spurn food, but *his soul*. . . . The Hebrew word נפש which properly means a breath, hence a panting appetite, is applied to a very vehement appetite for food. When, therefore the soul is said to abhor food, it is equivalent to saying for the vehement appetite for food abhors food: that is, in the place of an appetite for food, they are oppressed with a loathing: when they ought to be moved with a sharp desire of food, that their exhausted powers might be refreshed, appetite itself becomes a loathing of food, which is a most vivid description of the utmost loathing, and utter prostration of all desire.—Venema.

Verse 18.—"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." The best of creature-comforts are but vain comforts. What can dainty meat do a man good, when he is sick and ready to die? Then gold and silver, lands and houses, which are the dainty meat of a covetous man, are loathsome to him. When a man is sick to death, his very riches are sapless and tasteless to him; wife and children, friends and acquaintance, can yield but little comfort in that dark hour, yea, they often prove miserable comforters: when we have most need of comfort, these things administer least or no comfort at all to us. Is it not our wisdom, then, to get a stock of such comforts, as will hold and abide fresh with us, when all worldly comforts either leave us, or become tasteless to us? Is it not good to get a store of that food, which how sick soever we are, our stomachs will never loathe? yea, the sicker we are, our stomachs will the more like, hunger after, and feed the more heartily upon. *The flesh of Christ is meat indeed* (John vi. 55). Feed upon him by faith, in health and sickness, ye will never loathe him. His flesh is the true meat of desires, such meat as will fill and fatten us, but never cloy us. A hungry craving appetite after Christ, and sweet satisfaction in him, are inseparable, and still the stronger is our appetite, the greater is our satisfaction. And (which is yet a greater happiness) our souls will have the strongest appetite, the most sharp-set stomach after Christ, when, through bodily sickness, our stomachs cannot take down, but loathe the very scent and sight of the most pleasant perishing meat, and delicious earthly dainties. Look, that ye provide somewhat to eat, that will go down upon a sick-bed; your sick-bed meat is Christ; all other dainty food may be an abhorring to you.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 18.—"Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." The case is then growing desperate, and there seems to be no hope left, when it comes to the last stage here described, viz., to loathe and "abhor all manner of meat." The stomach turns at the sight of it, and the man has this loathing and abhorrence of "all manner of meat." What he most loved, and had the best appetite for, is now become so very offensive, that at the smell of it he grows sick and faints away. Nature cannot support itself long under this disorder. If this loss of appetite, and loathing even the smell of the most simple food continue, it must wear the patient out. Indeed, it is not always a mortal distemper; there may be an entire loathing of food, and even fainting away at the smell of it, and the patient may sometimes recover; but in the present case the distemper had continued so long, and was grown so inveterate that there were no hopes, for "they draw nigh," the Psalmist says, "to the gates of death." Those gates of brass and bars of iron with which death locks up his prisoners in the grave; and you may judge how great must be the strength of these gates and bars, since only one person was ever able to break through them, and if he had not been more

than man, he could never have broken these gates of brass, nor cut these bars of iron in sunder.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 18.—“*They draw near unto the gates of death.*” Death is a great commander, a great tyrant, and hath gates to sit in, as judges and magistrates used to ‘sit in the gates.’ There are three things implied in this phrase. 1. First, “*They draw near unto the gates of death,*” that is, they were “*near to death*”; as he that draws near the gates of a city is near the city, because the gates enter into the city. 2. Secondly, gates are applied to death *for authority*. They were almost in death’s jurisdiction. Death is a great tyrant. He rules over all the men in the world, over kings and potentates, and over mean men; and the greatest men fear death most. He is “the king of fears,” as Job calls him, Job xviii. 14; ay, and the fear of kings. . . . Therefore it is called “the gate of death.” It rules and overrules all mankind. Therefore it is said “to reign,” Rom. v. 21. Death and sin came in together. Sin was the gate that let in death, and ever since death reigned, and will, till Christ perfectly triumph over it, who is the King of that lord and commander, and hath “the key of hell and death,” Rev. i. 18. To wicked men, I say, he is a tyrant, and hath a gate; and when they go through the “*gate of death,*” they go to a worse, to a lower place, to hell. It is the trap-door to hell. 3. Thirdly. By the “*gate of death,*” is meant not only the authority, but the *power of death*; as in the gospel, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” Matt. xvi. 18: that is, the power and strength of hell. So here it implies the strength of death, which is very great, for it subdues all. It is the executioner of God’s justice.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 20.—When George Wishart arrived at Dundee, where the plague was raging [1545], he caused intimation to be made that he would preach; and for that purpose chose his station upon the head of the East-gate, the infected persons standing without, and those that were whole within. His text was Psalm cvii. 20, “*He sent his word, and healed them,*” etc., wherein he treated of the profit and comfort of God’s word, the punishment that comes by contempt of it, the readiness of God’s mercy to such as truly turn to him, and the happiness of those whom God takes from this misery, etc. By which sermon he so raised up the hearts of those that heard him, that they regarded not death, but judged them more happy that should then depart, rather than such as should remain behind, considering that they knew not whether they should have such a comforter with them.—*Samuel Clarke* (1599—1682), in “*A General Martyrologie.*”

Verse 20.—“*He sent his word.*” The same expression occurs in cxlvii. 15, 18; comp. Is. lv. 11. We detect in such passages the first glimmering of St. John’s doctrine of the agency of the personal Word. The Word by which the heavens were made, xxxiii. 6, is seen to be not merely the expression of God’s will, but his messenger mediating between himself and his creatures. It is interesting to compare with this the language of Elihu in the parallel passage of Job xxxiii. 23, where what is here ascribed to the agency of the Word is ascribed to that of the “*mediating angel, or messenger.*”—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 20.—“*His word*” who “*healed them*” was his essential Word, even the second person in the Godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ, the word who was made flesh and dwelt among us: of this divine Word it was foretold in the Old Testament, that he should arise with the glory of the morning sun, bringing healing in his wings for all our maladies; and accordingly the New Testament relates, that Jesus went about all Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing ALL manner of sickness, and ALL manner of disease among the people. He healed the bodily disease miraculously, to prove that he was the Almighty Physician of the soul. And it is remarkable that he never rejected any person who applied to him for an outward cure, to demonstrate to us, that he would never cast out any person who should apply to him for a spiritual cure.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 20.—“*And delivered them from their destructions.*” From their pits: or, From their sepulchres. That is, from the deaths to which they were near. In others render, From their nets or snares. Others, *their destructions*, the diseases in which they were miserable prisoners.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 20.—“*And delivered them from their destructions.*” From the destruction of the body, of the beauty and strength of it by diseases; restoring to health is a redeeming of the life from destruction; from the grave, the pit of corruption and destruction, so called because in it bodies corrupt, putrefy, and are destroyed by worms; and such who are savingly convinced of sin, and blessed with pardoning

grace and mercy, are delivered from the everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell.—*John Gill.*

Verse 22.—“*And let them sacrifice.*” For their *healing* they should bring a *sacrifice*; and they should offer the *life* of the innocent animal unto God, as he has offered their *lives*; and let them thus *confess* that God has spared *them* when they deserved to die; and let them “*declare*” also “his works with rejoicing”; for who will not rejoice when he is delivered from death?—*Adam Clarke.*

As a specimen of mediæval spiritualizing we give the following from the Hermit of Hampole:—

Verse 23.—“*They that go down to the sea in ships,*” etc. *They that* (are true prelates and preachers,) *go down* from the sublimity of contemplation, *to the sea*, that is, suiting themselves to the lowly, that they also may be saved, *in ships*, that is, in the faith, hope, and charity of the church, without which they would be drowned in the waters of pleasure, *that do business*, that is, continue preaching, *in great waters*, that is, among many people in order that they may become fishers of men.—*Richardus Hampolitanus.*

Verses 23—27.

While thus our keels still onward boldly strayed—
Now tossed by tempests, now by calms delayed;
To tell the terrors of the deep untried,
What toils we suffered, and what storms defied;
What rattling deluges the black clouds poured,
What dreary weeks of solid darkness low’red;
What mountain surges mountain surges lashed,
What sudden hurricanes the canvas dashed;
What bursting lightnings, with incessant flare,
Kindled in one wide flame the burning air;
What roaring thunders bellowed o’er our head,
And seemed to shake the reeling ocean’s bed:
To tell each horror in the deep revealed,
Would ask an iron throat with tenfold vigour steeled
Those dreadful wonders of the deep I saw,
Which fill the sailor’s breasts with sacred awe;
And what the sages, of their learning vain,
Esteem the phantoms of a dreamful brain.

Luiz de Camoens (1524—1579), in “the Lusiad.”

Verses 23—31.—No language can be more sublime than the description of a storm at sea in this Psalm. It is the very soul of poetry. The utmost simplicity of diction is employed to convey the grandest thoughts. The picture is not crowded; none but the most striking circumstances are selected; and everything is natural, simple, and beyond measure interesting. The whole is an august representation of the Providence of God, ruling in what appears the most ungovernable province of nature. It is God who raises the storm; it is God who stilleth it. The wise men of this world may look no farther than the physical laws by which God acts; but the Holy Spirit, by the Psalmist, views the awful conflict of the elements as the work of God.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verses 23—32.—This last picture springs naturally from the mention in verse 3 of the sea; and here the Psalmist may have directed his imagination to the usual tempestuousness of the season at which the Psalm was sung.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 24.—“*These see the works of the Lord.*” There are sinners who, like Jonah, flee from the face of God, go down to the sea, to the cares and pleasures of the world, away from the solid land of humility, quiet, and grace. They occupy themselves in many waters, in needless toils and excessive pleasures, and yet even there God does not leave them, but causes them to see his works and wonders even in the deep of their sins, by giving them timely and sufficient warnings, and alarming them with fear of the abyss.—*Le Blanc in Neale and Lilledale.*

Verses 25—31.

Think, O my soul, devoutly think,
How, with affrighted eyes
Thou saw'st the wide extended deep
In all its horrors rise!

Confusion dwelt in every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
O'ercame the pilot's art.

Yet then from all my griefs, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free,
Whilst in the confidence of prayer
My soul took hold on thee.

For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave,
I knew thou wert not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.

The storm was laid, the winds retired,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roared at thy command,
At thy command was still.

In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness I'll adore,
And praise thee for thy mercies past;
And humbly hope for more.

My life, if thou preserv'st my life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, if death must be my doom
Shall join my soul to thee.

Joseph Addison.

Verse 26.—“*They mount up to the heaven.*” There be three heavens. 1. *Cælum aërium*. 2. *Cælum astriferum*. 3. *Cælum beatorum*. It is not the latter now they go to in storms, but the two former.—*Daniel Pell*, in “*An Improvement of the Sea,*” 1659.

Verse 26.—“*They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths.*”

To larboard all their oars and canvas bend;
We on a ridge of waters to the sky
Are lifted, down to Erebus again
Sink with the falling wave; thrice howl'd the rocks
Within their stony caverns, thrice we saw
The splash'd-up foam upon the lights of heaven

Virgil.

Verse 28.—“*They cry unto the Lord.*” His attributes are much honoured in calling upon him, especially in times of dangers and distresses. 1. When you call upon God at sea, you honour his *sovereignty*. God says to these proud waves, “So far and no farther!” So, “the storm and hail,” they fulfil his will, and when he pleases he commands a calm. 2. Prayer in time of danger honours God's *wisdom*, when we see no way open for mercies and deliverance to come in at, then to look up to him, believing. “He knows how to deliver out of temptation.” O how much of the wisdom of God appears in preservation in time of danger! and is it not a good token of mercy coming in when persons pray, though all visible ways are blocked up? This honours God's *wisdom*, which we acknowledge is never at a loss as to ways of bringing in mercy and deliverance. 3. The *faithfulness* of God is much honoured in times of danger, when he is called upon. The faithfulness of a friend doth most appear in a strait: now if you can rely upon his promise, God's faithfulness is the best line men sinking at sea can lay hold on. So I might add, calling upon God honours all his other attributes. *John Ryther* (1632—1681) in “*A Plita for Mariners: or, The Seaman's Preacher,*” 1675.

Verse 28.—“*Then they cry.*” Tempestuous storms and deadly dangers have brought those upon their knees, that would never have bended in a calm: “*Then they cry.*” If any one would know at what time the sailors take up the duty of prayer, let me say it is when death stares them in the face. If ever you see the heavens veiled in sable blackness, the clouds flying, and the winds roaring under them; you may conclude that some of them (though God knows but few) are at prayer, yea, hard at it with their God. But never believe it that there is any prayer amongst them when the skies are calm, the winds down, and the seas smooth. David tells you not of their praying in good and comfortable weather, but that it is in time of storms, for I believe that neither he nor I ever saw many of them on that strain. . . .

God hears oftener from an afflicted people, than he either does or can from a people that are at ease, quiet, and out of danger. “*Then they cry.*” The prodigal son was very high, and resolved never to return till brought low by pinching and nipping afflictions, then his father had some tidings of him. Hagar was proud in Abraham’s house, but humbled in the wilderness. Jonah was asleep in the ship, but awake and at prayer in the whale’s belly, Jonah ii. 1. Manasses lived in Jerusalem like a libertine, but when bound in chains at Babel, his heart was turned to the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12. Corporal diseases forced many under the gospel to come to Christ, whereas others that enjoyed bodily health would not acknowledge him. One would think that the Lord would abhor to hear those prayers that are made only out of the fear of danger, and not out of the love, reality, and sincerity of the heart. If there had not been so many miseries of blindness, lameness, palsies, fevers, etc., in the days of Christ, there would not have been that flocking after him.—*Daniel Pell.*

Verse 28.—“*Then they cry unto the Lord.*” “*Then,*” if ever: hence that speech of one, *Qui nescit orare, discat navigare*, He that cannot pray, let him go to sea, and there he will learn.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 28.—“*Then they cry,*” etc. Gods of the sea and skies (for what resource have I but prayer?) abstain from rending asunder the joints of our shattered bar.—*Ovid.*

Verse 29.—“*He maketh the storm a calm,*” etc. The image is this. Mankind before they are redeemed are like a ship in a stormy sea, agitated with passions, tossed up and down with cares, and so blown about with various temptations, that they are never at rest. This is their calmest state in the smiling day of smooth prosperity: but afflictions will come, and afflictions of sin and Satan, and the world will raise a violent storm, which all the wit and strength of man cannot escape. He will soon be swallowed up of the devouring waves; unless that same God who created the sea speak to it, “*Peace, be still.*” We are all in the same situation the apostles were, when they were alone in the evening in the midst of the sea, and the wind and the waves were contrary; against which they toiled rowing in vain, until Christ came to them walking upon the sea, and commanded the winds to cease and the waves to be still. Upon which there was a great calm; for they knew his voice, who had spoken them into being, and they obeyed. His word is almighty to compose and still the raging war of the most furious elements. And he is as almighty in the spiritual world, as he is in the natural. Into whatever soul he enters, he commands all the jarring passions to be still, and there is indeed a blessed calm. O may the Almighty Saviour speak thus unto you all, that you may sail on a smooth unruffled sea, until you arrive safe at the desired haven of eternal rest!—*William Romaine.*

Verse 29.—If the sailor can do nothing so wise and oftentimes indeed can do nothing else than trust in the Lord, so is it with us in the storms of life. Like the mariner, we must use lawful means for our protection; but what are means without the divine blessing?—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 30.—“*Desired haven.*” At such a time as this sweet April morning, indeed, a breakwater like this [of Portland] may seem of little value, when the waves of the ocean only just suffice to break its face into gems of changing brilliance, and to make whispering music; while vessels of all sizes, like those whose clustering masts we see yonder under the promontory, ride with perfect security in the open road. But in the fierce gales of November or March, when the shrieking blasts drive furiously up the Channel, and the huge mountain billows, green and white, open threatening graves on every side, how welcome would be a safe harbour, easy of access, and placed

at a part of the coast which else would be unsheltered for many leagues on either side! Blessed be God for the gift of his beloved Son, the only Harbour of Refuge for poor tempest-tossed sinners! We may think lightly of it now, but in the coming day of gloom and wrath, when "the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow," they only will escape who are sheltered there!—*Philip Henry Gosse*, in "*The Aquarium*," 1836.

Verse 31.—"Oh." This verse seems to include the ardent earnestness of the Psalmist's spirit, that seamen would be much in thankfulness, and much and frequent in praising of the Lord their deliverer out of all their distresses. "Oh," seems he to say, that I could put men upon this duty, it would be more comfortable to me, seems the Psalmist to say, to find such a principle in the hearts of those that are employed in the great waters, than any one thing in the world again whatsoever. "Oh" is but a little word consisting of two letters, but no word that ever man utters with his tongue comes with that force and affection from the heart as this doth. "Oh" is a word of the highest expression, a word when a man can say no more. This interjection oftentimes starts out of the heart upon a sudden from some unexpected conception, or admiration, or other.—*Daniel Pell*.

Verse 33.—"He turneth rivers into a wilderness," etc. God is the father of the rain. If he withholds that refreshment for a long time, all nature droops, and every green thing dies. The imagery is drawn from Palestine where there were but two annual rainy seasons, and if either of them was long deferred, the effect was frightful. The channels of considerable rivers were dried up.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 33.—"Rivers" . . . "Watersprings." A church enriched with the graces of heaven is compared by the prophets to a well-watered garden (Isa. lviii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 12), to the paradise of God, watered with its four fruitful rivers: for as everything useful and ornamental in the vegetable world is raised up by water, so is everything in the spiritual world raised up by the Holy Spirit.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 34.—"A fruitful land unto barrenness." Hereof Judæa is at this day a notable instance (besides many parts of Asia, and Africa, once very fruitful, now, since they become Mahometan, dry and desert). Judæa, saith one, hath now only some few parcels of rich ground found in it; that men may guess the goodness of the cloth by the fineness of the shreds.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 34.—"For the wickedness of them that dwell therein." When I meet with a querulous husbandman, he tells me of a churlish soil, of a wet seed-time, of a green winter, of an unkindly spring, of a lukewarm summer, of a blustering autumn; but I tell him of a displeased God, who will be sure to contrive and fetch all seasons and elements, to his own most wise drifts and purposes.—*Joseph Hall*.

Verse 34.—"For the wickedness." God locketh up the clouds, because we have shut up our mouths. The earth is grown hard as iron to us, because we have hardened our hearts against our miserable neighbours. The cries of the poor for bread are loud, because our cries against sin have been so low. Sicknesses run apace from house to house, and sweep away the poor unprepared inhabitants, because we sweep not out the sin that breedeth them.—*Richard Baxter*, 1615—1691.

Verse 35.—"Dry ground into watersprings." If God afflict, his justice findeth the cause of it in man; but if he do good to any man, it is of his own good pleasure, without any cause in man: therefore no reason is given here of this change, as was of the former, but simply, "He turneth dry ground into watersprings."—*David Dickson*.

Verse 40.—"He poureth contempt upon princes." Mighty potentates, who have been the terror and dread of the whole world, when once denuded of their dignity and power, have become the sport even of their own dependents.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 40.—"Princes." Persons of high rank are the most exempt, in ordinary times, from destitution and want, and misery must reach a great height when it invades them. No part of the world probably has witnessed so many and great reverses of this kind as the regions and countries of the East.—*William Walford*.

Verse 41.—"He setteth the poor on high from affliction." How high? Above the reach of the curse, which shall never touch him; above the power of Satan, which shall never ruin him; above the reigning influence of sin, which "shall not

have dominion over him"; above the possibility of being banished from his presence, for "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." This is the way God sets his people on high, instructing them in the mysteries of his word, and giving them to partake the joys that are contained therein.—*Joseph Irons, 1786—1852.*

Verse 42.—"The righteous shall see it." The word here rendered "righteous" is not what the Scripture commonly uses to signify righteous or justified persons; but it is another word, and conveys another idea. It signifies to direct, to set right; and the "righteous" here mentioned are they, who are directed in the right way, and walk, as Enoch did, with God in his way, and not in the way of the world. And these "shall see" the goodness and mercy of God's dealings with the fallen race of man. They shall have eyes to see the ways of his providence. The same grace which set them right, will manifest to them the reasonableness of the plan of redemption. They shall see and admire, and be thankful for the wonders of his redeeming love, which are recorded in this divine hymn.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 42.—"All iniquity shall stop her mouth." "Iniquity" is here personified, and denotes the iniquitous; but the abstract is more poetical. "Stop her mouth." *Tongue-tied, literally, mouth-shut*; which, perhaps, might be not improperly vernaculized.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 43.—"Whoso is wise," etc. Or as it may be read interrogatively, "Who is wise?" as in Jer. ix. 12; Hosea xiv. 9; that is, spiritually wise, wise unto salvation; who is made to know wisdom in the hidden part; for not such as are possessed of natural wisdom, or worldly-wise men, much less who are wise to do evil, are here meant, "And will observe these things;" the remarkable appearances of divine Providence to persons in distress; the various changes and vicissitudes in the world; the several afflictions of God's people, and their deliverances out of them; the wonderful works of God in nature, providence, and grace; these will be observed, taken notice of, laid up in the mind, and kept by such who are truly wise, who know how to make a right use and proper improvement of them. "Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord"; every one of the wise men; they will perceive the kindness of God unto men, in the several dispensations of his providence towards them, and his special love and kindness towards his own people, even in all their afflictions they will perceive this to be at the bottom of every mercy and blessing; they will understand more of the nature and excellency of it, and know more of the love of God and Christ, which passeth knowledge. Or, *the kindnesses of the Lord shall be understood*; that is, by wise men; so R. Moses in Aben Ezra renders the words.—*John Gill.*

Verse 43.—"Will observe these things," etc. Will carefully note and remark what is here said of the fall and recovery of mankind, of our state by nature and by grace. True wisdom consists in observing these two things, what we are in ourselves, and what we are in Christ; in a deep sense of our misery by sin, stirring us up to seek our remedy in the Redeemer. This is wisdom. And whosoever is thus wise unto salvation "shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord;" shall be able to apply what he understands of it to his own private use and benefit. The verb in the original rendered "shall understand," is in the conjugation called *Hithpael*, which signifies to act upon itself. Whosoever observes those things properly finds his own interest in them. He makes the understanding of them useful to himself. He does not study them as a science or theory, but as interesting points in which he is nearly concerned, and which he therefore tries to bring home for his own private advantage. When he hears of the mercies of the Lord Jesus recorded in this Psalm he desires to partake of them. When he hears of the great deliverances vouchsafed to sinful ruined man, he studies to have his own share in them. What is said of these persons who wandered out of the way in the wilderness, and fell into the bondage of sin, and were afflicted with its diseases, and troubled like a stormy sea, with its continual tempests; all this he knows was his own case, and therefore what follows of their flourishing state after Christ delivered them may be his also if he cry unto the Lord, as they did, for help. And he never ceases praying and seeking, until the blessed Jesus brings him to the haven of the church, where he would be. And if he find the church diminished and brought low, he is not discouraged; but relies on the promises of his God, who will set him on high out of the reach of public calamity, when he comes to destroy an infidel church. He observes what is said on this Psalm

concerning those things ; and he knows it to be true, by his own experience. And therefore the lovingkindness of the Lord here recorded is to him a subject of exceeding great joy, because he has tasted of it. Whoso is wise will bring his knowledge of this Psalm home to his own heart, and he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, he shall be able to apply what he understands to his own benefit, and shall therefore be continually praising the Lord for his goodness, and declaring the wonders which he hath done for the salvation of men.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 43.—“*Observe these things.*” “*To observe*, signifieth not only with our eyes to behold it ; but so to stir up our minds to the consideration of a thing, that one may grow the better by it,” saith a grave author. Now in this notion of it, how few are they that observe “*these things*” ? . . .

If you would by observing the providence of God understand his lovingkindness, and gain a spiritual wisdom, *let your eye affect your heart*. Mollerus telleth us, such an observation is here intended *unde ad pietatem exuscitemur, ut inde meliores evadamus*, “as will quicken us to piety, and help to make us better.” There are many careless observers of providence, who indeed see *events* rather than providences ; they see much that comes to pass in the world, but consider nothing of God in them. . . . They do by the book of providence, as Augustine complained of himself, that in his unregenerate state he did by the book of Scripture ; he rather brought to it *discutiendi acumen*, than *discendi pietatem*. So men bring to the great works of God rather an acute eye and wit to find out the immediate causes, and reasons natural and political, than a *trembling, humble heart*, that they might learn by them more to acknowledge, *love, fear, adore*, and revere the great and mighty God whose works these are. Let not yours be such an observation ; but let your eye, beholding God in his providential dispensations, affect your hearts with that adoration and veneration, that love and fear of the great and mighty God, which such works of God do call to you for.—*John Collinges* (1623—1690), in “*Several Discourses concerning the actual Providence of God.*”

Verse 43.—“*Observe these things.*” These mighty doings of our Saviour and our God in delivering his feeble creatures from the trackless wilderness of error,—from the noisome chain of carnal lust,—from the deadly sickness of a corrupt nature,—and from the wild tempest of earthly passion, deserve the thoughtful joy of all who would be faithful servants of their Lord. The mouth of unbelief and the excuses of iniquity are stopped by the sight of the marvels of that mercy which endureth for ever. “The accuser of the brethren” is silenced and cast down. The truly wise will ponder these things, for in the knowledge of them is true wisdom ; and so pondering, there shall open before them, ever plainer, fuller, clearer, brighter, the revelation of that mighty love of their eternal Father which surpasses all understanding, and is vaster than all thought.—“*Plain Commentary.*”

Verse 43.—How great a volume might be wrote, *de observandis Providentiæ*, concerning the observable things of Divine Providence. I have seen a picture (one of those you call kitchen-pieces) concerning which it hath been proposed to me, that for so many hours I should view it as curiously as I could ; yet the proposer would for any wager undertake to show me something in it which I did not observe. Truly Providence is such a thing, I can never look upon it, I can never take the motions of it into my thoughts, but some new observation tendereth itself into my thoughts. I must turn my eyes from this wonderful work, for I see they will not be satisfied with seeing, my mind will never be filled with observation.—*John Collinges*.

Verse 43.—When we speak of the love and favour of God to his people, we are prone to understand by it nothing but pleasing providences, grateful to our senses : now the “*lovingkindness*” of God is not only seen in pleasing dispensations, but in adverse providences also : “Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth” : “all things are yours,” saith the apostle. This knowledge must be gained by *observation*.—*John Collinges*.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is like the Interpreter’s house in Bunyan’s “*Pilgrim’s Progress.*” Pilgrim is told that he will there see excellent and profitable things. The same promise is given in the introduction to this Psalm, where we have, I. The source of these excellent things—the goodness and all-enduring mercy of God ;

mercy not exhausted by the unworthiness of its objects. II. Their acknowledgment, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Men will not own it, but the redeemed of the Lord will. It is the experience of such that is pictorially represented in this Psalm. Let every one speak of God as he finds. Is he good when he takes away as well as when he gives? "The redeemed of the Lord will say so." Is he merciful when he frowns as well as when he smiles? "The redeemed of the Lord say so." Does he make all things work together for good to them that love him? "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." III. Their end. Praise and thanksgiving: "Oh give," etc. 1, For general mercies; 2, for redemption; 3, for special deliverances.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 2.—The duty of praise is universal, the real presentation of it remains with the redeemed. Particular redemption should lead to special praise, special testimony to truth and special faith in God: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Verse 3.—The ingathering of the chosen. I. All wandered. II. Their ways different. III. All observed of the Lord. IV. All brought to Jesus as to one centre. Note ways, and times of gathering.

Verse 4.—Wandering Jews. Illustrate the roaming of a mind in search of truth, peace, love, purity, etc.

Verses 4—10.—The words contain a brief history of man's fall and misery and of his restoration by Jesus Christ; which are described under these particulars. I. The lost state of men by nature. II. They are brought to a right sense of it, and cry to the Lord Jesus for deliverance. III. He hears them and delivers them out of all their distresses. IV. The tribute of thanks due to him for this great deliverance.—*W. Romaine.*

Verse 5.—Spiritual hunger the cause of faintness. Necessity of feeding the soul.

Verse 7.—Divine grace stimulating our exertions. "He led them forth . . . that they might go."

Verse 8.—He who has enjoyed God's help should mark, 1, in what distress he has been; 2, how he has called to God; 3, how God has helped him; 4, what thanks he has returned; and, 5, what thanks he is yet bound to render.—*Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 9.—A great general fact. The condition, the benefactor, the blessing—"goodness," the result—"satisfieth." Then the further result of praise as seen in verse 8.

Verses 12, 13.—I. The convicted soul's abject condition—humbled, exhausted, prostrate, deserted. II. His speedy deliverance. Cried, cried while in trouble, unto the Lord, he saved, out of their distresses.

Verse 13.—Man's work and God's work. *They* cried and *he* saved.

Verse 14.—God gives light, life, liberty.

Verse 17, etc.—A Rescue from Death, with a Return of Praise.—*R. Sibbes' Works*, Vol. VI.; *Nichol's* edition.

Verses 17—21.—I. The distress of the sick. II. Their cure by the Great Physician. III. Their grateful behaviour to him.—*W. Romaine.*

Verses 17—22.—A Visit to Christ's Hospital. I. The names and characters of the patients—"fools"; all sinners are fools. II. The cause of their pains and afflictions—"because of their transgressions," etc. III. The progress of the disease—"their soul abhorreth all manner of meat"; and, "they draw near unto the gates of death." IV. The interposition of the physician—"then they cry," etc., ver. 19, 20. 1, Note, when the physician comes in—when "they cry," etc. 2, The kind of prayer—a cry. 3, What the physician did—"saved," "healed," "delivered." 4, How this was effected—"He sent his word," etc. V. The consequent conduct of those who were healed; they praised God for his goodness. They added sacrifice to this praise, verse 22. In addition to sacrifice the healed ones began to offer songs—"sacrifice of thanksgiving." They added a declaration of joy—"Let them declare his works with rejoicing."

Verse 18.—The sin-sick soul without appetite for invitations, encouragements, or promises, however presented. Milk too simple, strong meat too heavy, wine too heating, manna too light, etc.

Verse 18.—Teacheth us, that even appetite to our meat is a good gift of the Lord; also that when men are in greatest extremity, then is God most commonly nigh unto them.—*T. Wilcocks.*

Verse 20.—Recovery from sickness must be ascribed to the Lord, and gratitude should flow forth because of it. But the text describes spiritual and mental sickness.

Notice, I. The Patient in his extremity. 1. He is a fool : by nature inclined to evil. 2. He has played the fool (see verse 17), "transgression," "iniquities." 3. He now has lost all appetite and is past all cure. 4. He is at death's door. 5. But he has begun to pray. II. The Cure in its simplicity. 1. Christ the Word is the essential cure. He heals the guilt, habit, depression, and evil results of sin. For every form of malady Christ has healing ; hence preachers should preach him much, and all meditate much upon him. 2. The word in the Book is the instrumental cure : its teachings, doctrines, precepts, promises, encouragements, invitations, examples. 3. The word of the Lord by the Holy Spirit is the applying cure. He leads us to believe. He is to be sought by the sick soul. He is to be relied upon by those who would bring others to the Great Physician.

Verse 26.—The ups and downs of a convicted sinner's experience.

Verse 27.—The awakened sinner staggered and nonplussed.

Verses 33, 34.—The scene which here opens with a landscape of beauty and fertility is suddenly changed into a dry and barren wilderness. The rivers are dried up, the springs cease to flow among the hills, and the verdant fields are scorched and bare. The reason assigned for this is "the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This picture needs no interpretation to the people of God. It is precisely what happens within them when they have fallen into sin.—*G. R.*

Verse 34.—The curse, cause, and cure of barrenness in a church.

Verse 35.—Hope for decayed churches lies in God ; he can work a marvellous change, he does do it—"turneth" : he will do it when the cause of barrenness is removed by repentance.

Verses 35—38. Here the scene again changes. The springs again gush forth, calm lakes again repose in the midst of foliage and flowers, the hills are clothed with luxuriant vines, and the fields are covered with corn ; plenty abounds both in town and country, and men and cattle increase. This picture, too, has its counterpart in experimental godliness. "Instead of the thorn shall come up," etc., "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them," etc. The one scene precedes prayer, the other follows it. A desolate wilderness before, the garden of Eden behind.—*G. R.*

Verses 39—41.—The scene again is reversed. There is a change again from freedom to oppression ; from plenty to want ; from honour to contempt. Then a revival again as suddenly appears. The poor and afflicted are lifted up, and the bereaved have "families like a flock." Such are the changeful scenes through which the people of God are led ; and such the experience by which they are made meet for the pure, perfect, and perpetual joys of heaven.—*G. R.*

Verses 42, 43.—Such surprising turns are of use, 1. For the solacing of saints ; they observe these dispensations with pleasure : "The righteous shall see it, and rejoice," in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifestation of his dominion over the children of men. 2. For the silencing of sinners : "all iniquity shall stop her mouth" ; i.e. it shall be a full conviction of the folly of those that deny the divine presence. 3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness : "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things"—these various dispensations of divine providence, "even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 43.—The best observation and the noblest understanding.