

## PSALM CVIII.

**TITLE AND SUBJECT.**—A Song or Psalm of David,—*To be sung jubilantly as a national hymn, or solemnly as a sacred Psalm.* We cannot find it in our heart to dismiss this Psalm by merely referring the reader first to Psalm lvii. 7—11 and then to Psalm lx. 5—12, though it will be at once seen that those two portions of Scripture are almost identical with the verses before us. It is true that most of the commentators have done so, and we are not so presumptuous as to dispute their wisdom; but we hold for ourselves that the words would not have been repeated if there had not been an object for so doing, and that this object could not have been answered if every hearer of it had said, "Ah, we had that before, and therefore we need not meditate upon it again." The Holy Spirit is not so short of expressions that he needs to repeat himself, and the repetition cannot be meant merely to fill the book: there must be some intention in the arrangement of two former divine utterances in a new connection; whether we can discover that intent is another matter. It is at least ours to endeavour to do so, and we may expect divine assistance therein.

We have before us **THE WARRIOR'S MORNING SONG**, with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day. As an old Prussian officer was wont in prayer to invoke the aid of "his Majesty's August Ally," so does David appeal to his God and set up his banner in Jehovah's name.

**DIVISION.**—First we have an utterance dictated by the spirit of praise, verses 1—5; then a second deliverance evoked by the spirit of believing prayer, verses 6—12; and then a final word of resolve (verse 13), as the warrior hears the war-trumpet summoning him to join battle immediately, and therefore marches with his fellow soldiers at once to the fray.

### EXPOSITION.

**O** GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp; I *myself* will awake early.

3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens: and thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

These five verses are found in Psalm lvii. 7—11 almost verbatim: the only important alteration being the use of the great name of JEHOVAH in verse 3 instead of Adonai in lvii. 9. This the English reader will only be able to perceive by the use of capitals in the present Psalm and not in Psalm lvii. There are other inconsiderable alterations, but the chief point of difference probably lies in the *position* of the verses. In lvii. these notes of praise follow prayer and grow out of it; but in this case the Psalmist begins at once to sing and give praise, and afterwards prays to God in a remarkably confident manner, so that he seems rather to seize the blessing than to entreat for it. Sometimes we must climb to praise by the ladder of prayer, and at other times we must bless God for the past in order to be able in faith to plead for the present and the future. By the aid of God's Spirit we can both pray ourselves up to praise, or praise the Lord till we get into a fit frame for prayer. In Psalm lvii. these words are a song in the cave of Adullam, and are the result of faith which is beginning its battles amid domestic enemies of the most malicious kind: but here they express the continued resolve and praise of a man who has already weathered many a campaign, has overcome all home conflicts, and is looking forward to conquests far and wide. The passage served as a fine close for one Psalm, and it makes an equally noteworthy opening for another. We cannot too often with fixed heart resolve to magnify the Lord; nor need we ever hesitate to use the same words in drawing near to God, for the Lord who cannot endure vain repetitions is equally

weariness of vain variations. Some expressions are so admirable that they ought to be used again : who would throw away a cup because he drank from it before ? God should be served with the best words, and when we have them they are surely good enough to be used twice. To use the same words continually and never utter a new song would show great slothfulness, and would lead to dead formalism, but we need not regard novelty of language as at all essential to devotion, nor strain after it as an urgent necessity. It may be that our heavenly Father would here teach us that if we are unable to find a great variety of suitable expressions in devotion, we need not in the slightest degree distress ourselves, but may either pray or praise, " using the same words."

1. "*O God, my heart is fixed.*" Though I have many wars to disturb me, and many cares to toss me to and fro, yet I am settled in one mind and cannot be driven from it. My heart has taken hold and abides in one resolve. Thy grace has overcome the fickleness of nature, and I am now in a resolute and determined frame of mind. "*I will sing and give praise.*" Both with voice and music will I extol thee—" I will sing and play," as some read it. Even though I have to shout in the battle I will also sing in my soul, and if my fingers must needs be engaged with the bow, yet shall they also touch the ten-stringed instrument and show forth thy praise. "*Even with my glory*"—with my intellect, my tongue, my poetic faculty, my musical skill, or whatever else causes me to be renowned, and confers honour upon me. It is my glory to be able to speak and not to be a dumb animal, therefore my voice shall show forth thy praise ; it is my glory to know God and not to be a heathen, and therefore my instructed intellect shall adore thee ; it is my glory to be a saint and no more a rebel, therefore the grace I have received shall bless thee ; it is my glory to be immortal and not a mere brute which perisheth, therefore my inmost life shall celebrate thy majesty. When he says *I will*, he supposes that there might be some temptation to refrain, but this he puts on one side, and with fixed heart prepares himself for the joyful engagement. He who sings with a fixed heart is likely to sing on, and all the while to sing well.

2. "*Awake, psaltery and harp.*" As if he could not be content with voice alone, but must use the well-tuned strings, and communicate to them something of his own liveliness. Strings are wonderful things when some men play upon them, they seem to become sympathetic and incorporated with the minstrel, as if his very soul were imparted to them and thrilled through them. Only when a thoroughly enraptured soul speaks in the instrument can music be acceptable with God : as mere musical sound the Lord can have no pleasure therein, he is only pleased with the thought and feeling which are thus expressed. When a man has musical gift, he should regard it as too lovely a power to be enlisted in the cause of sin. Well did Charles Wesley say :—

" If well I know the tuneful art  
To captivate a human heart,  
The glory, Lord, be thine,  
A servant of thy blessed will,  
I here devote my utmost skill  
To sound the praise divine.

" Thine own musician, Lord, inspire,  
And let my consecrated lyre  
Repeat the Psalmist's part.  
His Son and Thine reveal in me,  
And fill with sacred melody  
The fibres of my heart."

" *I myself will awake early.*" I will call up the dawn. The best and brightest hours of the day shall find me heartily aroused to bless my God. Some singers had need to awake, for they sing in drawling tones, as if they were half asleep ; the tune drags wearily along, there is no feeling or sentiment in the singing, but the listener hears only a dull mechanical sound, as if the choir ground out the notes from a worn-out barrel-organ. Oh, choristers, wake up, for this is not a work for dreamers, but such as requires your best powers in their liveliest condition. In all worship this should be the personal resolve of each worshipper : "*I myself will awake.*"

3. "*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.*" Whoever may come to hear me, devout or profane, believer or heathen, civilized or barbarian, I shall not cease

my music. David seemed inspired to foresee that his Psalms would be sung in every land, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. His heart was large, he would have the whole race of man listen to his joy in God, and lo, he has his desire, for his psalmody is cosmopolitan; no poet is so universally known as he. He had but one theme, he sang Jehovah and none beside, and his work being thus made of gold, silver, and precious stones, has endured the fiery ordeal of time, and was never more prized than at this day. Happy man, to have thus made his choice to be the Lord's musician, he retains his office as the Poet Laureate of the kingdom of heaven, and shall retain it till the crack of doom. "*And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.*" This is written, not only to complete the parallelism of the verse, but to reaffirm his fixed resolve. He would march to battle praising Jehovah, and when he had conquered he would make the captured cities ring with Jehovah's praises. He would carry his religion with him wherever he pushed his conquests, and the vanquished should not hear the praises of David, but the glories of the Lord of Hosts. Would to God that wherever professing Christians travel they would carry the praises of the Lord with them! It is to be feared that some leave their religion when they leave their homes. Nations and peoples would soon know the gospel of Jesus if every Christian traveller were as intensely devout as the Psalmist. Alas, it is to be feared that the Lord's name is profaned rather than honoured among the heathen by many who are named by the name of Christ.

4. "*For thy mercy is great above the heavens,*" and therefore there must be no limit of time, or place, or people, when that mercy is to be extolled. As the heavens over-arch the whole earth, and from above mercy pours down upon men, so shalt thou be praised everywhere beneath the sky. Mercy is greater than the mountains, though they pierce the clouds; earth cannot hold it all, it is so vast, so boundless, so exceeding high that the heavens themselves are over-topped thereby. "*And thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.*" As far as we can see we behold thy truth and faithfulness, and there is much beyond which lies shrouded in cloud, but we are sure that it is all mercy, though it be far above and out of our sight. Therefore shall the song be lifted high and the Psalm shall peal forth without stint of far-resounding music. Here is ample space for the loudest chorus, and a subject which deserves thunders of praise.

5. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.*" Let thy praise be according to the greatness of thy mercy. Ah, if we were to measure our devotion thus, with what ardour should we sing! The whole earth with its overhanging dome would seem too scant an orchestra, and all the faculties of all mankind too little for the hallelujah. Angels would be called in to aid us, and surely they would come. They will come in that day when the whole earth shall be filled with the praises of Jehovah. We long for the time when God shall be universally worshipped, and his glory in the gospel shall be everywhere made known. This is a truly missionary prayer. David had none of the exclusiveness of the modern Jew or the narrow-heartedness of some nominal Christians. For God's sake, that his glory might be everywhere revealed, he longed to see heaven and earth full of the divine praise. Amen, so let it be.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8 Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

9 Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

11 *Will* not thou, O God, *who* hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

12 Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man.

Now prayer follows upon praise, and derives strength of faith and holy boldness therefrom. It is frequently best to begin worship with a hymn, and then to bring forth our vials full of odours after the harps have commenced their sweeter sounds.

6. "*That thy beloved may be delivered : save with thy right hand, and answer me.*" Let my prayer avail for all the beloved ones. Sometimes a nation seems to hang upon the petitions of one man. With what ardour should such an one pour out his soul! David does so here. It is easy praying for the Lord's beloved, for we feel sure of a favourable answer, since the Lord's heart is already set upon doing them good : yet it is solemn work to plead when we feel that the condition of a whole beloved nation depends upon what the Lord means to do with us whom he has placed in a representative position. "Answer me, that thy many beloved ones may be delivered" : it is an urgent prayer. David felt that the case demanded the *right hand* of God,—his wisest, speediest, and most efficient interposition, and he feels sure of obtaining it for himself, since his cause involved the safety of the chosen people. Will the Lord fail to use his right hand of power on behalf of those whom he has set at his right hand of favour? Shall not the beloved be delivered by him who loves them? When our suit is not a selfish one, but is bound up with the cause of God, we may be very bold about it.

7. "*God has spoken in his holiness.*" Aforetime the Lord had made large promises to David, and these his holiness had guaranteed. The divine attributes were pledged to give the son of Jesse great blessings ; there was no fear that the covenant God would run back from his plighted word. "*I will rejoice.*" If God has spoken we may well be glad : the very fact of a divine revelation is a joy. If the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have spoken to us as he has done. But what God has spoken is a still further reason for gladness, for he has declared "the sure mercies of David," and promised to establish his seed upon his throne, and to subdue all his enemies. David greatly rejoiced after the Lord had spoken to him by the mouth of Nathan. He sat before the Lord in a wonder of joy. See 1 Chronicles xvii., and note that in the next chapter David began to act vigorously against his enemies, even as in this Psalm he vows to do. "*I will divide Shechem.*" Home conquers come first. Foes must be dislodged from Israel's territory, and lands properly settled and managed. "*And mele out the valley of Succoth.*" On the other side Jordan as well as on this the land must be put in order, and secured against all wandering marauders. Some rejoicing leads to inaction, but not that which is grounded upon a lively faith in the promise of God. See how David prays, as if he had the blessing already, and could share it among his men : this comes of having sung so heartily unto the Lord his helper. See how he resolves on action, like a man whose prayers are only a part of his life, and vital portions of his action.

8. "*Gilead is mine.*" Thankful hearts dwell upon the gifts which the Lord has given them, and think it no task to mention them one by one. "*Manasseh is mine.*" I have it already, and it is to me the token and assurance that the rest of the promised heritage will also come into my possession in due time. If we gratefully acknowledge what we have we shall be in better heart for obtaining that which as yet we have not received. He who gives us Gilead and Manasseh will not fail to put the rest of the promised territory into our hands. "*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*" This tribe furnished David with more than twenty thousand "mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers" : the faithful loyalty of this band was, no doubt, a proof that the rest of the tribe were with him, and so he regarded them as the helmet of the state, the guard of his royal crown. "*Judah is my lawgiver.*" There had he seated the government and chief courts of justice. No other tribe could lawfully govern but Judah : till Shiloh came the divine decree fixed the legal power in that state. To us also there is no lawgiver but our Lord who sprang out of Judah ; and whenever Rome, or Canterbury, or any other power shall attempt to set up laws and ordinances for the church, we have but one reply—"Judah is my lawgiver." Thus the royal Psalmist rejoiced because his own land had been cleansed of intruders, and a regular government had been set up, and guarded by an ample force, and in all this he found encouragement to plead for victory over his foreign foes. Even thus do we plead with the Lord that as in one land and another Christ's holy gospel has been set up and maintained, so also in other lands the power of his sceptre of grace may be owned till the whole earth shall bow before him, and the Edom of Antichrist shall be crushed beneath his feet.

9. "*Moab is my washpot.*" This nation had shown no friendly spirit to the Israelites, but had continually viewed them as a detested rival, therefore they were to be subdued and made subject to David's throne. He claims by faith the victory, and regards his powerful enemy with contempt. Nor was he disappointed, for "the Moabites became David's servants and brought him gifts" (2 Sam. viii. 2).

As men wash their feet after a long journey, and so are revived, so vanquished difficulties serve to refresh us: we use Moab for a washpot. "*Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" It shall be as the floor upon which the bather throws his sandals, it shall lie beneath his foot, subject to his will and altogether his own. Edom was proud, but David throws his slipper at it; its capital was high, but he casts his sandal over it; it was strong, but he hurls his shoe at it as the gage of battle. He had not entered yet into its rock-built fortresses, but since the Lord was with him he felt sure that he would do so. Under the leadership of the Almighty, he felt so secure of conquering even fierce Edom itself that he looks upon it as a mere slave, over which he could exult with impunity. We ought never to fear those who are defending the wrong side, for since God is not with them their wisdom is folly, their strength is weakness, and their glory is their shame. We think too much of God's foes and talk of them with too much respect. Who is this Pope of Rome? His Holiness? Call him not so, but call him His Blasphemy! His Profanity! His Impudence! What are he and his cardinals, and his legates, but the image and incarnation of Antichrist, to be in due time cast with the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire? "*Over Philistia will I triumph.*" David had done so in his youth, and he is all the more sure of doing it again. We read that "David smote the Philistines and subdued them" (2 Sam. viii. 1), even as he had smitten Edom and filled it with his garrisons. The enemies with whom we battled in our youth are yet alive, and we shall have more brushes with them before we die, but, blessed be God, we are by no means dismayed at the prospect, for we expect to triumph over them even more easily than aforesaid.

Thy right hand shall thy people aid;  
Thy faithful promise makes us strong;  
We will Philistia's land invade,  
And over Edom chant the song.

Through thee we shall most valiant prove,  
And tread the foe beneath our feet;  
Through thee our faith shall hills remove,  
And small as chaff the mountains beat.

10. Faith leads on to strong desire for the realisation of the promise, and hence the practical question, "*Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?*" The difficulty is plainly perceived. Petra is strong and hard to enter: the Psalmist warrior knows that he cannot enter the city by his own power, and he therefore asks who is to help him. He asks of the right person, even of his Lord, who has all men at his beck, and can say to this man, "show my servant the road," and he will show it, or to this band, "cut your way into the rock city," and they will assuredly do it. Of Edom it is written by Obadiah, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, though wilt I bring thee down, saith the Lord." David looked for his conquest to Jehovah's infinite power, and he looked not in vain.

11. "*Will not thou, O God, who hast cast us off?*" This is grand faith which can trust the Lord even when he seems to have cast us off. Some can barely trust him when he pampers them, and yet David relied upon him when Israel seemed under a cloud and the Lord had hidden his face. O for more of this real and living faith. The casting off will not last long when faith so gloriously keeps her hold. None but the elect of God who have obtained "like precious faith" can sing—

"Now thou array'st thine awful face  
In angry frowns, without a smile;  
We, through the cloud, believe thy grace,  
Secure of thy compassion still."

"*And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?*" Canst thou for ever forsake thine own and leave thy people to be overthrown by thine enemies? The sweet singer is sure that Edom shall be captured, because he cannot and will not believe that God will refrain from going forth with the armies of his chosen people. When we ask ourselves, "Who will be the means of our obtaining a promised blessing?" we need not be discouraged if we perceive no secondary agent, for we may then

fall back upon the great Promiser himself, and believe that he himself will perform his word unto us. If no one else will lead us into Edom, the Lord himself will do it, if he has promised it. Or if there must be visible instruments he will use *our hosts*, feeble as they are. We need not that any new agency should be created, God can strengthen our present hosts and enable them to do all that is needed; all that is wanted even for the conquest of a world is that the Lord go forth with such forces as we already have. He can bring us into the strong city even by such weak weapons as we wield to-day.

12. "*Give us help from trouble : for vain is the help of man.*" This prayer has often fallen from the lips of men who have been bitterly disappointed by their fellows, and it has also been poured out unto the Lord in the presence of some gigantic labour in which mortal power is evidently of no avail. Edom cannot be entered by any human power, yet from its fastnesses the robber bands come rushing down; therefore, O Lord, do thou interpose and give thy people deliverance. Help divine is expected because help human is of no avail. We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our confidence in man is altogether gone. When the help of man is vain, we shall not find it vain to seek the help of God.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly : for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

13. God's help shall inspire us to help ourselves. Faith is neither a coward nor a sluggard : she knows that God is with her, and therefore she does valiantly ; she knows that he will tread down her enemies, and therefore she arises to tread them down in his name. Where praise and prayer have preceded the battle, we may expect to see heroic deeds and decisive victories. "*Through God*" is our secret support ; from that source we draw all our courage, wisdom, and strength. "*We shall do valiantly.*" This is the public outflow from that secret source : our inward and spiritual faith proves itself by outward and valorous deeds. "*He shall tread down our enemies.*" They shall fall before him, and as they lie prostrate he shall march over them, and all the hosts of his people with him. This is a prophecy. It was fulfilled to David, but it remains true to the Son of David and all who are on his side. The church shall yet arouse herself to praise her God with all her heart, and then with songs and hosannas she will advance to the great battle ; her foes shall be overthrown and utterly crushed by the power of her God, and the Lord's glory shall be above all the earth. Send it in our time, we beseech thee, O Lord.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—Note the different application of the words as they are used in Psalms lvii. and lx., and as they are employed in Psalm cviii. In the former they were prophetic of prosperity yet to come, and consolatory in the expectation of approaching troubles. In the latter, they are eucharistic for mercies already received, and descriptive of the glorious things which God has prepared for his Son and for Israel his people. The Psalm, thus interpreted, announces that Messiah's travail is ended, when the troubles of Israel are brought to a close. David's Son and David's Lord has taken to himself his great power and begun to reign, and sitting upon the throne of glory, he sings this hymn, verses 1 to 6. But with the glory of the Redeemer is associated also the restoration, to favour and happiness, of Israel, his long cast off, but not forgotten people. The setting up of King Messiah upon the holy hill of Zion is graphically described, and all Jehovah's promises are realised in the amplest measure. Messiah is described as a conqueror when the battle is won, and kings and nations, prostrate at his feet, await his sentence and judgment upon them. "I will rejoice. I will divide and portion out Shechem and the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and I give it to the children of Gad and Reuben. And Manasseh also is mine. Ephraim is my strength in war : my horn of defence. Judah is my king." Thus in gracious and flattering words, the victor addresses his confederates and subjects. In a different strain, a strain of sarcasm and contempt, he announces his pleasure respecting his vanquished enemies. "Moab I will use as a vessel to wash my feet in. Over proud Edom I will cast my shoe, as an angry master to a slave

ministering to him. Philistia follow my chariot, and shout forth my triumph." But what is to be understood of the next passage, verse 10, "Who will bring me into Edom?" Edom is already treated as a vassal state, verse 9. When all the nations become the kingdoms of Messiah, what is this Edom that is to be amongst his latest triumphs? One passage only seems to bear upon it, Isaiah lxiii. 1, and from this we learn that it is from Edom as the last scene of his vengeance, the conquering Messiah will come forth, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." This Edom is therefore named with anxiety, because after its overthrow, Messiah will shine out "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 13—16.—*R. H. Ryland.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm hath two parts: in the former is the thanksgiving of faith, and promise of praise, in hope of obtaining all which the church is here to pray for (ver. 1—5). In the latter part is the prayer for preservation of the church, ver. 6, with confidence to be heard and helped, whatsoever impediment appear, against all who stand out against Christ's kingdom, whether within the visible church (ver. 7, 8), or whether without, such as are professed enemies unto it (ver. 9, 10, 11), which prayer is followed forth (ver. 12), and comfortably closed with assurance of the Church's victory by the assistance of God, ver. 13.—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 1.*—"O God, my heart is fixed." The wheels of a chariot revolve, but the axletree turns not; the sails of a mill move with the wind, but the mill itself moves not; the earth is carried round its orbit, but its centre is fixed. So should a Christian be able, amidst changing scenes and changing fortunes, to say, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed."—*G. S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings," 1862.*

*Verse 1.*—"My heart is fixed." The prophet saith his heart was ready, so the old translation hath it; the new translation, "My heart is fixed." The word in the Hebrew signifies, first, ready, or prepared. Then, secondly, it signifies fixed. We first fit, prepare a thing, sharpen it, before we drive it into the ground, and then drive it in and fix it. So ask seriously and often, that thy heart may be ready, and may also be fixed, and this by a habit which brings readiness and fixedness, as in other holy duties, so in that of meditation.—*Nathanael Ranew, in "Solitude improved by Divine Meditation," 1670.*

*Verse 1.*—Meditation is a fixed duty. It is not a cursory work. Man's thoughts naturally labour with a great inconsistency; but meditation chains them, and fastens them upon some spiritual object. The soul when it meditates lays a command on itself, that the thoughts which are otherwise flitting and feathery should fix upon its object; and so this duty is very advantageous. As we know a garden which is watered with sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruit than when it is refreshed with a constant stream; so when our thoughts are sometimes on good things, and then run off; when they only take a glance of a holy object, and then flit away, there is not so much fruit brought into the soul. In meditation, then, there must be a fixing of the heart upon the object, a steeping the thoughts, as holy David: "O God, my heart is fixed." We must view the holy object presented by meditation, as a limner who views some curious piece, and carefully heeds every shade, every line and colour; as the Virgin Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. In deed, meditation is not only the busying the thoughts, but the centering of them; not only the employing of them, but the staking them down upon some spiritual affair. When the soul, meditating upon something divine, saith as the disciples in the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 4), "It is good to be here."—*John Wells, in the "Practical Sabbatarian," 1668.*

*Verse 1.*—"With my glory." The parallel passage in the Prayer-book version is, "with the best member I have." The tongue, being considered the best member, is here described as the glory of man—as that which tends to elevate him in the scale of creation; and therefore the pious man resolves to employ his speech in giving utterance to the goodness of God. God is glorified by the praise of his redeemed, and the instrument whereby it is effected is man's glory.—*The Quiver.*

*Verses 1, 2.*—As a man first tuneth his instrument, and then playeth on it: so should the holy servant of God first labour to bring his spirit, heart, and affections into a solid and settled frame for worship, and then go to work; "My heart is fixed," or prepared firmly, "I will sing and give praise." As the glory of man above the brute creatures, is that from a reasonable mind he can express what is his will by his tongue: so the glory of saints above other men, is to have a tongue directed by the heart, for expressing of God's praise: "I will sing and give praise, even with my glory." Under typical terms we are taught to make use of all sanctified

means for stirring of us up into God's service : for this the Psalmist intendeth, when he saith, "*Awake psaltery and harp.*" We ourselves must first be stirred up to make right use of the means, before the means can be fit to stir us up : therefore saith he, "*I myself will awake right early.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1—5.—After David has professed a purpose of praising God (verses 1, 2, 3) he tells you, next, the proportion that is between the attributes which he praiseth in God, and his praise of him. The greatness of the attributes "*mercy and truth*" we have in verse 4, "*Thy truth reaches unto the clouds*"; and there is an answerable greatness in his praises of God for them, verse 5 : "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens : and thy glory above all the earth.*" He wisheth and endeavoureth to exalt him as high in his praises as he is in himself ; to exalt him above the earth, above the heaven, and the clouds.—*Henry Jeanes.*

Verse 2.—With reference to this passage the Talmud says, "A cithern used to hang above David's bed ; and when midnight came the north wind blew among the strings, so that they sounded of themselves ; and forthwith he arose and busied himself with the Tóra until the pillar of the dawn ascended." Rashi observes, "The dawn awakes the other kings ; but I, said David, will awake the dawn."—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 2.—When the Hebrew captives were sitting in sorrow "by the waters of Babylon," they wept, and hung their harps on the willows, and could not be prevailed upon by the conquerors to sing "the songs of Zion in that land" (Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 4). But when "the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with singing" (cxxvi. 1, 2). Then the "*psaltery and harp*" of former generations "*awoke*" (v. 2). The old songs revived on their lips, and the melodies of David acquired new charms for them.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 2.—"*Awake early.*"

"Yet never sleep the sun up ; prayer should  
Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours  
'Twillt heaven and us ; the manna was not good  
After sun-rising, for day sullies flowers."

*Henry Vaughan, 1621—1695.*

Verse 4.—"*For thy mercy is great,*" etc. His mercy is great—that mercy sung of lately (Ps. cvii. 1 and 43). It is "*from above the heavens*" (שמים מעל); *i.e.*, coming down to us as do drops of a fertilizing shower ; even as the "*Peace on earth,*" of Luke ii. 14, was first "*peace in heaven*" (Luke xix. 38).—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 4.—The mercy of God was then great *above* the heavens, when the God-man, Christ Jesus, was raised to the highest heavens, and the truth of our salvation established on the very throne of God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verses 4, 5.—There is more stuff and substance of good in the Lord's promises than the sharpest-sighted saint did or can perceive ; for when we have followed the promise, to find out all the truth which is in it, we meet with a cloud of unsearchable riches, and are forced to leave it there ; for so much is included in this, "*Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.*" The height of our praising of God is to put the work of praising God upon himself, and to point him out unto others as going about the magnifying of his own name, and to be glad for it, as here ; "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; and thy glory above all the earth.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verses 4, 5, 6.—There is great confidence here, and, as ever, mercy to the soul which knows itself and comes before truth. But, then, for its own deliverance and blessing, it looks to the exalting of God. This shows it must be a holy, righteous exalting. "*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens : and thy glory above all the earth ; that thy beloved may be delivered.*" It is a blessed thought, and this is what faith has to lay hold of now, even in the time of trial, that our blessing and God's glory are one, only we must put his glory first.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy beloved may be delivered,*" etc. The church is the Lord's "*beloved,*" or the incorporation, more loved than anything else in the world, therefore here called, "*Thy beloved.*" Because the church is God's beloved, the care of it should be most in our mind, and the love of the preservation of it should draw forth our prayer most in favour of it. "*That thy beloved may be delivered : save.*"—*David Dickson.*



*Verse 6.*—God being thus exalted according to the majesty of his truth, the special plea of the Spirit of Jesus, founded on the mercy which has throned itself above the heavens, is next urged (verse 6) on behalf of the nation of his ancient love. “*That thy beloved [ones] may be delivered, save with thy right hand and answer me.*” It is the Spirit of Immanuel that thus makes intercession for his well-remembered people according to God. His land should be rid in due time of those who had burdened it with wickedness. For God had spoken in his holiness concerning the portion of his anointed.—*Arthur Pridham.*

*Verse 7.*—“*God hath spoken*” the word of assurance. This refers to all the words in which the land of their inheritance was defined, especially Gen. xv. 18, Ex. xxiii. 31, Deut. xi. 24, and that remarkable prediction concerning the perpetuity of David’s line, 2 Sam. vii., which must have made a deep impression on his mind. From these passages it is evident that Aram as well as Edom was included in the full compass of the territory designed for Israel, and that David felt himself to be in the path of destiny when he was endeavouring to extend his sway from the river of Egypt to the great river, even the Euphrates. “*In his holiness,*” in the immutable integrity of his heart, which was an infallible guarantee for the fulfilment of his promise. “*I will exult.*” This is the exclamation of the representative head of the people, when he ponders upon the divine utterance.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verse 7.*—Faith closing with a promise, will furnish joy to the believer before he enjoys the performance of it: “*God hath spoken,*” saith he, “*I will rejoice.*”—*David Dickson.*

*Verse 7.*—He, the second David, had accomplished his warfare, and had crowned himself with victory. Henceforth he would apportion the kingdoms of the world and subdue them unto himself at his own holy will. Ephraim and Judah, Moab and Philistia, the Jew first and then the Gentile, were to be brought to confess him as their Lord.—*Plain Commentary.*

*Verse 8.*—“*Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.*” As Ephraim was the most populous of all the tribes, he appropriately terms it *the strength of his head*, that is, of his dominions.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 9.*—*Moab*, who had enticed Israel to impurity, is made a vessel for its purifying. *Edom*, descendant of him who despised his birthright, is deprived of his independence;—for “*flinging a shoe*” was a sign of the transference of a prior claim on land. Ruth iv. 7.—*William Kay.*

*Verse 9.*—“*Moab is my washpot.*” The office of washing the feet was in the East commonly performed by slaves, and the meanest of the family, as appears from what Abigail said to David when he took her to wife, “*Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord,*” 1 Sam. xxv. 41; and from the fact of our Saviour washing his disciples’ feet, to give them an example of humility, John xiii. 5. The word *washpot*, used in this last passage, signifies in general a *washing-pot*, and is put for the word *ποδόνιτρον*, the term which the Greeks, in strict propriety of speech, applied to a vessel for washing the feet. As this office was servile, so the vessels employed for this purpose were a mean part of household stuff. Gataker and Le Clerc illustrate this text from an anecdote related by Herodotus, concerning Amasis, king of Egypt, who expressed the meanness of his own origin by comparing himself to a pot for washing the feet in (Herod, Lib. ii. c. 172). When, therefore, it is said, “*Moab is my washing-pot,*” the complete and servile subjection of Moab to David is strongly marked. This is expressed, not by comparing Moab to a slave who performs the lowest offices, as presenting to his master the basin for washing his feet, but by comparing him to the mean utensil itself. See 2 Sam. viii. 2; 1 Chron. xviii. 1, 2, 12, 13.—*James Anderson’s Note to Calvin on Ps. lx.*

*Verse 9.*—“*Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast my shoe.*” This somewhat difficult expression may be thus explained. Moab and Edom were to be reduced to a state of lowest vassalage to the people of God. The one was to be like a pot or tub fit only for washing the feet in, while the other was to be like the domestic slave standing by to receive the sandals thrown to him by the person about to perform his ablutions, that he might first put them by in a safe place, and then come and wash his master’s feet.—“*Rays from the East.*”

*Verse 9.*—“*Over Edom will I cast my shoe.*” David overthrew their army in

the "Valley of Salt," and his general, Joab, following up the victory, destroyed nearly the whole male population (1 Kings xi. 15, 16), and placed Jewish garrisons in all the strongholds of Edom (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14). In honour of that victory the Psalmist-warrior may have penned the words in Ps. lx. 8, "*Over Edom will I cast my shoe.*"—*J. L. Porter*, in "*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*"

*Verse 10.*—The strong city built on the rock, even man's hardened heart, stronger and more stony than the tomb, he had conquered and overcome; and in him and his might are his people to carry on his warfare, and to cast down all the strongholds of human pride, and human stubbornness, and human unrepentance.—*Plain Commentary.*

*Verses 10, 11.*—It is not conclusive evidence that we are not called to undertake a given work or perform a certain duty, because it is very difficult, or even impossible for us to succeed without special help from God. If God calls David to take Petra, he shall take Petra.—*William S. Plumer.*

*Verse 11.*—"Will not thou, O God?" His hand shall lead him even to Petra, which seems unapproachable by human strength. That marvellous rock-city of the Edomites is surrounded by rocks some of which are three hundred feet high, and a single path twelve in width leads to it. The city itself is partly hewn out of the cloven rocks, and its ruins, which however belong to a later period, fill travellers with amazement.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

*Verse 11.*—He who came victorious from Edom, and with garments dyed in the blood of his passion from Bozrah, will henceforth now go forth with the armies of the true Israel,—for what are hosts without the Lord of hosts?—to subdue their enemy.—*Plain Commentary.*

*Verse 12.*—"Give us help from trouble," etc. He who would have God's help in any business, must quit confidence in man's help; and the seeing of the vanity of man's help must make the believer to trust the more unto, and expect the more confidently God's help, as here is done. "*Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.*"—*David Dickson.*

#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Whole Psalm.*—Parts of two former Psalms are here united in one. I. Repetition is here sanctioned by inspiration. 1. Of what? Of hymns, of prayers, of sermons. 2. For what? For impression. "As we said before so say I now again, if any man preach," etc. For confirmation: "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice": they went through Syria and Cilicia again confirming the churches. For preservation: quotations authenticate originals, a writing in two copies is safer than in one. II. Rearrangement is here sanctioned by inspiration. 1. Different experiences may require it. Sometimes the heart is most fixed at the commencement of a spiritual exercise: sometimes at its close. Hence the commencement of one Psalm is the close of another. 2. Different occasions may require it. As of sorrow and joy. Two parts of two different hymns may better harmonise with a particular occasion than either one separately considered.—*G. R.*

*Verse 1.*—I. The best occupation: praise. Worthy—1. Of the heart in its best condition. 2. Of the best faculties of the best educated man. II. The best resolution. 1. Arising from a fixed heart. 2. Deliberately formed. 3. Solemnly expressed. 4. Joyfully executed. III. The best results. To praise God makes a man both happier and holier, stronger and bolder—as the succeeding verses show.

*Verse 2.*—The benefit of early rising. The sweetness of the Sabbath morning early prayer-meeting.

*Verse 3.*—We must not restrain praise because we are overheard by strangers, nor because the listeners are heathen, or ungodly, or are numerous, or are likely to oppose. There may be all the more reason for our outspoken praise of God when we are in such circumstances.

*Verses 4, 5.*—The greatness of mercy, the height of truth, and the immensity of the Divine praise.

*Verse 6.*—The prayer of a representative man. There are times when to answer *me* is to deliver the church—at such times I have a powerful plea.

*Verse 7.*—God's voice the cause of joy, the reason for action, the guarantee of success.

*Verse 8.*—“*Judah is my lawgiver.*” Jesus the sole and only lawmaker in the church.

*Verse 11 (first clause).*—Confidence in a frowning God.

*Verse 11 (second clause).*—Whether God will go forth with our hosts depends upon—Who they are? What is their object? What is their motive and spirit? What weapons do they use? etc.

*Verse 12.*—The failure of human help is often—1. The direct cause of our prayer. 2. The source of urgency in pleading. 3. A powerful argument for the pleader. 4. A distinct reason for hope to light upon.

*Verse 13.*—How, when, and why a believer should do valiantly.

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