

PSALM CXVII.

SUBJECT.—*This Psalm, which is very little in its letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for, bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord. In all probability it was frequently used as a brief hymn suitable for almost every occasion, and especially when the time for worship was short. Perhaps it was also sung at the commencement or at the close of other Psalms, just as we now use the doxology. It would have served either to open a service or to conclude it. It is both short and sweet. The same divine Spirit which expatiates in the 119th, here condenses his utterances into two short verses, but yet the same infinite fulness is present and perceptible. It may be worth noting that this is at once the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the central portion of the whole Bible.*

EXPOSITION.

O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations : praise him, all ye people.

2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us : and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

1. "*O praise the LORD, all ye nations.*" This is an exhortation to the Gentiles to glorify Jehovah, and a clear proof that the Old Testament spirit differed widely from that narrow and contracted national bigotry with which the Jews of our Lord's day became so inveterately diseased. The nations could not be expected to join in the praise of Jehovah unless they were also to be partakers of the benefits which Israel enjoyed; and hence the Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man, even as Moses had prophesied when he said, "Rejoice, O ye nations, his people." (Deut. xxxii. 43), for so the Hebrew has it. The nations were to be his people. He would call them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved. We know and believe that no one tribe of men shall be unrepresented in the universal song which shall ascend unto the Lord of all. Individuals have already been gathered out of every kindred and people and tongue by the preaching of the gospel, and these have right heartily joined in magnifying the grace which sought them out, and brought them to know the Saviour. These are but the advance-guard of a number which no man can number who will come ere long to worship the all-glorious One. "*Praise him, all ye people.*" Having done it once, do it again, and do it still more fervently, daily increasing in the reverence and zeal with which you extol the Most High. Not only praise him nationally by your rulers, but popularly in your masses. The multitude of the common folk shall bless the Lord. Inasmuch as the matter is spoken of twice, its certainty is confirmed, and the Gentiles must and shall extol Jehovah—all of them, without exception. Under the gospel dispensation we worship no new god, but the God of Abraham is our God for ever and ever; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

2. "*For his merciful kindness is great toward us.*" By which is meant not only his great love toward the Jewish people, but towards the whole family of man. The Lord is kind to us as his creatures, and merciful to us as sinners, hence his merciful kindness to us as sinful creatures. This mercy has been very great, or powerful. The mighty grace of God has prevailed even as the waters of the flood prevailed over the earth: breaking over all bounds, it has flowed towards all portions of the multiplied race of man. In Christ Jesus, God has shown mercy mixed with kindness, and that to the very highest degree. We can all join in this grateful acknowledgment, and in the praise which is therefore due. "*And the truth of the LORD endureth for ever.*" He has kept his covenant promise that in the seed of Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed, and he will eternally keep every single promise of that covenant to all those who put their trust in him. This should be a cause of constant and grateful praise, wherefore the Psalm concludes as it began, with another Hallelujah, "*Praise ye the LORD.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—A very short Psalm if you regard the words, but of very great compass and most excellent if you thoughtfully consider the meaning. There are here five principal points of doctrine.

First, *the calling of the Gentiles*, the Apostle being the interpreter, Rom. xv. 11 ; but in vain might the Prophet invite the Gentiles to praise Jehovah, unless they were to be gathered into the unity of the faith together with the children of Abraham.

Second, *The summary of the Gospel*, namely, the manifestation of grace and truth, the Holy Spirit being the interpreter, John i. 17.

Third, *The end of so great a blessing*, namely, the worship of God in spirit and in truth, as we know that the kingdom of the Messiah is spiritual.

Fourth, *the employment of the subjects of the great King* is to praise and glorify Jehovah.

Lastly, *the privilege of these servants* : that, as to the Jews, so also to the Gentiles, who know and serve God the Saviour, eternal life and blessedness are brought, assured in this life, and prepared in heaven.—*Mollerus*.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm, the shortest portion of the Book of God, is quoted, and given much value to, in Rom. xv. And upon this it has been profitably observed, "It is a small portion of Scripture, and as such we might easily overlook it. But not so the Holy Ghost. He gleans up this precious little testimony which speaks of grace to the Gentiles, and presses it on our attention."—*From Bellett's Short Meditations on the Psalms, chiefly in their Prophetic character, 1871.*

Whole Psalm.—The occasion and the author of this Psalm are alike unknown. De Wette regards it as a *Temple-Psalm*, and agrees with Rosenmüller in the supposition that it was sung either at the beginning or the end of the service in the temple. Knapp supposes that it was used as an intermediate service, sung during the progress of the general service to vary the devotion, and to awaken a new interest in the service, either sung by the choir or by the whole people.—*Albert Barnes*.

Whole Psalm.—In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long ; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short Psalm giveth us to understand.—*David Dickson*.

Whole Psalm.—This is the shortest, and the next but one is the longest, of the Psalms. There are times for short hymns and long hymns, for short prayers and long prayers, for short sermons and long sermons, for short speeches and long speeches. It is better to be too short than too long, as it can more easily be mended. Short addresses need no formal divisions : long addresses require them, as in the next Psalm but one.—*G. Rogers*.

Verse 1.—"O praise the LORD," etc. The praise of God is here made both the beginning and the end of the Psalm ; to show, that in praising God the saints are never satisfied with their own efforts, and would infinitely magnify him, even as his perfections are infinite. Here they make a circle, the beginning, middle, and end whereof is *hallelujah*. In the last Psalm, when David had said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," and so in all likelihood had made an end, yet he repeats the *hallelujah* again, and cries, "Praise ye the Lord." The Psalmist had made an end and yet he had not done ; to signify, that when we have said our utmost for God's praise, we must not be content, but begin anew. There is hardly any duty more pressed in the Old Testament upon us, though less practised, than this of praising God. To quicken us therefore to a duty so necessary, but so much neglected, this and many other Psalms were penned by David, purposely to excite us, that are the *nations* here meant, to consecrate our whole lives to the singing and setting forth of God's worthy praises.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 1.—"All ye nations." Note : each nation of the world has some special gift bestowed on it by God, which is not given to the others, whether you have regard to nature or grace, for which it ought to praise God.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 1.—"Praise him." A different word is here used for "praise" than in the former clause : a word which is more frequently used in the Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic languages ; and signifies the celebration of the praises of God with a high voice.—*John Gill*.

Verse 2.—"For his merciful kindness is great toward us." We cannot part from this Psalm without remarking that even in the Old Testament we have more than one instance of a recognition on the part of those that were without the pale of the church that God's favour to Israel was a source of blessing to themselves. Such were probably to some extent the sentiments of Hiram and the Queen of Sheba, the contemporaries of Solomon; such the experience of Naaman; such the virtual acknowledgments of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede. They beheld "his merciful kindness" toward his servants of the house of Israel, and they praised him accordingly.—*John Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2.—"For his merciful kindness is great toward us." Albeit there be matter of praise unto God in himself, though we should not be partakers of any benefit from him, yet the Lord doth give his people cause to praise him for favours to them in their own particular cases.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"For his merciful kindness is great." גָּבַר, *gabar*, is strong: it is not only great in bulk or number; but it is powerful; it prevails over sin, Satan, death and hell.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"Merciful kindness . . . and the truth of the LORD." Here, and so in divers other Psalms, God's mercy and truth are joined together; to show that all passages and proceedings, both in ordinances and in providences, whereby he cometh and communicateth himself to his people are not only mercy, though that is very sweet, but truth also. Their blessings come to them in the way of promise from God, as bound to them by the truth of his covenant. This is soul-satisfying indeed; this turns all that a man hath to cream, when every mercy is a present sent from heaven by virtue of a promise. Upon this account, God's mercy is ordinarily in the Psalms bounded by his truth; that none may either presume him more merciful than he hath declared himself in his word; nor despair of finding mercy gratis, according to the truth of his promise. Therefore, though thy sins be great, believe the text, and know that God's mercy is greater than thy sins. The high heaven covereth as well tall mountains as small molehills, and mercy can cover all. The more desperate thy disease, the greater is the glory of thy physician, who hath perfectly cured thee.—*Abraham Wright.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—The universal kingdom. I. The same God. II. The same worship. III. The same reason for it.

Verse 2.—"Merciful kindness." In God's kindness there is mercy, because, I. Our sin deserves the reverse of kindness. II. Our weakness requires great tenderness. III. Our fears can only be so removed.

Verse 2 (last clause).—I. In his attribute—he is always faithful. II. In his revelation—always infallible. III. In his action—always according to promise.
