

## PSALM CXXIII.

**TITLE.**—A Song of degrees. *We are climbing. The first step (Ps. cx.) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as "the Psalm of the eyes." Old authors call it Oculus Sperans, or the eye of hope. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this Psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.*

**U**NTO thee will I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

### EXPOSITION.

1. "*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*" It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a figleaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory-land which lies beyond the skies. "*O thou that dwellest in the heavens,*" just sets forth the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress; God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is there revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succours to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no

more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer: a glance of the eye will do it all; for—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye  
When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home: he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

2. "*Behold*"—for it is worthy of regard among men, and O that the Majesty of heaven would also note it, and speedily send the mercy which our waiting spirits seek. See, O Lord, how we look to thee, and in thy mercy look on us. This *Behold* has, however, a call to us to observe and consider. Whenever saints of God have waited upon the Lord their example has been worthy of earnest consideration. Sanctification is a miracle of grace; therefore let us behold it. For God to have wrought in men the spirit of service is a great marvel, and as such let all men turn aside and see this great sight. "*As the eyes of servants (or slaves) look unto the hand of their masters.*" They stand at the end of the room with their hands folded watching their lord's movements. Orientals speak less than we do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands; hence, the domestic must fix his eyes on his master, or he might miss a sign, and so fail to obey it: even so, the sanctified man lifts his eyes unto God, and endeavours to learn the divine will from every one of the signs which the Lord is pleased to use. Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah's hand, and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study them, to discover the divine will. "*And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;*" this second comparison may be used because Eastern women are even more thorough than the men in the training of their servants. It is usually thought that women issue more commands, and are more sensitive of disobedience, than the sterner sex. Among the Roman matrons female slaves had a sorry time of it, and no doubt it was the same among the generality of Eastern ladies. "*Even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.*" Believers desire to be attentive to each and all of the directions of the Lord; even those which concern apparently little things are not little to us, for we know that even for idle words we shall be called to account, and we are anxious to give in that account with joy, and not with grief. True saints, like obedient servants, look to the Lord their God *reverentially*: they have a holy awe and inward fear of the great and glorious One. They watch, *obediently*, doing his commandments, guided by his eye. Their constant gaze is fixed *attentively* on all that comes from the Most High; they give earnest heed, and fear lest they should let anything slip through inadvertence or drowsiness. They look *continuously*, for there never is a time when they are off duty; at all times they delight to serve in all things. Upon the Lord they fix their eyes *expectantly*, looking for supply, succour, and safety from his hands, waiting that he may have mercy upon them. To him they look *singly*, they have no other confidence, and they learn to look *submissively*, waiting patiently for the Lord, seeking both in activity and suffering to glorify his name. When they are smitten with the rod they turn their eyes *imploringly* to the hand which chastens, hoping that mercy will soon abate the rigour of the affliction. There is much more in the figure than we can display in this brief comment; perhaps it will be most profitable to suggest the question—Are we thus trained to service? Though we are sons, have we learned the full obedience of servants? Have we surrendered self, and bowed our will before the heavenly Majesty? Do we desire in all things to be at the Lord's disposal? If so, happy are we. Though we are made joint-heirs with Christ, yet for the present we differ little from servants, and may be well content to take them for our model.

Observe the covenant name, "*Jehovah our God*": it is sweet to wait upon a covenant God. Because of that covenant he will show mercy to us; but we may have to wait for it. "*Until that he have mercy upon us:*" God hath his time and

season, and we must wait *until* it cometh. For the trial of our faith our blessed Lord may for awhile delay, but in the end the vision will be fulfilled. Mercy is that which we need, that which we look for, that which our Lord will manifest to us. Even those who look to the Lord, with that holy look which is here described, still need mercy, and as they cannot claim it by right they wait for it till sovereign grace chooses to vouchsafe it. Blessed are those servants whom their Master shall find so doing. Waiting upon the Lord is a posture suitable both for earth and heaven : it is, indeed, in every place the right and fitting condition for a servant of the Lord. Nor may we leave the posture so long as we are by grace dwellers in the realm of mercy. It is a great mercy to be enabled to wait for mercy.

3. "*Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.*" He hangs upon the word "mercy," and embodies it in a vehement prayer: the very word seems to hold him, and he harps upon it. It is well for us to pray about everything, and turn everything into prayer; and especially when we are reminded of a great necessity we should catch at it as a keynote, and pitch our tune to it. The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist's spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately. Note that he has left the first person singular for the plural. All the saints need mercy; they all seek it; they shall all have it, therefore we pray—"have mercy upon us." A slave when corrected looks to his master's hand that the punishment may cease, and even so we look to the Lord for mercy, and entreat for it with all our hearts. Our contemptuous opponents will have no mercy upon us; let us not ask it at their hands, but turn to the God of mercy, and seek his aid alone.

"*For we are exceedingly filled with contempt,*" and this is an acid which eats into the soul. Observe the emphatic words. *Contempt* is bitterness, wormwood mingled with gall; he that feels it may well cry for mercy to his God. *Filled* with contempt, as if the bitter wine had been poured in till it was up to the brim. This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched. Another word is added adverbially—*exceedingly* filled. Filled even to running over, as if pressed down and then heaped up. A little contempt they could bear, but now they were satiated with it, and weary of it. Do we wonder at the threefold mention of mercy when this master evil was in the ascendant? Nothing is more wounding, embittering, festering than disdain. When our companions make little of us we are far too apt to make little of ourselves and of the consolations prepared for us. Oh to be filled with communion, and then contempt will run off from us, and never be able to fill us with its biting vinegar.

4. "*Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.*" Knowing no troubles of their own, the easy ones grow cruel and deride the people of the Lord. Having the godly already in secret contempt, they show it by openly scorning them. Note those who do this: they are not the poor, the humble, the troubled, but those who have a merry life of it and are self-content. They are in easy circumstances; they are easy in heart through a deadened conscience and so they easily come to mock at holiness; they are easy from needing nothing, and from having no severe toil exacted from them; they are easy as to any anxiety to improve, for their conceit of themselves is boundless. Such men take things easily, and therefore they scorn the holy carefulness of those who watch the hand of the Lord. They say, Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? and then they turn round with a contemptuous look and sneer at those who fear the Lord. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion; their contempt of the godly shall hasten and increase their misery. The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct. "*And with the contempt of the proud.*" The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous. The contempt of the great ones of the earth is often peculiarly acrid: some of them, like a well-known statesman, are "masters of gibes and flouts and sneers," and never do they seem so much at home in their acrimony as when a servant of the Lord is the victim of their venom. It is easy enough to write upon this subject, but to be selected as the target of contempt is quite another matter. Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service

till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun, and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honour in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints.—*Martin Luther.*

*Whole Psalm.*—The change of performers in this Psalm is very evident; the pronoun in the first distich is in the first person *singular*, in the rest of Psalm the first *plural* is used.—*Stephen Street.*

*Whole Psalm.*—This Psalm has one distinction which is to be found in “scarcely any other piece in the Old Testament.” In the Hebrew it has many rhymes. But these rhymes are purely accidental. They result simply from the fact that many words are used in it with the same inflexions, and therefore with the same or similar terminations. Regularly recurring and intentional rhymes are not a characteristic of Hebrew poetry, any more than they were of Greek or Latin poetry.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*” He who previously lifted his eyes unto the hills, now hath raised his heart’s eyes to the Lord himself.—*The Venerable Bede* (672—735), in *Neale and Littledale.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,*” etc. This is the sigh of the pilgrim who ascendeth and loveth, and ascendeth because he loveth. He is ascending from earth to heaven, and while he is ascending, unto whom shall he lift his eyes, but unto him that dwelleth in heaven? We ascend to heaven each time we think of God. In that ascent lies all goodness: if we would repent, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would be humble, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would truly love, we must look not on ourselves, but on him who dwelleth in the heavens. If we would have him turn his eyes from our sins, we must turn our eyes unto his mercy and truth.—“*Plain Commentary.*”

*Verse 1.*—“*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.*” Praying by the glances of the eye rather than by words; mine afflictions having swollen my heart too big for my mouth.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 1.*—“*Unto THEE do I lift up mine eyes.*” You feel the greatness of the contrast these words imply. Earth and heaven, dust and deity; the poor, weeping, sinful children of mortality, the holy, ever-blessed, eternal God: how wide is the interval of separation between them! But over the awful chasm, broader than ocean though it be, love and wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ, have thrown a passage, by which the most sinful may repair unterrified to his presence, and find the shame and the fears of guilt exchanged for the peace of forgiveness and the hope that is full of immortality.—*Robert Nisbet.*

*Verse 1.*—There are many testimonies in the *lifting up of the eyes to heaven*. 1. It is the testimony of a *believing*, humble heart. *Infidelity* will never carry a man above the earth. *Pride* can carry a man no higher than the earth either. 2. It is the testimony of an *obedient* heart. A man that lifts up his eye to God, he acknowledgeth thus much,—Lord, I am thy servant. 3. It is the testimony of a *thankful* heart; acknowledging that every good blessing, every perfect gift, is from the hand of God. 4. It is the testimony of a *heavenly* heart. He that lifts up his eyes to heaven acknowledgeth that he is weary of the earth; his heart is not there; his hope and desire is above. 5. It is the testimony of a *devout* heart: there is no part of the body besides the tongue that is so great an agent in prayer as the *eye*.—*Condensed from Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse 1.*—"O thou that dwellest in the heavens." "That sittest." The Lord is here contemplated as enthroned in heaven, where he administers the affairs of the universe executes judgment, and hears prayer.—*James G. Murphy.*

*Verses 1, 2.*—The lifting up the eyes, implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us. The very lifting up of the bodily eyes towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust: so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord's care and loving-kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye: Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible:" Heb. xi. 27. . . . Faith seeth things afar off in the promises (Heb. xi. 13), at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from that which is invisible, but also from that which is future as well as invisible; its supports lie in the other world, and in things which are yet to come.—*Thomas Manton.*

*Verses 1, 2.*—In the first strophe the poet places himself before us as standing in the presence of the Majesty of Heaven, with his eyes fixed on the hand of God, absorbed in watchful expectation of some sign or gesture, however slight, which may indicate the Divine will. He is like a slave standing silent but alert, in the presence of the Oriental "lord," with hands folded on his breast, and eyes fixed on his master, seeking to read, and to anticipate, if possible, his every wish. He is like a maiden in attendance on her mistress, anxiously striving to see her mind in her looks, to discover and administer to her moods and wants. The grave, reserved Orientals, as we know, seldom speak to their attendants, at least on public occasions. They intamate their wishes and commands by a wave of the hand, by a glance of the eye, by slight movements and gestures which might escape notice were they not watched for with eager attention. Their slaves "hang upon their faces;" they "fasten their eyes" on the eyes of their master; they watch and obey every turn of his hand, every movement of his finger. Thus the Psalmist conceives of himself as waiting on God, looking to him alone, watching for the faintest signal bent on catching and obeying it.—*Samuel Cox.*

*Verse 2.*—"Behold." An ordinary word, but here it hath an extraordinary position. Ordinarily it is a term of *attention*, used for the awakening of man, to stir up their admiration and audience; but here it is a word not only prefixed for the exciting of men, but of God himself. David is speaking to God in his meditations. "Behold," saith he. As we take it with respect to God, so it is a *precatory* particle: he beseecheth God to look down upon him, while he looks up unto God: Look on us, as we look to thee; "Behold, Lord, as the eyes of servants." etc. If we take it as it hath respect to man, so it is an *exemplary* particle, to stir them up to do the like. "Behold" what we do, and do likewise; let your eyes be like ours. "Behold, as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters, so are our eyes to the Lord our God." Let yours have the same fixing. So it is a word that draws all eyes after it to imitation.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse 2.*—"Behold, as the eyes of servants look," etc. For direction, defence, maintenance, mercy in time of correction, help when the service is over-hard, etc., "so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God," viz., for direction and benediction.—*John Trapp.*

*Verse 2.*—"Eyes of servants unto the hand," etc. Our eyes ought to be to the hand of the Lord our God:—First, that we may admire his works. Secondly, that we may show that our service is pleasant to us; and to show our dependence on such a benign, mighty, and bountiful hand. Thirdly, that we may evince to him our love, and devoted willingness to do all things which he shall command by the slightest movement of a finger. Fourthly, that from him we may receive food, and all things necessary for sustenance. Fifthly, that he may be a defence for us against the enemies that molest us, either by smiting them with the sword, or by shooting of arrows; or by repelling others by the movement of a finger; or, at least, by covering us with the shield of his good-will. Sixthly and lastly, that, moved by mercy, he would cease from chastisement.—*Condensed from Le Blanc.*

*Verse 2.*—"As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters," etc. A traveller says, "I have seen a fine illustration of this passage in a gentleman's house

at Damascus. The people of the East do not speak so much or so quick as those in the West, and a sign of the hand is frequently the only instructions given to the servants in waiting. As soon as we were introduced and seated on the divan, a wave of the master's hand indicated that sherbet was to be served. Another wave brought coffee and pipes; another brought sweetmeats. At another signal dinner was made ready. The attendants watched their master's eye and hand, to know his will and do it instantly." Such is the attention with which we ought to wait upon the Lord, anxious to fulfil his holy pleasure,—our great desire being, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" An equally pointed and more homely illustration may be seen any day, on our own river Thames, or in any of our large seaport towns, where the call-boy watches attentively the hand of the captain of the boat, and conveys his will to the engine-men.—*"The Sunday at Home."*

Verse 2.—*"As the eyes of slaves,"* watching anxiously the least movement, the smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary (in his *Letters on Egypt*, p. 135), says, "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. *With their eyes fixed upon their master* they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." . . . In the Psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the *oculus sperans*, the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to him and none other for help.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—*"As the eyes of servants,"* etc. The true explanation, I should apprehend, is this: As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till that motion of the hand appears that puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are up to thee, our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure.—*Thomas Harmer.*

Verse 2.—*"Servants."* Note how humbly the faithful think of themselves in the sight of God. They are called and chosen to this dignity, to be the heirs and children of God, and are exalted above the angels, and yet, notwithstanding, they count themselves no better in God's sight than "*servants.*" They say not here, Behold, like as children look to the hand of their fathers, but "as servants" to the hand of their masters. This is the humility and modesty of the godly, and it is so far off that hereby they lose the dignity of God's children, to the which they are called, that by this means it is made to them more sure and certain.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—From the everyday conduct of domestic servants we should learn our duty Godwards. Not without cause did our Saviour take his parables from common, everyday things, from fields, vines, trees, marriages, etc., that thus we might have everywhere apt reminders.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—*"Servants."* "*A maiden.*" Consider that there be two sorts of servants set down here, man-servants and maid-servants; and this is to let us know that both sexes may be confident in God. Not only may men be confident in the power of God, but even women also, who are more frail and feeble. Not only may women mourn to God for wrongs done to them, and have repentance for sin, but they may be confident in God also. And therefore see, in that rehearsal of believers and cloud of witnesses, not only is the faith of men noted and commended by the Spirit of God, but also the faith of women: and among the judges, Deborah, Jael, etc., are commended as worthies, and courageous in God. And the women also in the New Testament are noted for their following of Christ—even when all fled from him, then they followed him.—*From a sermon by Alexander Henderson, 1583—1646.*

Verse 2.—*"Servants."* "*A maiden.*" We know how shamefully servants were treated in ancient times, and what reproaches must be cast upon them, whilst yet they durst not move a finger to repel the outrage. Being therefore deprived of all means of defending themselves, the only thing which remained for them to do was, what is here stated, to crave the protection of their masters. The same explanation is equally applicable to the case of *handmaids.* Their condition was indeed shameful and degrading; but there is no reason why we should be ashamed of, or offended at, being compared to slaves, provided God is our defender, and takes our lives under his guardianship; God, I say, who purposely disarms us and strips us of all worldly aid, that we may learn to rely upon his grace, and to be contented with it alone. It having been anciently a capital crime for bondmen to carry

a sword or any other weapon about them, and as they were exposed to injuries of every description, their masters were wont to defend them with so much the more spirit, when anyone causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection, and renouncing all confidence in our own resources, will, as our defender, encounter and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us.—*John Calvin.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Hand.*” With the *hand* we demand, we promise, we call, dismiss, threaten, entreat, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, reckon, confess, repent; express fear, express shame, express doubt; we instruct, command, unite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, acquit, insult, despise, defy, disdain, flatter, applaud, bless, abase, ridicule, reconcile, recommend, exalt, regale, gladden, complain, afflict, discomfort, discourage, astonish; exclaim, indicate silence, and what not? with a variety and a multiplication that keep pace with the tongue.—*Michael de Montaigne, 1533—1592.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Masters.*” It is said of Mr. George Herbert, that divine poet, that, to satisfy his independency upon all others, and to quicken his diligence in God’s service, he used in his ordinary speech, when he made mention of the blessed name of Jesus, to add, “my Master.” And, without any doubt, if men were unfeignedly of his mind, their respects would be more to Christ’s command, to Christ’s will, to Christ’s pleasure.—*From Spencer’s “Things New and Old.”*

*Verse 2.*—“*Our eyes wait.*” Here the Psalmist uses another word: it is the eye *waiting*. What is the reason of the second word? Now he leaves the similitude in the first line; for in the first line it is thus,—“As the eyes of servants *look*, and the eyes of a maiden *look*”; here it is the eye *waits*. There is good reason: to *wait* is more than to *look*: to *wait* is to look constantly, with patience and submission, by subjecting our affections and wills and desires to God’s will; that is to *wait*. David in the second part, in the second line, gives a *better* word, he betters his copy. There is the duty of a Christian, to better his example; the eyes of servants *look*, David’s eyes shall *wait*: “*So our eyes wait.*” It is true indeed this word is not in the original, therefore you may observe it is in a small letter in your Bibles, to note that it is a word of necessity, added for the supply of the sense, because the Holy Ghost left it not imperfect, but more perfect, that he put not in the verb; because it is left to every man’s heart to supply a verb to his own comfort, and a better he cannot than this. And that this word must be added appears by the next words: “*until that he have mercy upon us.*” To look till he have mercy on us is to *wait*; so there is good reason why this word is added. If we look to the thing begged—“*mercy*”—it is so precious that we may *wait* for it. It was “servants” that he mentioned, and it is their duty to *wait* upon their masters; they wait upon their trenchers at meat; they wait when they go to bed and when they rise; they wait in every place. Therefore, because he had mentioned the first word, he takes the proper duty; there is nothing more proper to servants than waiting, and if we are the servants of God we must *wait*. There is good reason in that respect, because it is a word so significant, therefore the Spirit of God varies it; he keeps not exactly to the line, “So do our eyes *look*,” but he puts it, “So do our eyes *wait*.”—*Richard Holdsworth.*

*Verse 3.*—“*Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us!*” Note how a godly man speaks. He does not say, “*Have mercy upon me, O LORD, have mercy upon me!* because I am disgraced;” but, “*Have mercy upon us, O LORD, for we are filled with contempt!*” The godly man is not so grieved for his own and individual contempt as he is for the general contempt of the good and faithful. There is an accord of the godly, not only in the cross, but also in groanings, and in the invocation of divine grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

*Verse 3.*—“*For we are exceedingly filled.*” The Hebrew word here used means “to be saturated”; to have the appetite fully satisfied—as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be; they could experience no more.—*Albert Barnes.*

*Verse 3.*—“*We are exceedingly filled with contempt.*” Men of the world regard the Temple Pilgrims and their religion with the quiet smile of disdain, wondering that those who have so much to engage them in a present life should be weak enough to concern themselves about frames and feelings, about an unseen God, and unknown eternity; and this is a trial they find hard to bear. *Their soul, too, is filled exceedingly*

with the scorning of those that are at ease. The prosperous of their neighbours declare that they have found the world a generous and happy scene to all who deserve its gifts. Poverty and sorrow they attribute to unworthiness alone. "Let them exert themselves," is the unfeeling cry; "let them bestir themselves instead of praying, and with them as with us it will soon be well;" and these words of harsh and unfeeling ignorance are like poison to the wounds of the bleeding heart. They have further "the contempt of the proud" to mourn; of those who give expression to their fierce disdain by assailing them with words of contumely, and who seek to draw them by reproaches both from peace and from piety. These are still the trials of Zion's worshippers: silent contempt, open misrepresentation, fierce opposition. Religion, their last comfort, is despised; peace, their first desire, is denied. Anxious to devote themselves in the spirit of humble and earnest piety to the duties of their appointed sphere, they find enemies in open outcry and array against them. But God is their refuge, and to him they go.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 3, 4.—The second strophe takes up the "have mercy upon us," as it were in echo. It begins with a *Kyrie eleison*, which is confirmed in a *crescendo* manner after the form of steps.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 4.—"Exceedingly filled," or perhaps, "has long been filled." (Compare cxx. 6). This expression, together with the earnestness of the repeated prayer, "Be gracious unto us," shows that the "scorn" and "contempt" have long pressed upon the people, and their faith has accordingly been exposed to a severe trial. The more remarkable is the entire absence of anything like impatience in the language of the Psalm.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"The scorning of those that are at ease." When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to shout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people. This is the sure effect of great arrogance and pride. They think they may do what they please; they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, but put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. lv. 19, 20); whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. This is certainly pride, for it is a lifting up of the heart above God and against God and without God. And they do not consider his providence, which alternately lifts up and casts down, that adversity may not be without a cordial, nor prosperity without a curb and bridle. When men sit fast, and are well at ease, they are apt to be insolent and scornful. Riches and worldly greatness make men insolent and despisers of others, and not to care what burdens they impose upon them; they are entrenched within a mass of wealth and power and greatness, and so think none can call them to an account.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 4.—"Those that are at ease." The word always means such as are recklessly at their ease, the careless ones, such as those whom Isaiah bids, "rise up, tremble, be troubled;" for "many days and years shall ye be troubled" (ch. xxxii. 9—11). It is that luxury and ease which sensualize the soul, and make it dull, stupid, hard-hearted.—*Edward Bouverie Pusey* (1800—), in "The Minor Prophets."

Verse 4.—"Those that are at ease," who are regardless of the troubles of others, and expect none of their own.—*James G. Murphy.*

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#### HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Whole Psalm.—We have here, I. The prayer of *dependence*, verse 2. II. The prayer of *apprehension*: "Unto thee," etc. III. The spirit of *obedience*: "As the eyes of servants," etc. IV. The *patience* of the saints: "Until he have mercy upon us."—*R. Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm.—Eyes and no eyes. I. EYES. 1. *Upward*, in confidence, in prayer, in thought. 2. "Unto," in reverence, watchfulness, obedience. 3. *Inward*, producing a cry for mercy. II. NO EYES. 1. No sight of the excellence of the godly. 2. No sense of their own danger: "at ease." 3. No humility before God: "proud." 4. No uplifted eyes in hope, prayer, expectation.



*Verse 1.—The eyes of faith.* I. Need uplifting. II. See best upward. III. Have always something to see upward. IV. Let us look up, and so turn our eyes from too much introspection and retrospection.

*Verse 1.—I.* The language of Adoration: "Thou that dwellest in the heavens." II. The language of Confession. 1. Of need. 2. Of helplessness. III. The language of Supplication: "Unto thee," etc. IV. The language of Expectation; as shown in verse 2.—*G. R.*

*Verse 2.—(Psalm cxxi. 4 with this verse.)* Two beholds. I. God's watchful eye over us. II. The saint's watchful eye upon God.

*Verse 2.—"Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."* I. What it is to wait with the eye. II. What peculiar aspect of the Lord suggests such waiting: "Jehovah our God." The covenant God is the trusted God. III. What comes of such waiting—"mercy."

*Verse 2.—The guiding hand.* I. A beckoning hand—to go near. II. A directing hand—to go here and there. III. A quiescent hand—to remain where we are.—*G. R.*

*Verse 2.—Homely metaphors, or what may be learned from maids and their mistresses.*

*Verse 3 (first portion).—The Sinner's Litany. The Saint's Entreaty.*

*Verse 3 (second portion).—The world's contempt, the abundance of it, the reason of it, the bitterness of it, the comfort under it.*

*Verses 3, 4.—I.* The occasion of the prayer: the contempt of men. This is often the most difficult to bear. 1. Because it is most unreasonable. Why ridicule men for yielding to their own convictions of what is right? 2. Most undeserved. True religion injures no man, but seeks the good of all. 3. Most profane. To reproach the people of God because they are his people is to reproach God himself. II. The subject of the prayer. 1. The prayer: is not for justice, which might be desired, but for mercy. 2. The plea: "For we are," etc. The reproaches of men are an encouragement to look for special help from God. The harp hung upon the willows sends forth its sweetest tones. The less it is in human hands the more freely it is played upon by the Spirit of God.—*G. R.*

*Verse 4.—"Those that are at ease."* I. Explain their state: "at ease." II. Show their ordinary state of mind: "proud." III. Denounce their frequent sin: scorn of the gody. IV. Exhibit their terrible danger.