

PSALM CXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *There is an evident ascent from the last Psalm: that did but hint at the way in which a house may be built up, but this draws a picture of that house built, and adorned with domestic bliss through the Lord's own benediction. There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we close with "peace upon Israel." Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend.*

SUBJECT.—It is a family hymn,—a song for a marriage, or a birth, or for any day in which a happy household has met to praise the Lord. Like all the songs of degrees, it has an eye to Zion and Jerusalem, which are both expressly mentioned, and it closes like Psalms cxxv, cxxx., and cxxxi., with an allusion to Israel. It is a short Psalm, but exceedingly full and suggestive. Its poetry is of the highest order. Perhaps in no country can it be better understood than in our own, for we above all nations delight to sing of "Home, sweet home."

EXPOSITION.

BLESSED is everyone that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

1. "*Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD.*" The last Psalm ended with a blessing,—for the word there translated "happy" is the same as that which is here rendered "blessed": thus the two songs are joined by a catch-word. There is also in them a close community of subject. The fear of God is the corner-stone of all blessedness. We must reverence the ever-blessed God before we can be blessed ourselves. Some think that this life is an evil, an infliction, a thing upon which rests a curse; but it is not so; the God-fearing man has a present blessing resting upon him. It is not true that it would be to him "something better not to be." He is happy now, for he is the child of the happy God, the ever-living Jehovah; and he is even here a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, whose heritage is not misery, but joy. This is true of every one of the God-fearing, of all conditions, in all ages: each one and every one is blessed. Their blessedness may not always be seen by carnal reason, but it is always a fact, for God himself declares that it is so; and we know that those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. Let us cultivate that holy filial fear of Jehovah which is the essence of all true religion;—the fear of reverence, of dread to offend, of anxiety to please, and of entire submission and obedience. This fear of the Lord is the fit fountain of holy living: we look in vain for holiness apart from it: none but those who fear the Lord will ever walk in his ways.

"*That walketh in his ways.*" The religious life, which God declares to be blessed, must be practical as well as emotional. It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no. God's ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after him. A man's heart will be seen in his walk, and the blessing will come where heart and walk are both with God. Note that the first Psalm links the benediction with the walk in a negative way, "Blessed is the man that walketh not," etc.; but here we find it in connection with the positive form of our conversation. To enjoy the divine blessing we must be active, and walk;

we must be methodical, and walk in certain ways; and we must be godly, and walk in the Lord's ways. God's ways are blessed ways; they were cast up by the Blessed One, they were trodden by him in whom we are blessed, they are frequented by the blessed, they are provided with means of blessing, they are paved with present blessings, and they lead to eternal blessedness: who would not desire to walk in them?

2. "*For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.*" The general doctrine of the first verse here receives a personal application: note the change to the second person: "*thou shalt eat,*" etc. This is the portion of God's saints,—to work, and to find a reward in so doing. God is the God of labourers. We are not to leave our worldly callings because the Lord has called us by grace: we are not promised a blessing upon romantic idleness or unreasonable dreaming, but upon hard work and honest industry. Though we are in God's hands we are to be supported by our own hands. He will give us daily bread, but it must be made our own by labour. All kinds of labour are here included; for if one toils by the sweat of his brow, and another does so by the sweat of his brain, there is no difference in the blessing; save that it is generally more healthy to work with the body than with the mind only. Without God it would be vain to labour; but when we are labourers together with God a promise is set before us. The promise is that labour shall be fruitful, and that he who performs it shall himself enjoy the recompense of it. It is a grievous ill for a man to slave his life away and receive no fair remuneration for his toil: as a rule, God's servants rise out of such bondage and claim their own, and receive it: at any rate, this verse may encourage them to do so. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Under the Theocracy the chosen people could see this promise literally fulfilled; but when evil rulers oppressed them their earnings were withheld by churls, and their harvests were snatched away from them by marauders. Had they walked in the fear of the Lord they would never have known such great evils. Some men never enjoy their labour, for they give themselves no time for rest. Eagerness to get takes from them the ability to enjoy. Surely, if it is worth while to labour, it is worth while to eat of that labour. "*Happy shalt thou be,*" or, *Oh, thy happiness.* Heaped up happinesses in the plural belong to that man who fears the Lord. He is happy, and he shall be happy in a thousand ways. The context leads us to expect family happiness. Our God is our household God. The Romans had their Lares and Penates, but we have far more than they in the one only living and true God. "*And it shall be well with thee,*" or *good for thee.* Yes, good is for the good; and it shall be well with those who do well.

"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well."

If we fear God we may dismiss all other fear. In walking in God's ways we shall be under his protection, provision, and approval; danger and destruction shall be far from us: all things shall work our good. In God's view it would not be a blessed thing for us to live without exertion, nor to eat the unearned bread of dependence: the happiest state on earth is one in which we have something to do, strength to do it with, and a fair return for what we have done. This, with the divine blessing, is all that we ought to desire, and it is sufficient for any man who fears the Lord and abhors covetousness. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

3. "*Thy wife.*" To reach the full of earthly felicity a man must not be alone. A helpmeet was needed in Paradise, and assuredly she is not less necessary out of it. He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing. It is not every man that feareth the Lord who has a wife; but if he has, she shall share in his blessedness and increase it.

"*Shall be as a fruitful vine.*" To complete domestic bliss children are sent. They come as the lawful fruit of marriage, even as clusters appear upon the vine. For the grapes the vine was planted; for children was the wife provided. It is generally well with any creature when it fulfills its purpose, and it is so far well with married people when the great design of their union is brought about. They must not look upon fruitfulness as a burden, but as a blessing. Good wives are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters

of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position.

"*By the sides of thine house.*" She keeps to the house : she is a home bird. Some imagine that she is like a vine which is nailed up to the house wall ; but they have no such custom in Palestine, neither is it pleasant to think of a wife as growing up by a wall, and as bound to the very bricks and mortar of her husband's dwelling. No, she is a fruitful vine, and a faithful house-keeper ; if you wish to find her, she is within the house : she is to be found both inside and outside the home, but her chief fruitfulness is in the inner side of the dwelling, which she adorns. Eastern houses usually have an open square in the centre, and the various rooms are ranged around the sides,—there shall the wife be found, busy in one room or another, as the hour of the day demands. She keeps at home, and so keeps the home. It is her husband's house, and she is her husband's ; as the text puts it—"thy wife," and "thy house" ; but by her loving care her husband is made so happy that he is glad to own her as an equal proprietor with himself. for he is hers, and the house is hers too.

"*Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*" Hundreds of times have I seen the young olive plants springing up around the parent stem, and it has always made me think of this verse. The Psalmist never intended to suggest the idea of olive plants round a table, but of young people springing up around their parents, even as olive plants surround the fine, well-rooted tree. The figure is very striking, and would be sure to present itself to the mind of every observer in the olive country. How beautiful to see the gnarled olive, still bearing abundant fruit, surrounded with a little band of sturdy successors, any one of which would be able to take its place should the central olive be blown down, or removed in any other way. The notion of a table in a bower may suit a cockney in a tea-garden, but would never occur to an oriental poet ; it is not the olive plants, but the children, that are round about the table. Moreover, note that it is not olive *branches*, but *plants*,—a very different thing. Our children gather around our table to be fed, and this involves expenses : how much better is this than to see them pining upon beds of sickness, unable to come for their meals ! What a blessing to have sufficient to put upon the table ! Let us for this benefit praise the bounty of the Lord. The wife is busy all over the house, but the youngsters are busiest at meal-times ; and if the blessing of the Lord rest upon the family, no sight can be more delightful. Here we have the vine and the olive blended—joy from the fruitful wife, and solid comfort from the growing family ; these are the choicest products earth can yield : our families are gardens of the Lord. It may help us to value the privileges of our home if we consider where we should be if they were withdrawn. What if the dear partner of our life were removed from the sides of our house to the recesses of the sepulchre ? What is the trouble of children compared with the sorrow of their loss ? Think, dear father, what would be your grief if you had to cry with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when my children were about me."

4. "*Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.*" Mark this. Put a *Nota Bene* against it, for it is worthy of observation. It is not to be inferred that all blessed men are married, and are fathers ; but that this is the way in which the Lord favours godly people who are placed in domestic life. He makes their relationships happy and profitable. In this fashion does Jehovah bless God-fearing households, for he is the God of all the families of Israel. We have seen this blessing scores of times, and we have never ceased to admire in domestic peace the sweetest of human felicity. Family blessedness comes from the Lord, and is a part of his plan for the preservation of a godly race, and for the maintenance of his worship in the land. To the Lord alone we must look for it. The possession of riches will not ensure it ; the choice of a healthy and beautiful bride will not ensure it ; the birth of numerous comely children will not ensure it : there must be the blessing of God, the influence of piety, the result of holy living.

Verse 5. "*The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion.*" A spiritual blessing shall be received by the gracious man, and this shall crown all his temporal mercies. He is one among the many who make up God's inheritance ; his tent is part and parcel of the encampment around the tabernacle ; and therefore when the benediction is pronounced at the centre it shall radiate to him in his place. The blessing of the house of God shall be upon his house. The priestly benediction which is recorded in Numbers vi. 24—26, runs thus : "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the

Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." This is it which shall come upon the head of the God-fearing man. Zion was the centre of blessing, and to it the people looked when they sought for mercy: from the altar of sacrifice, from the mercy-seat, from the Shekinah-light, yea, from Jehovah himself, the blessing shall come to each one of his holy people. "*And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.*" He shall have a patriot's joy as well as a patriarch's peace. God shall give him to see his country prosper, and its metropolitan city flourish. When tent-mercies are followed by temple-mercies, and these are attended by national mercies,—the man, the worshipper, the patriot is trebly favoured of the Lord. This favour is to be permanent throughout the good man's life, and that life is to be a long one, for he is to see his sons' sons. Many a time does true religion bring such blessings to men; and when these good things are denied them, they have a greater reward as a compensation.

6. "*Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.*" This is a great pleasure. Men live their young lives over again in their grandchildren. Does not Solomon say that "children's children are the crown of old men"? So they are. The good man is glad that a pious stock is likely to be continued; he rejoices in the belief that other homes as happy as his own will be built up wherein altars to the glory of God shall smoke with the morning and evening sacrifice. This promise implies long life, and that life rendered happy by its being continued in our offspring. It is one token of the immortality of man that he derives joy from extending his life in the lives of his descendants.

"*And peace upon Israel.*" With this sweet word Psalm cxxv. was closed. It is a favourite formula. Let God's own heritage be at peace, and we are all glad of it. We count it our own prosperity for the chosen of the Lord to find rest and quiet. Jacob was sorely tossed about; his life knew little of peace; but yet the Lord delivered him out of all his tribulations, and brought him to a place of rest in Goshen for a while, and afterwards to sleep with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. His glorious Seed was grievously afflicted and at last crucified; but he has risen to eternal peace, and in his peace we dwell. Israel's spiritual descendants still share his chequered conditions, but there remains a rest for them also, and they shall have peace from the God of peace. Israel was a praying petitioner in the days of his wrestling, but he became a prevailing prince, and therein his soul found peace. Yes, all around it is true—"Peace upon Israel! Peace upon Israel."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Psalm cxxviii. follows Psalm cxxvii. for the same reason as Psalm ii. follows Psalm i. In both instances they are Psalms placed together, of which one begins with *ashrè* (happy, very happy), and the other ends with *ashrè*. In other respects Psalms cxxviii. and cxxvii. supplement one another. They are related to one another much as the New Testament parables of the treasure in the field and the one pearl are related. That which makes man happy is represented in Psalm cxxvii. as a gift coming as a blessing, and in Psalm cxxviii. as a reward coming as a blessing, that which is briefly indicated in the word סָכָר, *sakar*, reward, in cxxvii. 3 being here expanded and unfolded. There it appears as a gift of grace in contrast to the God-estranged self-activity of man; here as a fruit of the *ora et labora*.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—It is to be observed, that here all men are spoken to as wedded; because this is the ordinary estate of most people. See 1 Cor. vii. 1, 2. At this day every Jew is bound to marry at about eighteen years of age, or before twenty; else he is accounted as one that liveth in sin.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is an *ἐπιγαλαμῖος λόγος*, written for the commendation, instruction, and consolation of those who are either already married or are about to enter on that kind of life. It enumerates, therefore, at the commencement, as is usual in songs of this kind, all those things which are regarded as burdens in the married life, such as the labours in seeking to provide for the whole family;

the spouse, and that marriage bond, which, as it were, binds a man and seems to make him a slave, just as that character says in the comedy, "I have taken a wife; I have sold my liberty:" lastly, the education of the children, which certainly is most laborious, and requires the largest expenditure. To lighten the burden of all these things, there is added to each a blessing, or a promise, so that they might appear slight. And at the close, it subjoins in general, a spiritual promise, which easily makes light of all the labours and disquiets of the married life; even if they should be the very heaviest. The blessing comes from Zion or the Church: for there is nothing so burdensome and difficult, but what it can be easily borne by those who are members of the true Church, and know the sources of true consolation.—D. H. Mollerus.

Verse 1.—"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD," etc. Here we have the living fountain of the blessing which rests upon the conjugal and domestic state. When worldly prudence attempts to choose a wife and form a household, it can apply its hand only to so much of the work as has its seat upon earth, and is visible to the eye of sense. It builds, so to speak, the first and the second story, adds cornice and pediment, and the fabric presents a fair appearance—but it has no foundation. Whenever you see the household of a married pair continuing to defy every storm, you may be sure that it rests upon a sure foundation, lying beyond the reach of human sense, and that that foundation is *the fear of the Lord*. To the fear of the Lord, therefore, the holy Psalmist has wisely given a place in front of this beautiful Psalm, which celebrates the blessing that descends upon conjugal and domestic life.—Augustus F. Tholuck, in "*Hours of Christian Devotion*," 1870.

Verse 1.—"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD." There is a fear of the Lord which hath terror in it and not blessedness. The apprehension with which a warring rebel regards his triumphant and offended sovereign, or the feelings of a fraudulent bankrupt towards a stern creditor, or, a conscience-stricken criminal to a righteous judge, are frequently types of men's feelings in regard to God. This evidently cannot be the fear which the "blessed" of this Psalm feel. Nor can theirs, on the other hand, be the tormenting fear of self-reproach.

Their fear is that which the believed revelations given of him in his Word produce. It is the fear which a child feels towards an honoured parent,—a fear to offend: it is that which they who have been rescued from destruction feel to the benefactor who nobly and at the vastest sacrifice interposed for their safety,—a fear to act unworthily of his kindness: it is that which fills the breast of a pardoned and grateful rebel in the presence of a venerated sovereign at whose throne he is permitted to stand in honour,—a fear lest he should ever forget his goodness, and give him cause to regret it. Such is the fear of the Christian now: a fear which reverence for majesty, gratitude for mercies, dread of displeasure, desire of approval, and longing for the fellowship of heaven, inspire; the fear of angels and the blessed Son; the fear not of sorrow but of love, which shrinks with instinctive recoil from doing aught that would tend to grieve, or from denying aught that would tend to honour. Religion is the grand and the only wisdom; and since the beginning, the middle, and the end of it, is the fear of the Lord, blessed is every man that is swayed by it.—Robert Nisbel, in "*The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims*," 1863.

Verse 1.—"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD." Let us take a little of the character of the blessed man. Who is it that is undaunted? "*The man that feareth God.*" Fear sounds rather contrary to blessedness; hath an air of misery; but add whom. He that feareth the LORD; that touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not: he shall not be afraid; all petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear; and this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say—"If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased; no matter who despise me, if he account me his. Though all forsake me, though my dearest friends grow estranged, if he reject me not, that is my only fear; and for that I am not perplexed, I know he will not." A believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, the anger of God to fall upon him; he accounts that only terrible; but yet he doth not fear it, doth not apprehend it will fall on him, is better persuaded of the goodness of God. So this fear is still joined with trust:—"Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy"; Ps. xxxiii. 18.—Robert Leighton, 1611—1684.

Verse 1.—"Blessed is every one," etc. There is a stress on all ("every one"), teaching that no disparity of sex or condition, of rank or wealth, affects the degree

of happiness granted by God to every one of his true servants in their several stations. It is to be observed, further, that whenever the fear of the Lord is mentioned in Holy Writ, it is never set by itself, as though sufficient for the consummation of our faith, but always has something added or prefixed, by which to estimate its due proportion of perfection, according as it is stated by Solomon in the Proverbs (ii. 3—5).—*J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale, in "A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediæval Writers," 1860.*

Verse 1.—"Blessed is every one" etc. It is a precious promise, but perhaps thou art tempted to say in thy heart, not meant for everyone. Wilt thou answer against the Lord? Hear him speak in the song. He says, "every one." "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD." None are excluded but those who will not walk in his ways.—*Edward Jewitt Robinson.*

Verse 1.—"Blessed," etc. The adage, "That it is best not to be born at all, or to die as soon as possible," has certainly been long since received by the common consent of almost all men. Carnal reason judges either that all mankind without exception are miserable, or that fortune is more favourable to ungodly and wicked men than to the good. To the sentiment that those are blessed who fear the Lord, it has an entire aversion. So much the more requisite, then, is it to dwell upon the consideration of this truth. Farther, as this blessedness is not apparent to the eye, it is of importance, in order to our being able to apprehend it, first to attend to the definition which will be given of it by-and-bye; and secondly, to know that it depends chiefly upon the protection of God. Although we collect together all the circumstances which seem to contribute to a happy life, surely nothing will be found more desirable than to be kept hidden under the guardianship of God. If this blessing is, in our estimation, to be preferred, as it deserves, to all other good things, whoever is persuaded that the care of God is exercised about the world and human affairs, will at the same time unquestionably acknowledge that what is here laid down is the chief point of happiness.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1.—"That feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways." The fear of the Lord is the internal principle; but unless there be a corresponding expression in the outward life, what reason is there to suppose that it has any existence at all?

Observe also, that there is no walking in the ways of the Lord, until his fear be established in the heart. There can be no genuine morality apart from the fear of God. How can a man obey God while his affections are alienated from him?—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 1.—"That walketh in his ways." God makes blessed those that walk in his ways, because he himself walks with them. This is said concerning David, and it is explained how that companionship blessed him, 2 Sam. v. 10: "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him": where the "and" may be taken as the causal particle "because." That God does indeed join himself to those who walk in his ways as companion and leader we have in 2 Chron. xvii. 3, 4: "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father."—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands," etc. There is a fourfold literal sense here: Thou shalt live by honest, peaceful labour, not by rapine and violence on that produced by the toil of others, nor yet indolently and luxuriously; thou shalt "eat," and not penuriously stint thyself and others; thy crops shall not be blighted, but shall bring forth abundantly; and no enemy shall destroy or carry off thy harvest. And these two latter interpretations accord best with the converse punishments threatened to the disobedient by Moses. "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands." But he who hates labour does not eat of it, nor can he say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work": John iv. 34. On the other hand, he to whom such labour is a delight, does not merely look forward in hope to the future fruits or rewards of labour, but even here and now finds sustenance and pleasure in toiling for God; so that it is "well" with him in the world, even amidst all its cares and troubles, and he "shall be happy" in that which is to come, whence sorrow is banished for ever, as it is written in the gospel: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God": Luke xiv. 15.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2.—"Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands," etc. This must they learn also which are married, that they must labour. For the law of nature requireth

that the husband should sustain and nourish his wife and his children. For after that man and wife do know that they ought to fear God their Creator, who not only made them, but gave his blessing also unto his creature; this secondly must they know, that something they must do that they consume not their days in ease and idleness. Hesiod, the poet, giveth his counsel, that first thou shouldst get thee a horse, then a wife, and also an ox to till the ground. . . . For albeit that our diligence, care, and travail is not able to maintain our family, yet God useth such as a means by the which he will bless us.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 2.—“*Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.*” Men have dreamed fascinating dreams of removing the disabilities and limitations of the world and the evils of life, without sorrow. Poets have pictured earthly paradises, where life would be one long festival,—

“Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.”

But vain are all such dreams and longings. They are of human, not of Divine origin, and spring from a root of selfishness and not of holiness. They cannot be realized in a fallen world, full of sorrow because full of sin. All blessings in man's economy are got from pains. Happiness is the flower that grows from a thorn of sorrow transformed by man's cultivation. The beautiful myth which placed the golden apples of the Hesperides in a garden guarded by dragons, is an allegory illustrative of the great human fact, that not till we have slain the dragons of selfishness and sloth can we obtain any of the golden successes of life. Supposing it were possible that we could obtain the objects of our desire without any toil or trouble, we should not enjoy them. To benefit us really, they must be the growths of our own self-denial and labour. And this is the great lesson which the miracles of our Lord, wrought in the manner in which they were, unfolded. They teach us that, in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act,—that God crowns every honest and faithful effort of man with success: “*Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*”—*Hugh Macmillan*, in “*The Ministry of Nature,*” 1871.

Verse 2 (first clause).—

Labour, the symbol of man's punishment;
Labour, the secret of man's happiness.

James Montgomery, 1771—1854.

Verse 2.—“*Happy shalt thou be.*” Oh trust in the Lord for happiness as well as for help! All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust “in him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy”; who, of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that, receiving them as his gifts, and as pledges of his love, we may enjoy all that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all; while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand into all that he bestows on his thankful children, who, having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all and above all.—*John Wesley*, 1703—1791.

Verse 2.—“*Happy shalt thou be.*” Mr. Disraeli puts these remarkable words into the mouth of one of his characters:—“Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.” A sad and cheerless view of life's progress that! It may be true, in measure, of a life separated from godliness; it certainly is not true of a life allied with godliness. Let there be “life and godliness,” and then youth is not a blunder, but a wise purpose and a glowing hope; manhood is not a struggle only, but a conquest and a joy; old age is not a regret, but a rich memory and a glorious prospect.—*R. P. Macmaster*, in “*The Baptist Magazine,*” 1878.

Verse 3.—“*Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,*” etc. The comparison would perhaps be brought out more clearly by arranging the verse as follows:—

“Thy wife shall be in the inner part of thy house
Like a fruitful vine;
Thy children round about thy table
Like the shoots of the olive.”

In the inner part, literally, "the sides of thy house," as in Amos vi. 10, *i.e.*, the women's apartments, as marking the proper sphere of the wife engaged in her domestic duties, and also to some extent her seclusion, though this was far less amongst the Jews than amongst other Orientals.

The "vine" is an emblem chiefly of *fruitfulness*, but perhaps also of dependence, as needing support; the "olive," of vigorous, healthy, joyous life. The same figure is employed by Euripides, *Herc. Fur.*, 839. *Med.* 1098.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine," etc. We do not remember to have met with a single instance, in the East, of vines trained *against the walls of a house*, or of olives near or about a house. Neither have we read of such instances. The passage doubtless derives its figures from the fertility of the vine, and from the appearance of the olive, or the order in which olive trees are planted. The construction would then be: "Thy wife, in the sides (interior apartments) of thy house, shall be as the fruitful vine, and thy children round about thy table, like olive plants."—*John Kitto* (1804—1854), in "The Pictorial Bible."

Verse 3.—"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house." The wife is likened not to thorns or briars, nor even to oaks or to other fruits and trees, but to the vine; and also to a vine neither in a vineyard nor in a garden, but set by the walls of the house; also not barren, but fertile and fruit-bearing. This admonishes husbands as well as wives of their duties. For as the walls support the vine, and defend it against the force of winds and tempests, so ought husbands, as far as is in their power, to defend their wives by their godly conversation and wholesome teachings and institutions against the pestilential wind of the old serpent; also against the injuries of evil-disposed men. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church": Ephes. v. 28, 29.

Further, the vine is exceedingly fragile wood, and not meet for any work, Ezek. xv. 4. Husbands, therefore, should remember that they ought to behave towards their wives patiently and prudently, as with the weaker vessel; not keeping in mind the fragility of the wood, but the abundance and sweetness of the fruit. If husbands observe this, that will happen to them which Scripture says concerning the peaceful time of Solomon, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree": 1 Kings iv. 25. Such was the married life of Abraham with Sarah, Isaac with Rebecca, Jacob with Leah and Rachel.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 3.—"A fruitful vine by the sides of thine house." It does not say *on the sides* of the house, but *by the sides*. The passage probably refers to the trellised bowers which often lead up to the houses, and are covered with vines, the grapes hanging over head. Sitting in these bowers is sitting under our own vines: Micah iv. 4. I have seen in Constantinople grapes hanging over the people's heads in the principal streets, the vines being trained from one side of the street to the other.—*John Gadsby*, in "My Wanderings," 1860.

Verse 3.—"By the sides of thine house." Not on the roof, nor on the floor; the one is too high, she is no ruler; the other too low, she is no slave: but in the sides, an equal place between both.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3.—"By the sides of thine house." The house is her proper place; for she is "the beauty of the house"; there her business lies, there she is safe. The ancients painting them with a snail under their feet, and the Egyptians denying their women shoes, and the Scythians burning the bride's chariot axle-tree at her door, when she was brought to her husband's house, and the angel's asking Abraham where Sarah was (though he knew well enough), that it might be observed, she was "in the tent," do all intimate, that, by the law of nature, and by the rules of religion, the wife ought to keep at home, unless urgent necessity do call her abroad.—*Richard Steele* (—1692), in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 3.—As it is visible that the good man's sons being "like olive plants round about his table," means not that they should be like the olive plants which grew round his table, it being, I presume, a thought in Bishop Patrick that will not be defended, that the Psalmist refers to a table spread in an arbour composed of young olive trees, for we find no such arbours in the Levant, nor is the tree very proper for such a purpose; so in like manner the first clause must signify, thy wife shall be in the sides, or private apartments, of thy house, fruitful as a thriving vine: the place here mentioned (the sides of the house) referring to the wife, not to the vine; as

the other (the table) refers to the children, not to the olives. Nor is this a new thought, it is a remark that Musculus and other interpreters have made.

The Hebrew word, translated *sides*, is very well known to signify the more *private apartments* of a house, as they have also remarked; and he that reads Dr. Shaw's description of an Eastern house, must immediately see the propriety of calling the private apartments *its sides*. Such a house consists of a square court, which the doctor observes, is called the *midst* of the house: and private apartments round it, which may as properly be called *its sides* in consequence: into this middle of the house, or this quadrangle, company, he tells us, are sometimes received, in which *other authors* tell us their *wives* remain concealed at such times.—*Thomas Harmer, 1719—1788.*

Verse 3.—“*Thy children like olive plants,*” etc. Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have hit upon a beautiful illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it, we may even fancy that they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole—a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 3.—Man by nature, uninfluenced by grace, is “a wild olive tree”; and the object of most parents is merely to cultivate this wild olive tree. What anxiety is there about accomplishments which, how attractive soever, are but the dying blossoms of this wild olive tree!—*Richard Cecil, 1748—1810.*

Verse 3.—Although the world is carried away by irregular desires after various objects, between which it is perpetually fluctuating in its choice, God gives us in this Psalm a description of what he considers to be a blessing beyond all riches, and therefore we ought to hold it in high estimation. If a man has a wife of amiable manners as the companion of his life, let him set no less value upon this blessing than Solomon did, who, in Prov. xix. 14, affirms that it is God alone who gives a good wife. In like manner, if a man be a father of a numerous offspring, let him receive that goodly boon with a thankful heart.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—Before the fall Paradise was man's home; since the fall home has been his Paradise.—*Augustus William Hare (1792—1834), and Julius Charles Hare (1795—1855), in “Guesses at Truth.”*

Verse 4.—As Haman caused it to be proclaimed (Esther vi. 9), “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour”; so here, “Behold, that *thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.*” He shall be blessed in his wife, and blessed in his children; so blessed in both that the Psalmist calls all to behold it, as a rare, beautiful, yea, wonderful sight: “Behold, *thus shall the man be blessed.*” And yet the man fearing God shall be blessed more than *thus*: his blessing shall come in the best way (verse 5): “*The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion*”; his temporal mercies shall come in a spiritual way, yea, he shall have spiritual blessings: “*He shall bless thee out of Zion*”; and he shall have blessings beyond his own walls: “*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.*” Sometimes a good man can take no content in his family mercies because of the church's afflictions; he “prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy” (Ps. cxxxvii. 6), and while that is mourning he cannot but be sorrowing, though his own house be full of joy. Sometimes a man's own family is so afflicted, and his house so full of sorrow, that he cannot but mourn, even when Jerusalem rejoiceth and Zion is glad. But when a good man looks home to his own house and sees good there; when also he looks abroad to Jerusalem and sees good there too, how full is his joy! how complete is his blessedness! and, “Behold, *thus the man is blessed that feareth the LORD.*”—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4.—“Behold, that *thus shall the man be blessed,*” etc. It is asserted with a note commanding attention: *behold* it by faith in the promise; *behold* it by observation in the performance of the promise; *behold* it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so; for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—“*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem,*” etc. What is added concerning “*the good of Jerusalem*” is to be regarded as enjoining upon the godly the duty not

only of seeking their own individual welfare, or of being devoted to their own peculiar interests ; but rather of having it as their chief desire to see the church of God in a flourishing condition. It would be a very unreasonable thing for each member to desire what may be profitable for itself, while in the meantime the body was neglected. From our extreme proneness to err in this respect, the prophet, with good reason, recommends solicitude about the public welfare ; and he mingles together domestic blessings and the common benefits of the church in such a way as to show us that they are things joined together, and which it is unlawful to put asunder.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 6.—Lord, let thy blessing so accompany my endeavours in their breedings, that all my sons may be Benaiahs, the Lord's building, and then they will all be Abners, their father's light ; and that all my daughters may be Bethias, the Lord's daughters, and then they will all be Abigail's, their father's joy.—*George Swinnoek.*

Verse 6.—Religion is as favourable for long life as for happiness. She promotes long life by destroying those evils, the tendency of which is to limit the duration of human existence. War sweeps millions into a premature grave. Men live longer in Christian than in heathen countries. They live longer in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries. The direct effect of true religion is to increase the period of human life. "Length of days is in her right hand."—*N. M' Michael.*

Verse 6.—Connecting this with the next Psalm we find the following in a famous Scotch divine :—" 'Peace upon Israel.' The great blessing of peace, which the Lord hath promised to his people even in this life, (for where the Lord gives mercy to any, he gives them peace also, peace and grace are inseparably joined together,) this peace, I say, does not consist in this, that the people of God shall have no enemies ; no, for there is an immortal and endless enmity against them. Neither does their peace consist in this, that their enemies shall not assault them ; neither does it consist in this, that their enemies shall not molest or afflict them. We do but deceive ourselves if so be that we imagine, so long as we are in this our pilgrimage, and in our warfare here, if we promise to ourselves a peace of this kind ; for while we live in this world, we shall still have enemies, and these enemies shall assault us, and persecute and afflict us."—*Alexander Henderson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The universality of the blessedness of God-fearing men. Circumstances, personal or relative, cannot alter the blessing ; nor age, nor public opinion, nor even their own sense of unworthiness.

Verse 1.—Consider : I. The union of a right fear with a right walk. 1. There is a wrong fear, because slavish ; this never can lead to genuine obedience, which must be willingly and cheerfully rendered. 2. But the fear of reverence and filial love will surely turn the feet to God's ways, keep them steadfast therein, and wing them with speed. II. The blessedness of him in whom they are united. 1. It is blessedness of life ; for that is prospered. 2. It is blessedness of domestic happiness ; for where the head of a family is holy, the family is the home of peace. 3. It is the blessedness of a holy influence in every sphere of his activity. 4. It is deep-felt heart-blessedness in walking with God. 5. And all is but a prelude to the everlasting blessedness of heaven.—*J. F.*

Verse 2.—The blessednesses of the righteous are first generalized, then particularized. Here they are divided into three particulars. I. The fruit of past labours. II. Present enjoyment. III. Future welfare : " It shall be well with thee." Well in time ; well in death ; well at the last judgment ; well for ever.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—I. Labour a blessing to him who fears God. II. The fruits of labour the result of God's blessing. III. The enjoyment of the fruits of labour a further blessing from God.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2 (first clause).—Success in life. I. Its source—God's blessing. II. Its channel—our own labour. III. The measure in which it is promised—as much

as we can eat. More is above the promise. IV. The enjoyment. We are permitted to eat or enjoy our labour.

Verse 2 (second clause).—Godly happiness. I. Follows upon God's blessing. II. Grows out of character: "feareth the Lord." III. Follows labour: see preceding sentence. IV. It is supported by well-being: see following sentence.

Verse 2 (last clause).—I. It shall be well with thee while thou livest. II. It shall be better with thee when thou diest. III. It shall be best of all with thee in eternity.—*Adapted from Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3.—The blessing of children. I. They are round our table—expense, anxiety, responsibility, pleasure. II. They are like olive plants—strong, planted in order, coming on to succeed us, fruitful for God—as the olive provided oil for the lamp.

Verse 3.—A complete family picture. Here are the husband, the wife, the children, the house, the rooms in the side, the table. We should ask a blessing upon each, bless God for each, and use each in a blessed manner.

Verse 4.—Domestic happiness the peculiar blessing of piety. Show how it produces and maintains it.

Verse 5.—The blessing out of Zion. See Numbers vi. 24—26.

Verse 5.—Two priceless mercies. I. The house of God a blessing to our house. It is connected with our own salvation, edification, consolation, etc. It is our hope for the conversion of our children and servants, etc. It is the place of their education, and for the formation of helpful friendship, etc. II. Our house a blessing to God's house. Personal interest in the church, hospitality, generosity, service, etc. Children aiding holy work. Wife useful, etc.

Verse 6.—Old age blessed when—I. Life has been spent in the fear of God. II. When it is surrounded to its close by human affection. III. When it maintains its interest in the cause of God.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 6 (last clause).—Church peace—its excellence, its enemies, its friends, its fruits.

