

PSALM CXLIX.

We are almost at the last Psalm, and still among the Hallelujahs. This is "a new song," evidently intended for the new creation, and the men who are of new heart. It is such a song as may be sung at the coming of the Lord, when the new dispensation shall bring overthrow to the wicked and honour to all the saints. The tone is exceedingly jubilant and exultant. All through one hears the beat of the feet of dancing maidens, keeping time to the timbrel and harp.

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people;

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

1. "*Praise ye the LORD.*" Specially you, ye chosen people, whom he has made to be his saints. You have praised him aforetime, praise him yet again; yea, for ever praise him. With renewed zeal and fresh delight lift up your song unto Jehovah. "*Sing unto the Lord a new song.*" Sing, for it is the fittest method for expressing reverent praise. Sing a hymn newly composed, for you have now a new knowledge of God. He is ever new in his manifestations; his mercies are new every morning; his deliverances are new in every night of sorrow; let your gratitude and thanksgivings be new also. It is well to repeat the old; it is more useful to invent the new. Novelty goes well with heartiness. Our singing should be "unto the Lord"; the songs we sing should be of him and to him, "for of him, and to him, and through him are all things." Among our novelties there should be new songs: alas! men are fonder of making new complaints than new Psalms. Our new songs should be devised in Jehovah's honour; indeed all our newest thoughts should run towards him. Never can we find a nobler subject for a song than the Lord, nor one more full of fresh matter for a new song, nor one which we are personally so much bound to sing as a new song "unto the Lord." "*And his praise in the congregation of saints.*" Saints are precious, and a congregation of saints is a treasure house of jewels. God is in the midst of saints, and because of this we may well long to be among them. They are so full of his praise that we feel at home among them when we are ourselves full of praise. The sanctuary is the house of praise as well as the house of prayer. All saints praise God: they would not be saints if they did not. Their praise is sincere, suitable, seasonable, and acceptable. Personal praise is sweet unto God, but congregated praise has a multiplicity of sweetnesses in it. When holy ones meet, they adore the Holy One. Saints do not gather to amuse themselves with music, nor to extol one another, but to sing his praise whose

saints they are. A congregation of saints is heaven upon earth : should not Jehovah, the Lord of saints, have all the praise that can come from such an assembly ? Yet at times even saintly conclaves need to be stirred up to thanksgiving ; for saints may be sad and apprehensive, and then their spirits require to be raised to a higher key, and stimulated to happier worship.

2. "*Let Israel rejoice in him that made him.*" Here is that new creation which calls for the new song. It was Jehovah who made Israel to be Israel, and the tribes to become a great nation : therefore let the Founder of the nation be had in perpetual honour. Joy and rejoicing are evidently to be the special characteristics of the new song. The religion of the dead in sin is more apt to chant dirges than to sing hallelujahs ; but when we are made new in the spirit of our minds we joy and rejoice in him that made us. Our joy is in our God and King : we choose no lower delight. "*Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*" Those who had seen the tribes formed into a settled kingdom as well as into a united nation should rejoice. Israel is the nation, Zion is the capital of the kingdom : Israel rejoices in her Maker, Zion in her King. In the case of our God we who believe in him are as glad of his Government as we are of his Creation : his reign is as truly the making of us as was his divine power. The children of Israel are happy to be made a people ; the children of Zion are equally happy to be ruled as a people. In every character our God is the source of joy to us : this verse issues a permit to our joy, yea it lays an injunction upon us to be glad in the Lord.

3. "*Let them praise his name in the dance : let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*" Thus let them repeat the triumph of the Red Sea, which was ever the typical glory of Israel. Miriam led the daughters of Israel in the dance when the Lord had triumphed gloriously ; was it not most fit that she should ? The sacred dance of devout joy is no example, nor even excuse, for frivolous dances, much less for lewd ones. Who could help dancing when Egypt was vanquished, and the tribes were free ? Every mode of expressing delight was bound to be employed on so memorable an occasion. Dancing, singing, and playing on instruments were all called into requisition, and most fitly so. There are unusual seasons which call for unusual expressions of joy. When the Lord saves a soul its holy joy overflows, and it cannot find channels enough for its exceeding gratitude : if the man does not leap, or play, or sing, at any rate he praises God, and wishes for a thousand tongues with which to magnify his Saviour. Who would wish it to be otherwise ? Young converts are not to be restrained in their joy. Let them sing and dance while they can. How can they mourn now that their Bridegroom is with them ? Let us give the utmost liberty to joy. Let us never attempt its suppression, but issue in the terms of this verse a double license for exultation. If any ought to be glad it is the children of Zion ; rejoicing is more fit for Israel than for any other people : it is their own folly and fault that they are not oftener brimming with joy in God, for the very thought of him is delight.

4. "*For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people ;*" and therefore they should take pleasure in him. If our joy be pleasing to him let us make it full. What condescension is this on Jehovah's part, to notice, to love, and to delight in his chosen ! Surely there is nothing in our persons, or our actions, which could cause pleasure to the Ever-blessed One, were it not that he condescends to men of low estate. The thought of the Lord's taking pleasure in us is a mine of joy never to be exhausted. "*He will beautify the meek with salvation.*" They are humble, and feel their need of salvation ; he is gracious, and bestows it upon them. They lament their deformity and he puts a beauty upon them of the choicest sort. He saves them by sanctifying them, and thus they wear the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of a joy which springs out of full salvation. He makes his people meek, and then makes the meek beautiful. Herein is grand argument for worshipping the Lord with the utmost exultation : he who takes such a pleasure in us must be approached with every token of exceeding joy.

God taketh pleasure in all his children as Jacob loved all his sons ; but the meek are his Josephs, and upon these he puts the coat of many colours, beautifying them with peace, content, joy, holiness, and influence. A meek and quiet spirit is called "an ornament," and certainly it is "the beauty of holiness." When God himself beautifies a man, he becomes beautiful indeed and beautiful for ever.

The verse may be read, "He shall beautify the meek with salvation," or "He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance," or, "He shall beautify the meek with victory" ; and each of these readings gives a new shade of meaning, well

worthy of quiet consideration. Each reading also suggests new cause for joyful adoration. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord."

5. "*Let the saints be joyful in glory.*" God has honoured them, and put a rare glory upon them; therefore let them exult therein. Shall those to whom God is their glory be cast down and troubled? Nay, let their joy proclaim their honourable estate. "*Let them sing aloud upon their beds.*" Their exultation should express itself in shouts and songs, for it is not a feeling of which they have any need to be ashamed. That which is so fully justified by fact, may well be loudly proclaimed. Even in their quietest retreats let them burst into song; when no one hears them, let them sing aloud unto God. If confined by sickness let them joy in God. In the night watches let them not lie awake and weep, but like nightingales let them charm the midnight hours. Their shouts are not now for the battlefield, but for the places of their rest: they can peacefully lie down and yet enjoy the victory with which the Lord has beautified them. Without fighting, faith wins and sings the victory. What a blessing to have our beds made into thrones, and our retirements turned into triumphs!

6. "*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.*" It seems they are not always on their beds, but are ready for deeds of prowess. When called to fight, the meek are very hard to overcome; they are just as steady in conflict as they are steadfast in patience. Besides, their way of fighting is of an extraordinary sort, for they sing to God but keep their swords in their hands. They can do two things at a time: if they do not wield the trowel and the sword, at least they sing and strike. In this Israel was not an example, but a type: we will not copy the chosen people in making literal war, but we will fulfil the emblem by carrying on spiritual war. We praise God and contend with our corruptions; we sing joyfully and war earnestly with evil of every kind. Our weapons are not carnal, but they are mighty, and wound with both back and edge. The word of God is all edge; whichever way we turn it, it strikes deadly blows at falsehood and wickedness. If we do not praise we shall grow sad in our conflict; and if we do not fight we shall become presumptuous in our song. The verse indicates a happy blending of the chorister and the crusader.

Note how each thing in the believer is emphatic: if he sings, it is high praises, and praises deep down in his throat, as the original hath it; and if he fights, it is with the sword, and the sword is two-edged. The living God imparts vigorous life to those who trust him. They are not of a neutral tint: men both hear them and feel them. Quiet is their spirit, but in that very quietude abides the thunder of an irresistible force. When godly men give battle to the powers of evil each conflict is high praise unto the God of goodness. Even the tumult of our holy war is a part of the music of our lives.

7. "*To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.*" This was once literally the duty of Israel: when they came into Canaan they fulfilled the righteous sentence of the Lord upon guilty nations. At this hour, under the gentler dispensation of grace, we wrestle not with flesh and blood; yet is our warfare none the less stern, and our victory none the less sure. All evil shall eventually be overthrown: the Lord shall display his justice against evil-doers, and in that warfare his servants shall play their parts. The saints shall judge the world. Both the conflict and the victory at the end of it shall cause glory to God, and honour to his holy ones.

8. "*To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.*" Thus are the greatest enemies of Jehovah and his people reduced to shame, rendered helpless, and themselves punished. This was Israel's boast in actual fact, it is ours spiritually. The chief powers of evil shall be restrained and ultimately destroyed. Those who made captives of the godly shall themselves be made captive. The powers of evil cannot bind our King, but by his power *their* king shall be bound with a great chain, and shut up in the bottomless pit, that he may at length be trodden under the feet of saints.

9. "*To execute upon them the judgment written.*" Israel as a nation had this to do, and did it, and then they rejoiced in the God who gave success to their arms. We praise our God after another fashion; we are not executioners of justice, but heralds of mercy. It would be a sad thing for any one to misuse this text: lest any warlike believer should be led to do so, we would remind him that the execution must not go beyond the sentence and warrant; and we have received no warrant of execution against our fellow men. Christians have no commission of vengeance;

it is theirs to execute the command of mercy, and that alone. "*This honour have all his saints.*" All the godly shared in the triumphs of the Lord when he smote Israel's foes. We have like honour, but it is shown in victories of another sort. All the holy ones are sent upon errands by their holy Lord. The honours described in this Psalm are common to all the family of grace; and such service as the Lord appoints is to be undertaken by every one of them, without exception. The Lord honours all his chosen here, and he will glorify them all hereafter: this rule is without exception. Surely in this we have the best argument for glorifying the Lord, wherefore we close our new song with another Hallelujah, "*Praise ye the Lord.*"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The foregoing Psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this is a hymn to the Redeemer.—*Matthew Henry.*

Whole Psalm.—The New Testament spiritual church cannot pray as the Old Testament national church here prays. Under the illusion that it must be used as a prayer without any spiritual transmutation, Psalm cxlix. has become the watchword of the most horrible errors. It was by means of this Psalm that Caspar Scloppius, in his *Classicum Belli Sacri*, which, as Bakius says, is written, not with ink, but with blood, inflamed the Roman Catholic princes to the Thirty Years' Religious War. And in the Protestant church Thomas Müntzer stirred up the War of the Peasants by means of this Psalm. We see that the Christian cannot make such a Psalm directly his own, without disavowing the apostolic warning, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. x. 4). The praying Christian must therefore transpose the letter of this Psalm into the spirit of the New Covenant.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—"A new song"; for this Psalm is a song of renovation. If Israel when restored and renewed had new cause for rejoicing, much more should the New Covenant Israel feel constrained to strike the new note of triumph. Infidels blaspheme, the ungrateful murmur, the thoughtless are silent, the mournful weep, all acting according to their old nature; but new men take up a new mode, which is the divinely-inspired song of peace, charity, and joy in the Lord.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 1.—"A new song."—The old man hath an old song, the new man a new song. The Old Testament is an old song, the New Testament is a new song. . . . Whoso loveth earthly things singeth an old song: let him that desireth to sing a new song love the things of eternity. Love itself is new and eternal; therefore is it ever new, because it never groweth old.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"Saints."—A title not to be restricted to the godly of the first times, but common to all that are saved in all after-times also, as Eph. iv. 12. This name putteth mere morality and formal profession out of countenance, as the sun doth a glow-worm. Sainthood is a matter of Divine workmanship, and therefore it is far more remarkable than human excellence. We should keep up the name of "saints," that the reality of the true religion be not lowered by avoiding this title; for in these times it is to be feared that the name is out of use, because holiness itself is out of fashion.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"Let Israel rejoice," etc. Give us, oh, give us the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue whilst he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful must be uniformly joyous—a spiritual sunshine—graceful from very gladness—beautiful because bright.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

Verse 2.—"Rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful."

You are never right until you can be heartily merry in the Lord, nor until you can enjoy mirth in connection with holiness.—*Walter Marshall*.

Verse 2.—“*Him that made him.*” Jehovah is called *Maker*, as one who formed Israel as a nation, and constituted the people a kingdom, though they had been a race of slaves. This is more than a general creation of men.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 2.—Literally the Hebrew here brings forward the mystic doctrine of the Trinity, for it reads, “Let Israel rejoice in God *his Makers.*”—*Simon de Muis*.

Verse 2.—“*Joyful in their King.*” I beg the reader to remark with me, here is nothing said of Israel being joyful in what their king had done for them. These things in their proper place, became sweet subjects of praise. But the subject of praise in which Israel is now to be engaged is Jesus himself. Reader, pause over this apparently small, but most important, distinction. The Lord is gracious in his gifts, gracious in his love, gracious in his salvation. Every thing he gives, it is from his mercy, and ever to be so acknowledged. But Jesus’ gifts are not himself: I cannot be satisfied with his gifts, while I know that to others he gives his *Person*. It is JESUS himself I want. Though he give me all things that I need, yet if he be to me himself all things that I need, in him I have all things. Hence, therefore, let us see that Jesus not only gives us all, but that he is our all.—*Robert Hawker*.

Verse 3.—“*The dance*” was in early times one of the modes of expressing religious joy (Ex. xv. 20; 2 Sam. vi. 16). When from any cause men’s ideas shall undergo such a revolution as to lead them to do the same thing for the same purpose, it will be time enough to discuss that matter. In our time, dancing has no such use, and cannot, therefore, in any wise be justified by pleading the practice of pious Jews of old.—*William Swan Plumer*.

Verse 3.—“*Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.*” They who from hence urge the use of music in religious worship, must, by the same rule, introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David’s dancing before the ark (Judges xxi. 21). But whereas many Scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel canon for Psalmody is to “sing with the spirit and with the understanding.”—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 2.—“*Timbrel.*” The *toph* was employed by David in all the festivities of religion (2 Sam. vi. 5). The occasions on which it was used were mostly joyful, and those who played upon it were generally females (Psalm lxxviii. 25), as was the case among most ancient nations, and is so at the present day in the East. The usages of the modern East might adequately illustrate all the scriptural allusions to this instrument, but happily we have more ancient and very valuable illustration from the monuments of Egypt. In these we find that the tambourine was a favourite instrument, both on sacred and festive occasions. There were three kinds, differing, no doubt, in sound as well as in form; one was circular, another square or oblong, and the third consisted of two squares separated by a bar. They were all beaten by the hand, and often used as an accomplishment to the harp and other instruments. The tambourine was usually played by females, who are represented as dancing to its sound without the accompaniment of any other instrument.—*John Kitto*.

Verse 3.—“*Harp.*” Of the *kinnor* the Scripture affords little further information than that it was composed of the sounding parts of good wood, and furnished with strings. Josephus asserts that it was furnished with ten strings, and played with a *plectrum*; which, however, is not understood to imply that it never had any other number of strings, or was always played with the *plectrum*. David certainly played it with the hand (1 Sam. xvi. 23; xviii. 10; xix. 9); and it was probably used in both ways, according to its size. That this instrument was really a *harp* is now very generally denied (*Kitto*). The reader will, by this time, have balanced the probabilities as to the nature and construction of the *kinnor*; and most likely he will be led to think that it was either a *guitar* or *lyre*, a belief which seems to be gaining ground, on account of the aptitude of such instruments for the uses to which the *kinnor* was devoted.—*J. Stainer*.

Verse 4.—“*For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people.*” In the text there are two causes assigned why the saints should be excited to praise the Lord, and to be joyful in their King.

I.—THE DELIGHT WHICH THE LORD HAS IN THE SAINTS. “He taketh pleasure

in his people." In this statement there are three subjects for inquiry, namely : 1. *Who* are the Lord's people ? 2. *Why* he takes pleasure in them ? 3. *In what respects* he takes pleasure in them ?

1. *Who are the Lord's people ?* Many are the names and titles given to them in Scripture. We find one in the second clause of the text ; but it equally belongs to the first. "He will beautify *the meek.*" The scriptural term "*meekness*" is one which singularly characterizes and distinguishes the true Christian. It, in fact, contains in itself a combination of graces, which are most evidently the fruit of the Spirit, and can grow on no other tree than on the Christian vine. *Meekness*, as a Christian grace, may be considered as it respects both God and man. As it respects God, it implies poverty of spirit ; humiliation of heart arising from a sense of guilt and a feeling of corruption ; submission to God's will ; silence and patience under his rod ; acquiescence with his dispensations ; and a surrender of our own natural desires and inclinations to his overruling appointments. As it respects man, meekness comprehends lowliness of mind, and a readiness to prefer others before ourselves ; gentleness of disposition and behaviour ; forbearance under provocations ; forgiveness of injuries ; quietness of spirit, and moderation in pushing forward our own interest and benefit. These are the qualities which distinguish "*the meek.*" Are not these, my brethren, the graces and tempers and dispositions which characterize and adorn true Christians ? They are, in an especial manner, "*the meek upon earth.*" In fact, there are, and can be, no others to whom this title really belongs. No man in his natural state can be *meek*, in the Scriptural sense of the word.

2. But *why* does the Lord "take pleasure" in them ? Is there anything in them of *their own*, which he can regard with complacency and delight ? No ; they know and feel that they have no pretensions of this kind. It is not for their sake, but for his own sake ; for his name's, his truth's, and his mercy's sake, that he has now a favour unto them. The Lord "taketh pleasure in his people," because they are his people ; those whom he has purchased by his blood, renewed by his Spirit, and redeemed by his power. He "taketh pleasure in them," because in them he is himself honoured and glorified ; because he sees in them the travail of his soul, the fruit of his suffering and mediation ; because of the work which he has already begun in them ; because they already exhibit some traces of his own image, some transcript of that mind which was in him, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

3. *In what respects* the Lord takes pleasure in his people. First : the Lord takes pleasure in them, inasmuch as he delights in the *exercise of their graces towards him*. They all believe in him, and have faith in his word and promises ; they rely on his truth and power ; they hope in his mercy ; they fear his displeasure ; they love his person and name. Secondly : the Lord hath pleasure in the *services of his people*. It is true, that they can do but little for him, and that little is nothing worth. At the best they can but render to him of his own again. But he regards their services, not with an eye to their intrinsic value in themselves, but for the sake of the willing mind from which they flow. He takes pleasure in their poor attempts to please him, because they are attempts. He weighs not the worth or merit of the action, but the principle and motive from which it springs. Thirdly : the Lord hath pleasure in the *prosperity of his people*. His name is love ; his nature is goodness ; and can we doubt but that he loves to see his people happy ? Nay, we are expressly told that "he rejoiceth over them with joy" ; that "he rejoiceth over them to do them good." Even in those dispensations which in themselves are grievous and painful he is seeking their good, and in the end promoting their happiness. What consolations do these reflections furnish to the *meek* and suffering servants of the Lord !

II.—Let us now consider THE LORD'S GRACIOUS DESIGNS concerning his people : "*He will beautify them with salvation.*" He designs not only to save, but to adorn and honour his people. Those "whom he justifies, them he also glorifies." He "*will beautify them with salvation*" ; a promise relating both to the present life and to the future one.

1. *To the present life.* It is the purpose of God to beautify his people with salvation in this world. There are many passages in the Scripture which intimate this purpose, and lead us to this view of the happy effects of religion, even in the present life. When the prodigal returned home to his father's house, contrite, penitent, and reformed, he was not only received with kindness, assured of forgiveness,

and welcomed as a son, but he was *adorned* and *beautified* (Luke xv. 22). So in the forty-fifth Psalm, the Church, the bride of Christ, is thus described: "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." "So shall he greatly desire thy beauty." See also Eph. v. 25—27.

But what is the glory, the beauty, which is here meant in these passages, with which Christ will adorn and beautify his people? It is "the beauty of holiness." We have already seen that the meek and quiet spirit by which the Christian is distinguished is an "ornament" to him; and we read in another place that he is "adorned" with good works. It is the great object of the gospel to sanctify all who embrace it, to restore them to the image of God which they have lost through sin.

2. We may now consider this promise as it relates to *the future world*. Lovely and glorious as are the saints on earth, their beauty falls far short of the perfection to which it will attain hereafter. They are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"; and when they awake up in another world, it will be after his likeness, without any remaining blemish, defect or spot. Carry forward your thoughts to the morning of the resurrection, when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, this mortal immortality; when the body, raised in honour and glory, shall be clothed in its beauteous apparel, and being made like unto Christ's glorious body, shall shine as the sun in the firmament; when now, once more united to its kindred and sanctified spirit, it shall no longer be a weight, and a clog, and a hindrance, but become a furtherer of its joy, and a sharer and a helper in its spiritual happiness. This is the meaning of the text, this is the *beauty* which he has designed for his people, and for which he is now preparing them. In the contemplation of these, with reason may it be said to them, "Praise ye the Lord."—*Condensed from a Sermon by Edward Cooper, 1826.*

Verse 4.—Here in *ratio propositionis*, the important reason of the proposed praising of the Lord. Those who know that they are objects of Divine complacency are likely to act on the principle of reciprocity. God takes pleasure in sanctifying, justifying and glorifying them; they must surely take pleasure in extolling him as Friend, Protector, Law-giver, Leader, King, God!—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 4.—"He will beautify the meek with salvation." Meekness not only gives great peace of mind, but often adds a lustre to the countenance. We only read of three in Scripture whose faces shone remarkably—viz., Christ, Moses, and Stephen—and they were eminent for meekness.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"The meek." In the Hebrew מַעֲבִיב, *ana'im*, means *poor and afflicted ones*; but the term came afterwards to be applied to *merciful persons*, as bodily afflictions have a tendency to subdue pride, while abundance begets cruelty.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"Let the saints be joyful," etc. Here begins a beautiful exegesis of the former passage. A protected people may rejoice with confidence. An anxious and fearful people could not sing aloud on their couches of repose.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds." At what time soever God is pleased to inspire his grace and comfort into us, we ought to rejoice therein, and by night on the bed to seek him whom our soul loveth; abridging that time of rest and ease, that it may become as beneficial unto us as the day itself. David was not satisfied by offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving in the courts of the Lord's house, and paying his vows in the presence of all the people; but in the night also he would continue his song of God's mercy. Like that excellent bird, the nightingale, which is never weary nor spent by continuing her delightful notes, so this sweet singer of Israel was incessant in praising the Lord; not giving sleep to his eyes until he had blessed his holy name. In time of affliction he made his bed to swim, praying unto the Lord to return and deliver his soul. Now in prosperity he gives thanks for the blessings he doth receive. When our bones are vexed, and our sleep departeth from us, we pray unto God to deal mercifully with us; but when our diseases are healed, we do not return thanks, being soon overtaken with heaviness and security. And yet David did endeavour to watch in the night, that he might sing praise unto the Lord. He did not then only meditate in the law of God, when he could not take any rest (as Ahasuerus had the book of the records of the Chronicles read before him, when he could not sleep); for now he might lie down in peace, and sleep, when God made him to dwell in safety.

Much less did he intend to procure sleep by a sinister performance of any good duty, like those who, by singing, or reading, or hearing, or meditating will have an unworthy aim to bring themselves asleep. David saith, "*Let the saints sing aloud upon their beds*": thereby to testify their cheerful devotion, and also to chase away the spirit of slumber.—*William Bloys*, in "*Meditations upon the xlii. Psalm*," 1632.

Verse 5.—"*The saints in glory*" shall rest from their labours, but not from their praises.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verse 5.—"*Upon their beds*," where before in the loneliness of night they consumed themselves with grief for their shame. Comp. Hosea vii. 14.—*E. W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 5.—The saints of God know most of domestic joy and peace. As the word of Jesus in John xiv. records, they have sorrows in plenty, but the more of these, the greater will be their joy, because their sorrows are to be transmuted into joys. They are to sing aloud "*on their beds*," or rather couches, for on these the Orientals not only sleep, but also dine, and feast. So this verse calls on the saints to hold a banquet, a feast of fat things. They are, as David sings in Ps. xxiii., to sit at the table prepared by the Lord in the presence of their enemies.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius*.

Verse 5.—This verse has been fulfilled in solemn crises of saintly life. On beds of death, and at the scaffold and the stake, joy and glory have been kindled in the hearts of Christ's faithful witnesses.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 5.—How I long for my bed! Not that I may sleep—I lie awake often and long! but to hold sweet communion with my God. What shall I render unto him for all his revelations and gifts to me? Were there no historical evidence of the truth of Christianity, were there no well-established miracles, still I should believe that the religion propagated by the fishermen of Galilee is divine. The holy joys it brings to me must be from heaven Do I write this boastingly, brother? Nay, it is with tears of humble gratitude that I tell of the goodness of the Lord.—*From a private letter from Bapa Padmanji*, in "*Feathers for Arrows*," 1870.

Verse 6.—"*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand*." Praise and power go ever hand in hand. The two things act and react upon each other. An era of spiritual force in the Church is always one of praise; and when there comes some grand outburst of sacred song, we may expect that the people of God are entering upon some new crusade for Christ. Cromwell's Ironsides were sneeringly called Psalm-singers; but God's Psalm-singers are always Ironsides. He who has a "new song in his mouth" is ever stronger, both to suffer and to labour, than the man who has a dumb spirit and a hymnless heart. When he sings at his work, he will both do more and do it better than he would without his song. Hence, we need not be surprised that all through its history the Church of God has travelled "along the line of music"—*William Taylor*, in "*The Study*," 1873.

Verse 6.—"*The high praises of God*." This expression needs a little explication, because so variously rendered by most interpreters; some rendering it only, exaltations of God; others, praisings exalting God; others, sublime praises of God; others, praisies highly uttered unto God: the reason whereof is, because the word *romemoth* in the text signifies sometimes actively, and then it notes the height, exaltation, and lifting up of anything to the observation of others; and sometimes passively, and then it notes the height, worth, excellency of the thing that is exalted, or lifted up, in itself. But the scope and nature of the duty prescribed in the text necessarily comprehends both—as well the high acts for which God is to be praised, as the high praises to be given unto God for those high acts; but especially the latter, namely, the height and excellency of the duty of praise to be performed for those high acts of God. This appears from the whole argument of the Psalm, which is entirely laudatory, as also from the instrument wherewith these high praises are to be performed, namely, the "mouth," "*the high praises of God in their mouth*"; showing that the height herein mentioned is a property of man's work in praising God, and not only for the work of God, for which he is to be praised. In my observations I shall comprehend both, and all the particulars in the duty prescribed besides, which is this—

The duty of praising God is a high duty, which must exalt and lift up the high God in it.

This truth I shall labour to demonstrate, 1. From the Object. 2. The Effect.

3. Their Price. 4. Their Performance; or, to use the School terms, they are "high": 1. Objectivè. 2. Effectivè. 3. Appreciativè. 4. Perfectivè.

1. The praises of God are "high" in relation to their *Object*, which is none other but the Most High God, and that in the consideration of his transcendent height and sublimity over and above all other things or persons: so the Psalmist's resolution intimates (Ps. vii. 17), "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness," which he expresseth in the following words, "To sing praise to the name of the Lord most high"; and Ps. xcii. 1: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High." In which places, and very many more in the Scriptures, it is evident that the Lord, considered in his highest sublimity, is the object of high praise, and that by most special and peculiar appropriation of it unto himself, and none other (Isa. xlii. 8).

2. In the second place, the praises of God will appear to be of a high, sublime nature, from the high *effect*, the genuine and proper fruit they produce, viz., that although their object to whom they are peculiarly appropriate (I mean the Lord himself) be in his own nature, and of himself, most infinitely high and transcendent, yet by the attribution and performance of praise unto him, doth he account his name, his power, his wisdom, and justice, and himself to be exalted thereby. What else do those expressions in Scripture imply wherein it is asserted, that by this high duty of praise the high Jehovah is exalted (Ps. cviii. 32); His sublime perfections are extolled and lifted up (Ps. lxxviii. 4): His great Name is magnified (Luke i. 64); His infinite majesty is glorified (Ps. l. 23)? Oh how high must be that duty, that adds height to the high God, that magnifies the great God, and glorifies the God of glory, and makes him higher, greater, and more glorious than he was before!

3. Thirdly, the praises of God are of a high nature, *appreciativè*, in respect of the high estimation the Lord himself hath of them, which appears two ways: (1) By the high price wherewith he purchaseth them; (2) By the high delight he takes in them, after he hath procured them.

First. The price wherewith God is willing to purchase them is very high, for not only the expense of all his wisdom, power, and goodness, put forth in creation, not only the layings out of all his counsel, care, love, and faithfulness in providence and preservation; but also the rich treasure of his promises, covenant, grace, yea, the precious blood of his own Son, in our redemption, is given freely, absolutely, intentionally, and ultimately, for no other thing but the purchase of high praises to God (Eph. i. 5, 6). All that God doth and giveth; all that Christ doth and suffereth, is for the praise of the glory of his grace. I confess, consider men's highest praises of God, as they are man's performance, they are poor and inconsiderable things; but consider them as they are the testimonies and expressions of a believing heart, declaring and making known the unspeakable wisdom, faithfulness, bounty, and excellencies of God, exercised in his works; in this notion the Scripture declares the heart of God to be so taken with the desire of them, that he is willing to give heaven, earth, Himself, and Son to poor men for the praises of their hearts, hands, and tongues; and accounts himself abundantly satisfied. Therefore, when his people will speak good of his name, they speak of him in the dialect of angels' notes, "the high praises of God."

Secondly. The high value that God hath of "high praises" will be evident by the high delight and pleasure God takes in them thus purchased; for skilful artists, and high-principled, elevated understandings, never take pleasure or delight in any thing or work which is not answerable to their highest principles, and proportionable to their uttermost skill and desire. Now the Lord, who is of the most perfect understanding, and deepest skill and knowledge, declares himself to take infinite delight in his people's praises. It is his solace and pleasure to be attended with them, either in earth or in heaven, by men or angels; and his soul is ravished with the thoughts and contemplation of them.

4. In the fourth place, the praises of God are high, and of a high nature *perfectivè*, that is, in respect of the high measure of grace they are to be attended withal in their performance: the Lord requiring the duty of high praise to be performed with a great measure of Scripture-light, with a high degree of effectual faith, and with a more ample proportion of practical holiness than any other of the most solemn exercises of his public worship.—Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Fairclough, entitled "The Prisoner's Praise," 1650.

Verse 8.—"To bind their kings with chains," etc. Agrippa was captive to Paul.

The word had him in bands like a prisoner, and made him confess against himself before Festus that he was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Then it was verified which before was prophesied, "*They shall bind kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron.*" Oh, the majesty and force of the word!—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 8.—It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy up in arms; and the mighty men of the world may have nations, kingdoms, and commonwealths at their command, but yet God is more powerful than they all. If he do but arise, they shall all of them fly before him. If he once fall to fettering of princes, it shall be done so sure, that no flesh shall be able to knock off their bolts again.—*Stephen Gosson, 1554—1623.*

Verse 9.—"*This honour have all his saints.*" All other glories and honours are but feminine, weak, poor things to it. God is their glory; honoured they are with his blessed presence, honoured with his sight, with his embraces; they see him and enjoy him. This is the very glory of their honour, the height and pitch of all, for "in thy presence is joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore," honour advanced into eternal glory; and "*this honour*" also "*have all his saints*"; some *in spe*, and some *in re*, some *in hope*, and some *in deed*; all either in promise or in possession.—*Mark Frank.*

Verse 9.—"*This honour have all his saints.*" "*His saints*" emphatically; Divine providence foreseeing that in after ages some would usurp the title of saintship to whom it did not belong. "*His saints*" exclusively; casting out saint traitors, as Beckett and Garnet; saint hypocrites, and many others; who, in the same sense as *auri sacra fames*, may be termed *sacri*, or *sancti*, saints. But, what honour have all his saints? Mark what went before—"as it is written"; but by whom, and where? Though chapters and verses be of later date, the Holy Spirit might have cited the book. O no! He, to quicken our industry, refers us to the Word at large. However, "search the Scriptures," and therein we shall meet with many honours afforded to the saints; both whilst they were living, and when they were dead.

Honour to their memories is sometimes paid them very abundantly, even by those who formerly were so niggardly and covetous as not to afford them a good word in their lifetime.

Many are made converts by the godly ends of good men; as the centurion himself, who attended and ordered the crucifying of Christ, after his expiring broke forth into that testimony of him,—"*Verily, this was the Son of God.*" So, such as rail at, revile, curse, condemn, persecute, execute pious people, speak other language of them when such men have passed the purgation of death, and confess them faithful and sincere servants of God.

The last "*honour*" is imitation of their virtuous examples. The Papists brag that Stapleton, their great controversial divine, was born on that very day whereon Sir Thomas More was put to death; but Providence so ordereth it that out of the ashes of dead saints many living ones do spring and sprout, by following the pious precedents of such godly persons deceased.—*Thomas Fuller, in "Abel Redivivus."*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—"*Praise ye the Lord.*" I. The one work of a life. II. The work of the truly living of all degrees. III. Their work in many and various forms. IV. A work for which there is abundant cause, reason, and argument.

Verse 1.—I. A wonderful gift—to be a saint. II. A wonderful people—who are saints. III. A wonderful assembly—a congregation of saints. IV. A wonderful God—the object of their song.

Verses 1, 2.—*The new song of the saints.* I. The saints are God's children by the new birth. II. The new birth has given them a new heart. III. The new heart utters itself in a new song.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1, 5.—I. We must praise God in public, "in the congregation of the saints": the more the better; it is like to heaven. II. We must praise him in

private. "Let the saints" be so transported with their joy in God as to "sing aloud upon their beds," when they awake in the night, as David; Ps. cxix. 62.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—The duty, reasonableness, and benefit of holy joy.

Verse 2.—A peculiar people, their peculiar God, and their peculiar joy in him.

Verse 2 (second clause).—Christ's people may well rejoice:—I. In the majesty of his person. II. In the righteousness of his rule. III. In the extent of his conquests. IV. In the protection they enjoy under him. V. In the glory to which he will raise them.—*From "The Homiletical Library," 1882.*

Verses 2, 4.—The cause given to God's Israel for Praise. Consider, I. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that "made" them. II. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them he is their King. III. God's delight in them. He is a King that rules by love, and therefore to be praised. IV. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he hath in them, he hath prepared for their future glory. "He will beautify the meek," etc.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—The text bears other renderings. Read as in Authorized Version. I. *The character to be aimed at—"the meek."* 1. Submissive to God. To his truth. To his dealings. 2. Gentle towards men. Bearing with patience. Forgiving with heartiness. Loving with perseverance. 3. Lowly in ourselves. II. *The favour to be enjoyed—"beautify."* 1. The beauty of gentleness. 2. The beauty of peace. 3. The beauty of content. 4. The beauty of joy. 5. The beauty of holiness. 6. The beauty of respect and influence. III. *The good results to be expected.* 1. God will be glorified and Christ manifested. 2. Men will be attracted. 3. Heaven will be anticipated.

Verse 4 (first clause).—The Lord's taking pleasure in his people is, I. A wonderful evidence of his grace. II. The highest honour they can desire. III. Their security for time and eternity.—*J. F.*

Verse 5.—Sainly joy. I. The state to which God has lifted the saints: "glory," in contrast with sin, reproach, affliction. II. The emotion which accordingly befits the saints: "be joyful." III. The utterance of that emotion incumbent on the saints: "sing aloud."—*C. A. D.*

Verse 5 (second clause).—Let them praise God—I. Upon their beds of *rest*, upon their *nightly* couch. 1. Because of what God has done for them during the day. 2. Because sleep is the gift of God. 3. Because they have a bed to lie upon. 4. Because the Lord is their keeper (Psalm iv. 5, 8). II. Upon their beds of *sickness*. 1. Because it is God's will they should suffer. 2. Because affliction is often a proof of God's love. 3. Because, if sanctified, sickness is a great blessing. 4. Because praise offered upon a bed of sickness is a testimony to the power of religion. III. Upon their beds of *death*. 1. Because the sting of death is removed. 2. Because their Lord has passed through death. 3. Because Christ is with them while they suffer. 4. Because of what awaits them. 5. Because they have the glorious hope of resurrection.—*C. W. Townsend.*

Verse 6.—I. The Christian life a combination of adoration and conflict. II. In each case it should be at its best: "high praises," "two-edged sword." III. In each case holiness should be conspicuous: it is of saints that the text speaks.

Verse 8.—The restraining and subduing power of the gospel.

Verse 9.—The honour common to all saints.