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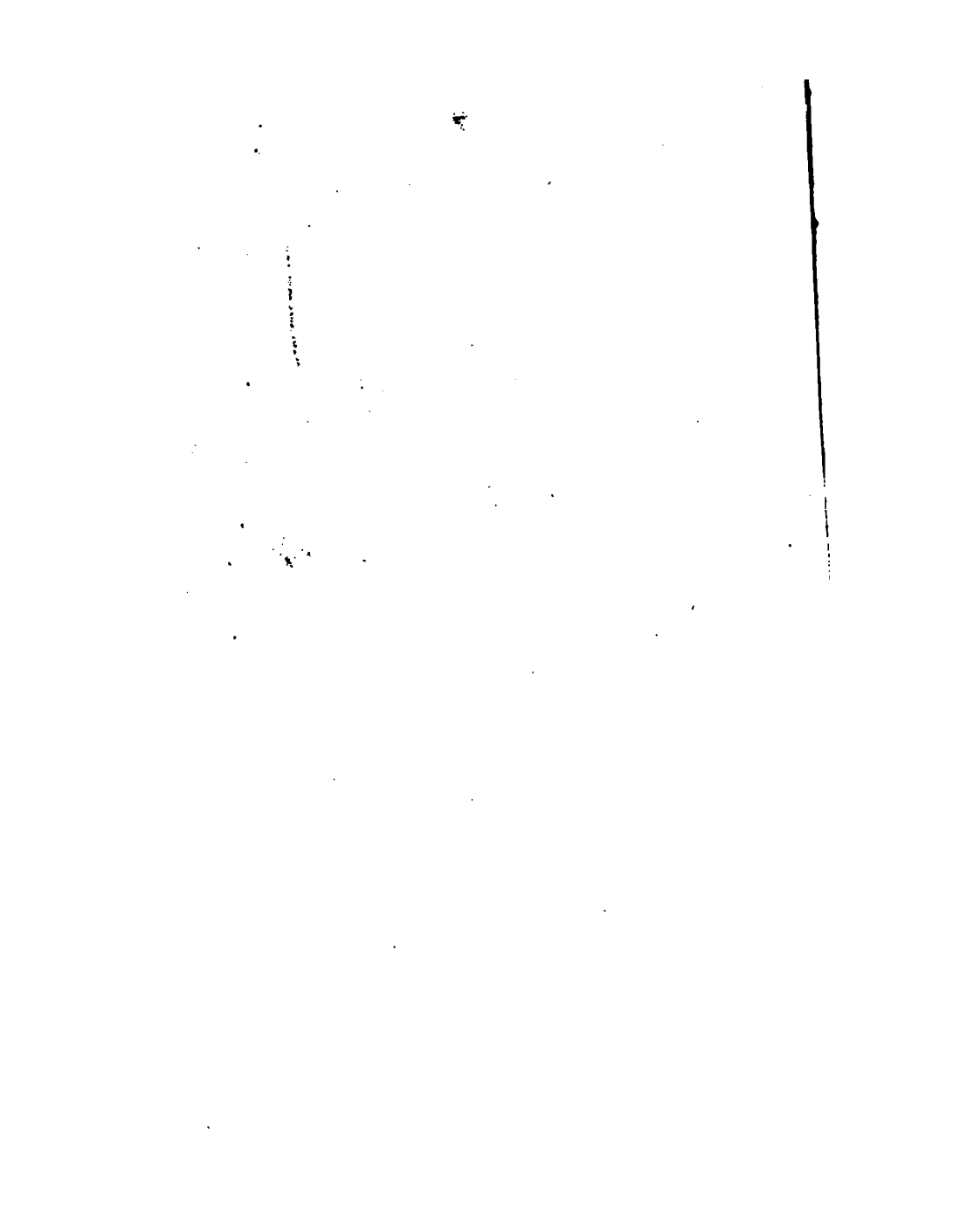
A Simple Exposition
of
The Psalms.



Oxford.



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THE PSALMS.

BY THE
RIGHT REV. ASHTON OXENDEN, D.D.
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE Psalms are a favourite portion of God's word. They are not intended so much to give us instruction and information, as to stir up devout and prayerful feelings in our hearts.

Most of the Psalms were composed by King David, who lived about a thousand years before the coming of our Lord. But some are supposed to have been written by Moses, Ezra, and others.

Many passages in the Psalms clearly refer to our blessed Lord—to His person, and His kingdom. He glitters here and there as a grain of precious metal in the sand. May the Holy Spirit discover Him to us, shedding light upon every verse, so that we may understand its full meaning! May He tune our hearts and enable us to enjoy the sweetness which is breathed forth in these holy songs!

The word *Selah* occurs about seventy times in the Psalms, as well as three times in the Book of Habakkuk. It is supposed to be a stop in music; and it is very doubtful whether it has anything whatever to do with the sense. Luther however and others consider it as a direction to us to pause, and carefully to reflect on the words that have gone before.

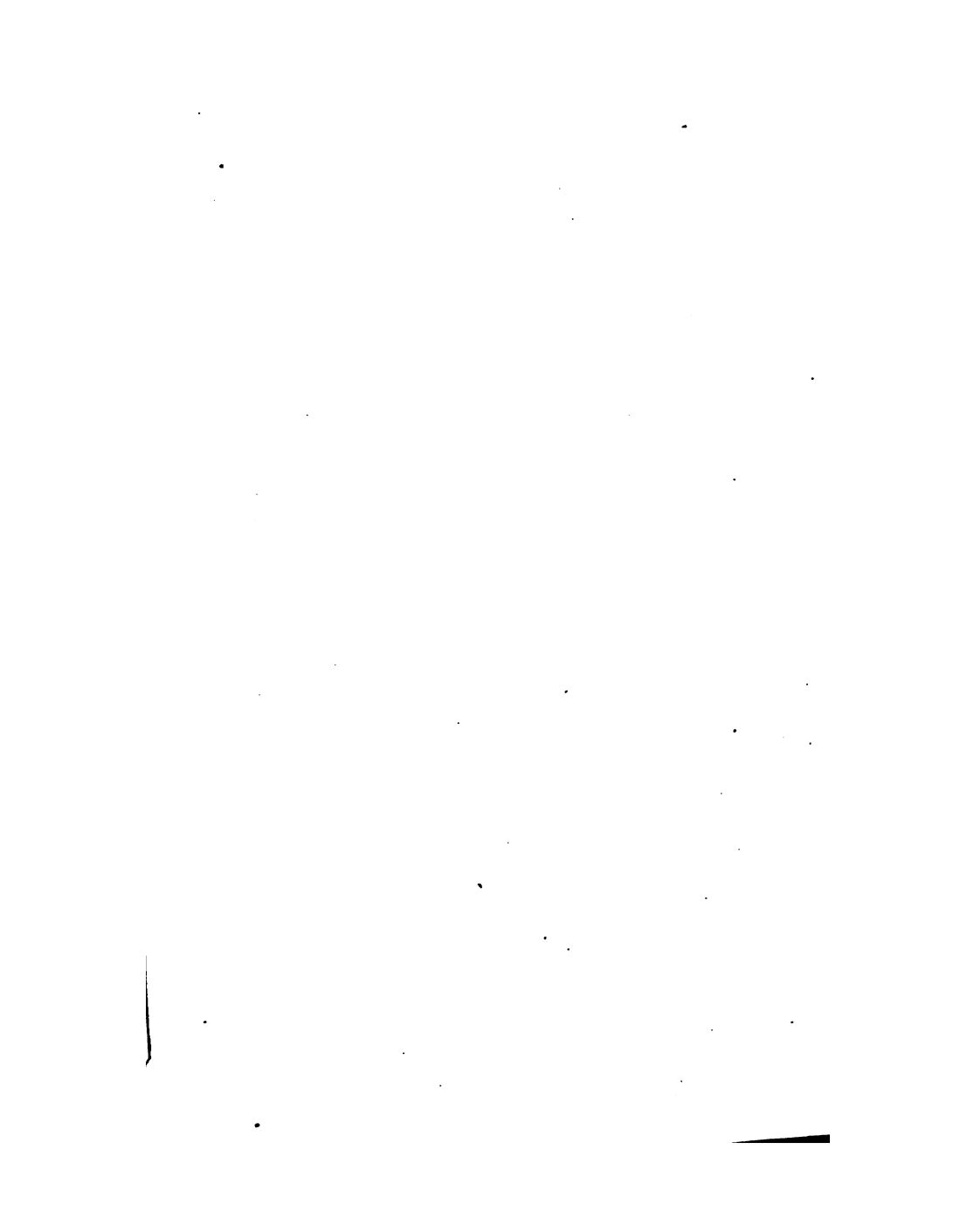
The following Exposition of the Psalms is intended either for Reading in the Family, or for Private Devotional use. The writer has not attempted to solve critical difficulties; but at the same time he has endeavoured, so far as limited space would allow, to give his view of difficult passages, as well as those which are plain. He has not intentionally avoided any one verse, because it contains 'things hard to be understood,' but has given what seemed to him to be the most honest and obvious interpretation.

There is in David's Psalms a certain sameness, which all must have observed—the same complaints again and again repeated—the same sufferings dwelt upon—the constant attraction of his soul to the great Source of help, towards which he ever turns.

God grant that the Psalmist's humility, his confidence, his joy and thankfulness, may be ours ; and that, as we read his words, we may catch much of his devout and heavenly spirit.

In sending forth this volume, it is a great comfort to me that, whilst far away from scenes and persons very dear to me, I am still able to speak to many English hearts. And although numberless deficiencies will be found in these pages, my excuse is that they have been written amidst the constant cares and anxieties of a large Diocese.

Montreal, Feb. 12, 1872.



READINGS ON THE PSALMS.

PSALM I.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so : but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

THE First Psalm is thought by some to be a kind of introduction to the rest. It begins, like the Sermon on the Mount, with a *Beatitude*, declaring at once the happiness and blessing which true godliness brings with it.

Two Pictures, as it were, are drawn and placed before us.

First, we have a Picture of the GODLY MAN. He is described as "not walking in the counsel of the ungodly." He avoids his example, and listens not to his advice. Next, it is said that he "standeth not in the way of sinners." Their ways are hateful to him: their habits, their conversation, their feelings, are all contrary to his taste. And further, it is added that he "sitteth not in the seat of the scornful;" that is, he shuns the companionship of those who despise religion, as he would avoid persons infected with some loathsome disease. The scorner especially is his abhorrence.

It seems as if the *gradual* advances in what is wrong are here described. To *walk* with the ungodly is to hold occasional intercourse with them. To *stand* in their ways signifies a somewhat closer intimacy. And then, to *sit* with them is to have a still more fixed and decided connexion with them. And is it not true, that he who sets one foot within forbidden ground will probably not stop there; but will walk onwards, till at length he will deliberately take his seat among the opposers and scoffers of true religion?

Having spoken of what the godly man *shuns*, the Psalmist goes on to show us wherein he *takes his pleasure*. God's word is precious to him. He loves to dwell upon it. By day and by night the Lord's testimonies are his delight.

In the third verse the Psalmist uses a beautiful comparison. He likens the godly man to a luxuriant Tree, planted by the water's edge, clothed with abundant leaves, and full of the richest fruit. And is it not thus with all God's people? He has planted them in His Church. He waters them every day with the dews of His Spirit. He blesses them with His choicest gifts. He is with them; and therefore they prosper.

But now we turn to the other Picture—that of the UNGODLY. His character and condition are the very opposite to the one we have been looking at. "The ungodly are not so:" they are not like the Tree planted by the water's side, covered with luxuriant leaves, and laden with fruit; but they are like the worthless Chaff, scattered by the wind. They may be rich in their own eyes; but they are miserably poor in God's sight. They may be building up a great name on earth, and their footing may seem sure; but they shall one day be "driven away in their wickedness." They may rank high among their fellow-men; but they "shall not stand in the judgment." They may be numbered among God's people now; but they shall be shut out hereafter "from the congregation of the righteous."

The Psalm concludes by reminding us that "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but

the way of the ungodly shall perish." The world may despise and overlook God's people; but "the Lord knoweth them that are His." He marks them for His own. He watches their course. They are dear to Him as the apple of the eye. They are graven on the palms of His hands. But the ungodly shall be cast away as chaff, or as a withered branch fitted for destruction.

'At present,' says Bishop Horne, 'wheat and chaff lie on one floor; wheat and tares grow in one field; good and bad fishes are comprehended in one net; good and bad men are contained in the visible Church. Let us wait with patience God's time of separation.' And meanwhile may He make us truly and unmistakably His; fitting us more and more for His service here, and preparing us for His presence hereafter: for "they that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God!"

PSALM II. 1-5.

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

THERE can be little doubt that this Psalm is one of David's. It is also clear that it is a *Prophetic* Psalm, leading us forward to the time of Christ, for evidently a greater than David is here.

In the first three verses, the anger and opposition of the ungodly are spoken of. And not only are the rabble and the common people represented as uniting in this confederacy against God and His Christ; but kings and potentates, like Herod and Pontius Pilate, are spoken of as joining them.

If we turn to Acts, iv. 25, 26, we shall see that these words are quoted by the Apostles, as referring to the persecutions which they were enduring as the followers of Christ. St. Peter and St. John had been seized and cast into prison by the unbelieving Jews. When they were set free,

they returned to their brethren, and lifting up their hearts to God in prayer, they exclaimed, in these very words of the Psalmist, "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that therein is; who by the mouth of thy holy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." And are not these words still true, as regards the opposition of unbelievers to the people of God? Is there not still the same lurking enmity against Christ and His servants? The offence of the Cross is not ceased; and never will it cease, until the Lord Himself shall come to put it down.

The "*bands*" and "*cords*" here spoken of are those spiritual ties which bind us to the Lord's service; and by which these unbelievers determinedly refuse to be held.

But the Psalmist goes on, in the following verses, to foretell that such opposition would be vain and useless; for God would make it of none effect; "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

Thus then it is foretold that all the efforts of *the ungodly* are but "a vain thing." 'They are,'

says Luther, 'like the swelling waves of the sea, blown up by the wind, and which make as if they would tear down the very shore ; but before they reach it they subside, and spend themselves with harmless noise upon the beach.' And equally vain will be every power that dares to exalt itself against the will and purpose of God.

The Lord is here said to *laugh*, to speak in His *wrath*, and so on. Such language is used to suit our comprehension, and to show us how He despises and sets at nought all opposition. His enemies shall be confounded and punished ; and in spite of all their efforts to thwart His purposes, not one of those purposes shall fail, but all shall be accomplished. This is a blessed thought, and one that is calculated to fill us with comfort. It enables us to bear up against the opposition of an ungodly world, feeling assured that the Lord reigneth all the while, and that He will triumph at last.

PSALM II. 6-12.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings : be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

WE have seen, from the former part of the Psalm, that the fiercest opposition of God's enemies will surely be put down, and His own purposes will be fulfilled. And here, in verse 6, the Psalmist goes on to declare that the Lord will establish His kingdom, and set Christ upon His throne. He speaks of it, indeed, as if it were *already done* ; " Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, This day have I begotten thee : " that is, ' This day I openly declare Thee to be my Son.'

There cannot be a moment's doubt that these last words refer to Christ. Three times over they

are so quoted in the New Testament ; namely, in Acts, xiii. 33 ; in Heb. i. 5 ; and also in Heb. v. 5. Indeed, the whole Psalm is clearly a prophecy of Christ and His kingdom—of Christ, who is the Son of God, our Lord, and our Saviour.

In the eighth verse the Father addresses His beloved Son, saying, "Ask of me." Can we doubt that Christ does indeed plead for the success of His kingdom ? And ought not His people so to plead also ? Surely if Christians asked more—if they took this promise to God, and entreated Him to make good His word—then would He ere this have given the heathen for His Son's inheritance, and the entire world for His possession. And as for those who oppose His rule, He would have broken them as "with a rod of iron, and dashed them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

May God forgive our coldness and unbelief !
May He call forth a spirit of prayer from us ; and then give us abundantly according to our requests !

The Psalmist concludes with words of advice in the last three verses. He holds out, as it were, a flag of warning. He seems to hear the muttering of the coming thunder, and to see the gathering storm. And therefore he summons the proudest of us to bow before the Lord, and cheerfully to devote ourselves to His service ; "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings : be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice

with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." We are called upon to bow ourselves before the cross of Jesus, and cast our crowns before His throne; to kiss the Son, in token of our homage; to give our hearts to Him; to yield ourselves up to Him, with our best affections. For we must remember, that those who reject His love will one day feel His wrath; and that the sceptre of His protection *may* be turned into a rod of punishment.

In Christ's service alone there is true blessedness. Happy those who find all their joy in Him, and are resting all their hopes upon Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!"

Whatever opposition then we meet with, and however troubled our life may be, there will be peace within, if our minds are stayed upon God. For as the waters of the great ocean are often troubled on the surface; and yet beneath, far down in its hidden depths, there is a region where perpetual calmness always reigns; so beneath the surface movements of our life there may dwell within, deep down in the heart, the abiding peace of God, the repose of a holy mind, even though troubles and persecutions may mark our outer history.

PSALM III.

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people.

DAVID suffered much during his lifetime; but no one caused him such intense grief as his undutiful and rebellious son, Absalom, to whom he evidently refers in this Psalm. No arrows were shot with such envenomed malice into his heart. On such occasions it was no small comfort to him to breathe out his soul to God, as he does in this Psalm.

He speaks of the number of his enemies as daily "increasing," and of fresh ones continually "rising up against him." He speaks too of their taunting him with God's backwardness in coming forward for his deliverance; "Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."

Distressing however as this was to him, he felt that he had an almighty Friend above. Whilst on earth there was abundant trouble and danger, a Helper in the heavens appears to his eye of faith; "But thou, O Lord," he exclaims, "art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." The child of his bosom had turned against him, but the Lord was on his side. He was sore distressed, but not forsaken. God was his Shield to defend him, his Glory to shine upon him, his Lifter to bear him up.

Such also was the Saviour's experience. As David was forced to leave his own city mourning and weeping, so was the holy Jesus led forth out of Jerusalem by His own children, who were in arms against Him, forsaken and sorrowing. And in the near prospect of this trial He exclaimed, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

David moreover had found God to be a prayer-hearing God; and he now bears testimony that his cry had not been in vain; "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill;" that is, from Zion, where the ark was, and which was therefore looked upon as the special dwelling-place of God. And this filled him with such calm and peaceful confidence, that he could lay himself down, and rise again, in perfect peace.

Such was the groundwork of David's confidence. It was based upon God's past faithfulness to him. And now, with a heart full of trust, he boldly and fearlessly stands up, ready for all coming trials. "I will not be afraid," he says, "of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly;" that is, Thou hast rendered harmless those whose fury is like that of wild beasts.

And what has the Christian to fear? His persecutors may be many and strong. His trials may be severe. But the Lord is with him, to shield and protect him. It is sweet indeed to feel that we are safe in His hands; that He who protected Daniel in the den, He who was with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego in the furnace, and He who stood by David in his sorest trials, will surely protect us, if we shelter ourselves under His loving care.

The Psalm ends with an acknowledgment that "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." It comes from Him alone. If He saves, none can destroy. There are many like Balak, who may desire to curse Israel; but His "blessing is upon his people."

PSALM IV.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness : thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress ; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame ? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing ? But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself : the Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord. There be many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep : for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

DAVID in this Psalm looks back with thankfulness to the Lord's past dealings with him, and looks forward with trust and confidence to the future.

He begins by calling to mind what God has already done for him, and makes that his plea for yet further mercies ; "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness (that is, my righteous God) : thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." He refers to some time of trial, when God had come to his relief, and made him feel as if

the chains that bound him were struck off, and he was now again in the full enjoyment of his liberty. This fills him with a happy confidence, as regards the future.

1st. As to *his Prayers*, he feels sure that they will be heard, as they have been again and again; "The Lord will hear (he says in verse 3) when I call upon him." I know Him to be a prayer-hearing God.

2ndly. As to *God's Favour*, he longs for the full enjoyment of it, and he feels sure that it will be granted to him. Whilst numbers are looking around them for happiness, or for help in trouble, he looks up to God for it; "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." How many in the time of their distress are tempted to despond, and are continually asking the question in this verge! How few apply to Him, who alone can give an answer of peace and comfort!

But David had already tasted of the Lord's goodness to himself; "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." He compares his own joy with that of the ungodly, even in their most prosperous days. Their fields may have waved with the golden harvest, and there may have been clusters of grapes in their vineyards; but their joy would be nothing like his. Such is the difference

between "the bread that perisheth" and that "which endureth unto everlasting life"—between "the wine which maketh glad the heart of man" and "the cup of salvation" which fills and satisfies the soul.

Then, 3rdly, As to *his Safety*, he has no fear. He feels himself secure in God's hands; "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." David felt such strong confidence in God, that he could sleep just as securely, as if he had a host of guards stationed all about him.

Now look at the second verse. There the Psalmist offers his counsel to *others*. He entreats them no longer to pour contempt on his "glory" or dignity, and to cease at length from "leasing" or deceit; for those who opposed him were but following a lie. And then, in the next verse, he bids them remember that the Lord's blessing is upon the godly, and that He sets them apart for Himself; just as He had done in David's own case, in choosing him to be the king over His people Israel.

He further exhorts them, and indeed all persons whoever they may be, saying, "Stand in awe, and sin not." Fear nothing so much as to offend God. "Commune with your own heart, and be still." Quietly look into your heart within, and see *if your actions can be right with God*. "Offer the

sacrifice of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." Offer unto God the only sacrifice you can offer—the sacrifice of a righteous and devout heart; and trust Him as your Friend.

Both this Psalm, and also the third, are supposed by some to have been Evening Psalms. For in both of them David speaks of going to rest in the peaceful consciousness of God's guardian care; "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell safely."

PSALM V. 1-6.

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness : neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight : thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

DAVID must have been the writer of this Psalm, for the language seems to be peculiarly his. He speaks as one who had suffered bitterly from the treachery and wickedness of his enemies ; and such was most truly his own case.

In these first six verses, we shall see that he thankfully turns from the falsehood and deceit of his persecutors to the truthfulness and faithfulness of God. He does not look around him with hopeless despondency, but he lifts up his eyes to heaven with trustful confidence. He feels assured that, however well these ungodly men may succeed in a worldly point of view, they will find no favour with God, but will in the end meet with the condemnation they deserve.

You will see that, in the second verse, he addresses the Lord as "his King and his God." Though a king himself, David acknowledges his subjection to God, as his supreme Ruler. He felt too that, as a *King*, God could not permit evil to triumph in His kingdom; and that, as *God*, He had full power to put it down. And to whom should a subject apply, but to his Sovereign? To whom should a sinner fly, but to his God?

In the third verse he speaks of the early morning as his hour of prayer: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." At the close of the last Psalm he had said that he would lie down in peace, and sleep, because God was his safeguard. And here, on waking, his first resolve is that the earliest accents of his voice should mount up to God.

Those who are in earnest will seek God *early*. They will get the start of the world, and take the first opportunity of holding communion with God. For who knows what a day may bring forth? Who can protect himself from the dangers that encompass him? Who can enable us to discharge rightly the duties which each fresh day presents? Feeble, and helpless, and sinful, we have need to put ourselves unreservedly in the hands of our God. It was St. Chrysostom's advice, that we 'should wash our souls before we wash the body.' The Morning

Prayers and Meditations of a devout soul are like the early dew-drops on the grass, sparkling in the first rays of the rising sun.

Such was the practice of our Lord Himself. We are told in St. Mark, i. 35, that "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." And may such be our practice also! May we, ere the world rushes in to disturb us, make our best and holiest offerings to God! May we "look up," expecting an answer of peace from heaven!

The Psalmist gives a reason, in the third and following versés, why God will hear him, and take up his cause; namely, because the opposition against him was a wicked opposition, and God could have "no pleasure in wickedness;" neither could He bear iniquity, and those who "speak leasing," or falsehood.

It is a comforting thought that God is a just God, and that His people, when oppressed and spoken against, can look up and say, as Job did, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."

PSALM V. 7-12.

But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy : and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies ; make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part is very wickedness ; their throat is an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue. Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice : let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

IT is remarkable how often David's love for God's House comes out in the Psalms. No one knew better than he did the consolation that is to be found there. Whilst then his enemies had no desire to serve God, he says in the seventh verse, "As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy ; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." Like every other pious Jew, he was a constant worshipper ; and when absent from Jerusalem, his face and his heart were often turned "towards" the temple. It seemed to him as if that was the peaceful home of God.

He again speaks of his enemies in the eighth and ninth verses, and asks God to enable him to steer a straight course in the midst of their treachery and faithlessness, lest if he made a single false step they should triumph over him ; " Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies : make thy way straight before my face. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part is very wickedness ; their throat is an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue."

But we are a little startled by the strong language used in the next verse : " Destroy thou them, O God ; let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee."

There is something in this which seems at first sight almost revengeful. But we must bear in mind that David's enemies were also God's enemies, for they were in actual revolt against Him ; " They have rebelled *against thee*." Hence David, from a zeal for God's honour, asks Him to " destroy them," thus dealing with them as they deserved. He could have borne their opposition against himself, but he could not bear their rebellion against God.

In the last two verses the Psalmist speaks of the safety and the joy of God's servants ; " But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice :

let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee."

There is a safety which belongs to God's people, and which the ungodly cannot feel ; and there is joy which is the blessed portion of His servants, and of them alone.

Happy indeed is it for us, if we can take up the joyful note at the close of this Psalm : "Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." This expresses a firm assurance that God's servants, however despised on earth, have His blessing plainly stamped upon them, and are under His peculiar care and keeping.

PSALM VI.

O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; for I am weak : O Lord, heal me ; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed : but thou, O Lord, how long ? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul : oh save me for thy mercies' sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee : in the grave who shall give thee thanks ? I am weary with my groaning ; all the night make I my bed to swim ; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief ; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication ; the Lord will receive my prayer. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed : let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

TH**ERE** is a sadness about many of David's Psalms, which was chiefly owing to his persecuted condition. During his earlier years he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains by Saul, who was constantly trying to take away his life ; and in later years he suffered still more acutely from the cruel and undutiful conduct of his favourite son, Absalom.

It is thought by some that this Psalm was written at a time when his whole frame was broken down by these afflictions. But whatever was the

cause of his suffering, we see that God was his refuge and Prayer his comfort.

In the first seven verses he pours forth his cry of distress. He speaks of his very bones aching with the intensity of his grief; of his being wearied and worn out with his groans by day, and with his tears by night; of his eyes becoming dim with grief, like those of an aged person.

David's was indeed a mournful cry; but far more mournful was the cry of David's Son; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." David's sorrow was partly for his own sin: the sorrow of Jesus was for yours and mine. Oh, that the thought of this may melt our hard hearts!

In the third verse the Psalmist entreats God that He will not keep him waiting much longer for deliverance; "My soul is sore vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long?" How long, he asks, will this affliction last? How long will his enemies be allowed to triumph over him? How long ere God will step forward as his gracious deliverer?

The very first word in the next verse shows the desire of his heart; "Return, O Lord"—Lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me; and like the Sun in the morning, bring back joy and gladness to my darkened soul.

Then he gives a reason why he pleads with God to spare his life; "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give

thee thanks?" So long as we are spared, we should delight in praising God for His goodness; for in the grave the voice of thanksgiving cannot be heard: no hallelujahs are sung there.

In the last three verses the Psalmist takes up a more cheerful tone. For now, as it were, "the winter is past, the rain is gone, the voice of the turtle is heard." Yes, he already feels assured that his prayer has not been in vain, but that God has taken up his cause. And therefore he bids his enemies leave him; "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer."

In the concluding verse he speaks as if he already foresaw the disappointment and destruction of his persecutors: "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

David's sorrow, as we have seen, was turned into joy. And so it is with the Christian. There may be a long weary night of anguish; but the morning comes bright and cloudless. It has been well said that 'according to the depth of our pain is the height of our joy which we derive from God.' And again, 'The sackcloth of the true penitent is exchanged for a robe of glory; and every tear becomes a sparkling gem in his crown.'

PSALM VII.

O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me : lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. O Lord my God, if I have done this ; if there be iniquity in my hands ; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me ; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy :) let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it ; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies : and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about : for their sakes, therefore, return thou on high. The Lord shall judge the people : judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; but establish the just : for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword ; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come

down upon his own pate. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.

THE name of "Cush the Benjamite" is mentioned in the Heading to this Psalm. But we read in the Old Testament of no person of that name: probably, therefore, it is a name given to Saul or to Shimei. It is clear that David refers throughout the Psalm, as well as in those that go before, to some persecution that he himself endured.

The Psalm opens with an expression of strong confidence in God, on whose Almighty protection David casts himself, lest his enemy with the fierceness of a lion should overpower him. It has been truly said that, 'The door is shut against our prayers, if we cannot open it with the key of confidence.'

In the third and following verses, he appeals to God to acknowledge his innocence. He speaks also of the forbearance he had himself shown towards his enemies, and that he had given no occasion for their hatred. Had it been otherwise, he feels that they might well trample upon him, and put him to shame; "O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:) let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust."

When he puts in the words, "Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy," it is as much as to say, instead of returning evil to him who acted peaceably towards me, I have done the very reverse, I actually rescued my enemy from danger.

In the full consciousness of his own integrity, he calls for judgment between himself and his persecutors, and entreats God to avenge him ; " Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of mine enemies : and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about : for their sakes, therefore, return thou on high."

By these last words he seems to mean, that a clear display of God's righteous judgment would induce multitudes, when they beheld it, to rally round their heavenly King, and adore Him for His justice. For *their* sakes therefore, as well as on his own account, he asks God to ascend His throne, and pass sentence.

The next five verses require no explanation. In verses 14, 15, and 16, David describes the excessive malice of his wicked enemy, and shows how the evil which he had carefully planned, shall recoil upon himself ; " Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His

mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

So it was with Haman, who was hanged on his own gallows. And so it was with the Jews, the enemies of our Lord. They digged, as it were, a pit for Christ. They were eager to shed His blood ; but that blood came back in judgment upon themselves, and upon their children.

This Psalm, like many others, begins with mournful complainings, but ends with words of praise. The Psalmist was so sure that God would undertake for him and deliver him, that he already lifts up the voice of thankfulness ; "I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness ; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high."

The truth is, that if we bring our troubles to God, and cast our burden upon Him, He will not only sustain us, and enable us to bear the weight, but He will fill our souls with a joy which we never experienced before. Our affliction will be felt to be a blessing, and our joy will be "in the Lord."

PSALM VIII.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet : all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

THIS is one of those Psalms which has a further meaning than appears at first sight.

In the first verse God is praised for His greatness and goodness ; “ O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!”

In the next verse it is declared that He makes even children, weak and helpless babes, to praise and glorify Him, and to stop the mouths of His opposers ; “ Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine

enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."

This was wonderfully the case when the Little Children in the Temple lifted up their voices to acknowledge our Lord, and thus reproved the scornful Scribes and Pharisees. (Matt. xxi. 15, 16.) And so it is oftentimes in our own day.

But now let us look at the remaining verses of the Psalm. We may suppose David, on some clear night, when the heavens were glittering with their bright and beauteous orbs, gazing upwards, and exclaiming with holy wonder, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Must he not be beneath Thy notice, too insignificant to be regarded by Thee, and to enjoy so many marks of Thy favour? And yet Thou hast greatly honoured him, and made him lord of all creation; "All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas"—all are subject to Thee.

But if we turn to Heb. ii. 6-10, we shall see that St. Paul looked upon this Psalm as pointing to the Saviour. Thus when David spoke of man being "made a little lower than the angels," he referred to Christ, who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." And

yet God "crowned him with glory and honour," putting "all things under his feet."

We learn then from the Apostle, that the Prophet in this beautiful Psalm looked forward with the eye of faith to that glorious redemption, by which man was lifted up from the lowest state, and made a joint heir with Christ. He "beheld the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"—sufferings which the Saviour endured for us, and the glory to which He was exalted as the great Head of His Church.

And is not this enough to stir our cold hearts? How low did God's dear Son stoop for our sake! He, who was higher than the highest, was made lower even than the lowest, that He might *die for us*. And now how greatly is He exalted, and to what a height are we raised in Him!

God give us grace to enter into the spirit of this Psalm, and to join the universal chorus of men and angels, saying, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

PSALM IX. 1-12.

I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee : I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause ; thou satest in the throne judging right. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end : and thou hast destroyed cities ; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure for ever : he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee : for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion : declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them : he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

IN the first twelve verses of this Psalm, which we are now to consider, David praises God for judging his cause, and for taking part against his enemies.

You will see that he speaks, in the first verse, of offering praise "with his *whole heart* ;" not coldly and languidly, as we too often do, but with all the

earnestness of one whose whole heart was full of gratitude, and burned with holy thankfulness, like the sacred fire upon the altar.

His joy too was great. It was no mere worldly gladness, for God Himself was the source and object of it; therefore he says in the second verse, "I will be glad and rejoice *in thee*." And such should be the joy of every child of God. He should find it, not in the abundance of wealth, or of earthly blessings, but in the Lord. There is the true home for all our joy.

We now come to the third and two following verses, in which the Psalmist declares his assurance that God will put down his foes; "When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right. Thou hast rebuked the heathen (*i. e.* the infidel opposer), thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever."

It is no small comfort to feel that the Lord puts Himself on the side of His people; and amidst all the injustice and hardships which they endure, He is ready at the proper moment to vindicate their cause, and to make them more than conquerors.

In the sixth verse he speaks of "the destructions" which his enemies had wrought, and "the cities" which they had overthrown. But he goes on to remind them that their desolating career would soon be over; that their success would only be momentary;

and that, although they might rage against the Lord, they could not really prevail, but that He would one day "judge the world in righteousness," and pass sentence on them as they deserve.

Then follows, in the ninth verse, a word of encouragement to God's suffering people. David tells them that "the Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed," and especially "in times of trouble." This should give us trust and confidence, and should lead us to feel safe under the sure covert of His wings.

Observe, it is those who "know his name" that "will put their trust in him." May we know Him, and therefore trust Him implicitly! He will defend us against every enemy, and stand by us in every trial.

However much then we may be oppressed and trampled upon here, let us feel sure that our deliverance will come, and let us respond to the invitation of the Psalmist, and sing together in full chorus of the goodness of our great Deliverer: "Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble."

Christ has many martyrs and suffering ones on earth; but their case will be looked into, and their cries will not be forgotten. He will never forsake His people who know Him, love Him, and bear the cross for His sake.

PSALM IX. 13-20.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death : that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion : I will rejoice in thy salvation. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made : in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth : the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten : the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O Lord ; let not man prevail : let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord ; that the nations may know themselves to be but men.

IN this latter half of the Psalm, David still dwells on the oppression of his enemies, and the deliverance which he felt sure God was working out for him.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth verses he entreats God to relieve him, so that he may have cause to praise Him for his deliverance ; " Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death : that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion : I will rejoice in thy salvation."

'There is,' says Bishop Horne, 'a beautiful contrast here between "the gates of death," and "the gates of the daughter of Zion," by which he means the earthly city and temple on Mount Zion. The one leads down to the pit: the other up to the mount of God. The one opens into everlasting darkness: the other into light eternal. It is indeed no small mercy to be snatched from the former, and transported to the latter. May we have experienced such a deliverance; then shall we too "rejoice in God's salvation!"'

When the Psalmist speaks of "the heathen," in the fifteenth verse, he means his godless enemies. He felt assured that they would soon be checked in their career of opposition, that they would be caught in their own net, and "snared in the work of their own hands." And he knew also that they would one day be punished everlastingly, being "turned into hell" with all those "that forget God."

Oh that we may never be classed among such! To forget God is to forget Him who has loved us, and given Himself for us; and the moment we begin to forget Him our course is a downward one. It has been said that 'Remembrance of God is the well-spring of virtue: forgetfulness of Him the fountain of vice.'

We may be sure too that those who remember God will be remembered by Him; for as David says here, "The needy shall not always be for-

gotten : the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." They may seem to be out of God's sight : but no, His eye is upon them, and the day when He shall own them is near. Like some precious flower, whose root is hidden in the ground, in due time the dews of heaven will water it, the sun will shine upon it, and it will spread out in its full strength and beauty.

The last two verses contain a prayer that God would "arise," and scatter His enemies, and not allow man to prevail against Him ; that He would "put them in fear," and make them tremble before Him ; so that all the world may feel that they are but puny, feeble creatures, and that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

It has been remarked that Thankfulness is the element in which David seemed to live ; and that one great beauty of this and other Psalms is the constant blending of Praise with Prayer. Shall we not do well to copy this in our devotions ? For there is often this defect in them, that we are too ready to ask God for His blessing, and then to forget to thank Him for those which we have already received. Truly it is easier to feel, and to express, our wants, than it is to pour forth our praises when those wants are supplied. We are more urgent to have our cup filled, than we are to express our gratitude to God when He makes our cup to run over.

PSALM X. 1-11.

Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never see it.

A COMPLAINT is here made that God seems, as it were, to be indifferent to the trials of His afflicted people; and an appeal is made to Him to come forward and check the violence of the ungodly; "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" God is urged no

longer to preserve an attitude of indifference under these circumstances.

Then, in the verses which follow, the course of the ungodly man is described.

1st. His *oppression of the poor* and afflicted; "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor." And the Psalmist adds, "Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined," or planned. Let their plots end in their own confusion.

2ndly. His *boastful spirit*; "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." A man must indeed be far gone in a course of sin, when he can boast of giving way to his own evil desires, instead of covering his face with a blush of shame; and further, when he is ready to give his countenance to those whom God abhors on account of their covetousness and sin.

3rdly. His bold *rejection of God*; "Through the pride of his countenance he will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." He feels that he wants no heavenly teacher to remove his ignorance, no God to take care of him, no Saviour to redeem him. His heart is full of the world and self; and there is no room there for God.

4thly. His *contempt for God's laws and God's judgments*; "His ways are always grievous." They are in direct opposition to God, to His ways, and to His will. God's "judgments are far out of his sight."

The truths and laws of God are set aside; they do not regulate his actions. And then, instead of looking to the Lord for help against his enemies, he proudly despises them, as if they were altogether beneath his notice; "As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them."

5thly. His *self-confidence*: "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." What a difference there is between the righteous confidence of God's people, and the false confidence of the ungodly! The one springs from faith: the other from presumption. The one says, 'I shall never be moved; for I have a strength of my own to bear me up against every trial:' the other feels that he too is safe, but it is because "underneath are the everlasting arms."

6thly. The *profane language* that his lips utter; "His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity." His very breath is loathsome, and, like the adder, he has a bag of poison under his lips.

7thly. His *secret plots against the poor and helpless*. This is beautifully described; "He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his

strong ones." He is like a lion that cowers and stoops before he springs upon his victim.

Lastly, his *security and presumption*. He vainly imagines that God will not notice what is done amiss; "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never see it."

Such is the picture which the Psalmist draws of the ungodly. It is true, all do not answer to this description. Some are less open and less daring in their sinfulness. Some reject God; and yet show kindness to their fellow-men. Some are outwardly correct, and almost blameless in their lives; but still they love not God, nor value the Saviour whom He hath sent. They are strangers to Him now, and must be strangers to Him for ever; for where He is they cannot be.

PSALM X. 12-18.

Arise, O Lord ; O God, lift up thine hand : forget not the humble. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand : the poor committeth himself unto thee ; thou art the helper of the fatherless. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man : seek out his wickedness till thou find none. The Lord is King for ever and ever : the heathen are perished out of his land. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; thou wilt prepare their heart ; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear, to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

IN the beginning of this Psalm, we have seen that an appeal was made to God to come out of His hiding-place, and take part against the wicked. That appeal is renewed in the twelfth verse ; “ Arise, O Lord ; O God, lift up thine hand : forget not the humble.” Raise Thine avenging arm to punish the guilty, and Thy protecting arm to shelter Thy poor afflicted ones.

It is then asked how it is that wicked men are allowed to contemn (or despise) God, and to flatter themselves that He will not call them to account ; “ Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.”

Surely it is because God is long-suffering, and of great mercy ; and He therefore bears with them, and gives them time for repentance.

The Psalmist goes on to say, in the fourteenth verse, "Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand." When Pharaoh was oppressing the Israelites in Egypt, God seemed for a while not to notice it. But at length He told His people that He had all along known their sorrows, and had heard their groaning. There was not an act of oppression and wrong that had escaped His eye. And so it was in the case of the Psalmist. And so too is it in our case. There is not a deed we do, or a sorrow we bear, or a wound we feel, that is unknown to God. There is an eye upon us that never closes, an ear that hears all.

With regard to the remaining verses, we may learn two principal things.

First, that God will one day *punish His enemies*. When it is said, in the fifteenth verse, "Break thou the horn of the wicked," it would seem to declare that God *will break* the daring arm which now seems so strong. He will so thoroughly "seek out" the sinner, and detect "his wickedness," that none shall remain undiscovered. The ungodly shall find that his little life of rebellion will soon come to an end ; and then as a mere "man of the earth," he shall "no more oppress."

Secondly, we may learn that God's afflicted ones are *under His loving care*, and that the wronged will assuredly one day be righted; "The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless." None are beneath God's notice or beyond His reach. The poor and the friendless are special objects of His compassion.

And as for their cries, they are heard even before they are uttered. The Lord declares this by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, saying, "It shall come to pass, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." And here too, in the seventeenth verse, it is said, "Thou hast heard the desire of the humble." And soon He will sit upon "the great white throne" as "a king for ever;" and then He will "judge the fatherless and oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

The expression, "Thou wilt prepare their heart," means, Thou wilt settle or establish their heart, allaying all their fears, and giving them an assured confidence.

Oh then may we not safely put ourselves in the hands of our heavenly Father, and bring all our troubles and all our complaints to Him? May we not at once silence all our murmurings, with the humble assurance that God will undertake for us, and in His own good time and way will arrange our cause?

PSALM XI.

In the Lord put I my trust : how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven : his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous ; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest : this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; his countenance doth behold the upright.

THERE is something very remarkable in the unshaken trust which David always had in God. This confidence never left him ; and it is continually expressed in the Psalms.

Many a one was ready to alarm him, and to make him "flee" as a frightened "bird to the mountains." But no, his golden motto was, "In the Lord put I my trust." And such should be our motto, when enemies threaten us, and danger is near.

We have, in the second and third verses, the arguments used by false friends to show him the great danger he was in ; "For, lo, the wicked

bend their bow, they make ready their arrows upon the string (they are prepared, that is, for their attack), that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart." And they add, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" They seem to hint that the strong "foundations," on which David's confidence was built, might be "destroyed," and then he would be utterly undone.

But now hear David's noble reply. He felt that his foundation was sure as a rock. His heavenly Father and Protector was near, though his eye could not see Him; "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth."

The expression, "The Lord trieth the righteous," means that God looks closely into their case and character. He knows all; and whatever may be said against them, it matters not so long as He approves. As the goldsmith tests and tries the goodness of the metal, by putting it into the fire, and burning away all the dross, so does God sometimes put the righteous into the furnace of affliction, that He may try their faith and purify their hearts.

Observe, it is not merely said of the wicked that God abhors them; but the words are, "His *soul* hateth them;" that is, He hates them beyond measure, with His whole heart. Yes, the wicked

are God's abhorrence. And yet in one sense He loves them: He hates their sins, but loves their souls.

The Psalmist further declares that the wicked will be *punished*. God's vengeance will surely fall upon them, though it may be withheld for a time. Like a storm, it may be long brewing; but it will come with all the more awful violence when it bursts; "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Here is clearly an allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 24). As they were destroyed on account of their exceeding wickedness, so will God assuredly destroy all who in like manner sin against Him.

The Psalmist gives his reason for believing that this will be the case. He knows that God will punish the wicked, and look favourably on the upright, because He is a just and righteous God. How can it be otherwise? "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

Let His servants then lift up their heads in confidence. They have no need to tremble, for they will be hid in the day of God's wrath. All will be well with them. His heart is towards them, and His hand is over them. He "loveth righteousness," and therefore He loves His people. He

sees His own image in them. He marks their purity, their holiness, their likeness to His own beloved Son, and He rejoices in them. His countenance smiles upon them. He presses them to His heart, as a loving Father does his children.

Truly the wicked have everything to fear: the righteous nothing. The one is never safe: the other always. The one may well dread His frown: the other may rejoice evermore, saying, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust."

PSALM XII.

Help, Lord ; for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things : who have said, With our tongue will we prevail ; our lips are our own : who is lord over us ? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord ; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. The words of the Lord are pure words : as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

WHEN the Prophet Elijah looked around him, and saw how God was dishonoured in the Land of Israel, and how grievously sin prevailed, he exclaimed, as we are told, “ Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone.” Something of the same feeling passed through David’s mind, when he cried out in the words before us, “ Help, Lord ; for there is not a godly man left ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

He further proceeds to describe the conduct and character of the great mass of men ; “ They

speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." St. Paul bids us, in Eph. iv. 25, to "speak every man truth with his neighbour ;" but these men speak "vanity," or lying, with their neighbours ; and that with "a double heart," thinking one thing and speaking another.

He expresses his confidence, in the third verse, that the Lord can, and will, check this ungodliness ; "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things ; who have said, With our tongue will we prevail ; our lips are our own : who is lord over us?" And are there not many even now who, though they may not actually speak thus, use this language in their hearts. They feel that they may say and do much as they please. They are under no control, and desire to be their own masters.

But what saith the Lord to this? Is He indifferent to the groans of His oppressed people, and to the boasting of their foes? "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." He, the true Sun, shall arise, and then all the false mists and vapours shall be dispersed. "I will set him (that is, the poor man) in safety from him that puffeth at him."

David had the happiness of feeling that he could implicitly trust God ; for how differently does He speak from these false flatterers, these men of "a

double heart!" "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Every word that comes from His lips is pure, and comforting, and true. It is like "silver, tried seven times" (that is, over and over again) in the fire; free from all dross, and unspeakably precious.

There is an encouraging promise towards the close of the Psalm. It is true that "the wicked walk on every side," and the "violent men" have the upper hand. And so it will be as long as the world lasts. But meanwhile the Lord is mindful of His people. He watches over them with more than a Father's love and tenderness. He holds them in His hand, so that no evil can befall them: "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord; thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." However wicked any "generation" may be, God can preserve His people unhurt by their violence, and unstained by their sin.

Happy those who are thus watched over, who have the shield of the Almighty round them, and whom He keeps as the very apple of His eye!

PSALM XIII.

How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God : lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death ; lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him ; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

HERE we have, 1st, a Complaint ; 2ndly, a Prayer ; and 3rdly, a Joyful Expression of confidence in God.

1st, there is the Psalmist's *Complaint*: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?"

If we are in trouble, and God does not at once interfere for our deliverance, we are apt to imagine that He is like a Friend who has forgotten us, or a Protector who turns away from us. But perhaps all the while His eye slumbereth not, His ear hears our faintest cry, and His powerful hand is already stretched out over us. For most true is that promise of His: "The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." (Ps. ix. 18.)

The writer of this Psalm felt at the time much cast down, and longed for some assurance that God was near to help him. He speaks, in the second verse, as one who was wearied out with the perplexity of his soul, "taking counsel" so often, and yet not knowing which way to turn, or what course to take. He speaks also of the "sorrow in his heart," the sorrow which lay deeply embedded there. And he further mentions his distress lest his enemy should exult, and lord it over him. But the thing which grieved him most was the thought that God had turned away from him. This was the real sting of his pain, the throbbing pulse of his misery.

2ndly, we have his *Prayer*. He does not merely look inward upon his sorrow, but he looks upward to his great Helper; "Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. He speaks here as one exhausted by trouble, and ready to die. His sight grows dim, as it were, and he seems to feel as if death were near. He prays therefore that God would revive him by His timely aid.

How many when in deep distress have thus prayed for God's enlightening grace, and have found a brightness which they never knew before; a new life has begun within them, a life of joy and peace.

And now, 3rdly, we see David's happy and assured *Confidence in God*. He suddenly, as it were, seems to correct himself, to feel that he had somewhat distrusted his heavenly Father, and that he ought rather to rely upon His promised help ; "I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." His holy trust and confidence return, and now his heart rejoices.

And is there not One very near us in the hour of trial ? Jesus came into the world, not only to be our *sin*-bearer, but our *sorrow*-bearer also. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." And depend upon it, no trouble is too great for Him to relieve, or too small for Him to notice. Be assured, He has an ear to hear us, if only we have a heart to pray.

This Psalm, as well as many others, has a mournful beginning and a triumphant ending. Oftentimes, when our souls are dark and sorrowful, light, under the influence of prayer, breaks in upon them ; the clouds disperse, and all is sunshine. As the dew descends at night upon the parched soil, so do heavenly comforts come down upon us, giving us "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

PSALM XIV.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord? There were they in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad.

THE corruption of mankind is mourned over in this Psalm. It is shown,—

1st. In his *secret unbelief*; “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” To deny that God exists, and that He rules this world of ours, is utter folly; and yet such foolish deniers are to be met with. Very few are bold enough *openly* to avow such unbelief, but many a fool says it *in his heart*. He *wishes* that there was no God to bring him to account. He *acts* as if there were none. And he *talks* as if God was not in all his thoughts. His

language is, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

2ndly. This corruption further shows itself in men's *works*; "They are corrupt, (says the Psalmist) they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." And again he says, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men"—like a watchman from the top of some lofty tower—"to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The sinfulness of man is so wide spread, that God is here represented as looking down from heaven upon this fallen world, and pronouncing the whole mass to be diseased. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

We see that unbelief in the heart produces evil actions. They are as a stream flowing from this poisoned source. Infidelity is the beginning of sin, and folly the foundation of infidelity. When God looks down from His holy habitation, what a sad sight does He behold! Sin is everywhere. This fair world of His is marred and stained with evil. All have gone astray. The path is marked out for them, but they have stepped aside from it. And if here and there a few are doing right, it is not in themselves; it is God, who by His grace

has found them, has led them into the good path, and has kept them there.

3rdly. Their corruption shows itself in their *enmity against God and against His people*. They are represented as devouring them, instead of helping them. They are described as enjoying no peace, but being in a constant state of alarm; and the more so since God plainly shows Himself to be on the side of the righteous. And again, they are accused of "shaming the counsel of the poor;" that is, of throwing contempt on their plans, because they sheltered themselves under the Lord as their refuge.

In the last verse an earnest desire is expressed for a better and happier state of things; "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad."

We must remember that the captivity and distresses of God's people Israel were all in consequence of their sins, and their departure from God; and therefore the Psalmist expresses a longing desire that they should be restored, and be enabled once more to rejoice.

For us Christians God has now at length wrought a great salvation. Christ is come to deliver us from our captivity, and to set us free. May we accept His salvation; and may we find it to be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts!

PSALM XV.

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

A DESCRIPTION is given in these verses of the person who is acceptable to God; who is a welcome worshipper in His earthly temple; and who shall be admitted into His everlasting dwelling-place above. The question is asked, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" By the "holy hill," the Psalmist means Mount Zion, where the tabernacle was placed; and this tabernacle, or house of God, was an emblem of God's temple in heaven.

He proceeds to answer the question, by giving a description of one who may be considered as acceptable to God.

1st. As to his *conduct*; "He walketh uprightly."

His life is pure and holy before God, and irreproachable before men.

2ndly. As to his *deeds* ; “ He worketh righteousness.” He is fruitful in good works. He gives himself to God’s service, and delights to do His will.

3rdly. As to his *language* ; “ He speaketh the truth in his heart. He backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.” He is a man of truth ; one to be depended upon. And whilst many are tempted to speak unkindly of their neighbours, and to believe the slightest report that is damaging to their character, on *his* tongue is the law of kindness.

4thly. As to the *distinction he makes* between God’s people and His enemies ; “ In whose eyes a vile person is contemned ; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.” Though charity would lead the Christian to hope the best of all, it does not teach him to confound the wicked with the good. He sees and makes a clear distinction between them, condemning the one and honouring the other.

5thly. As regards his *word, or oath* ; “ He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” He pledges himself to do what is right, though it be to his disadvantage, and never goes back from his plighted word. Nothing tempts him to swerve from what he considers to be the right course.

6thly. As regards his *view of what is just* between man and man ; “ He putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.” He scorns to take advantage of his poorer brother ; and no bribe can tempt him to condemn the innocent.

The putting out money to interest was positively forbidden by the Jewish Law. (Lev. xxv. 35-37.) And to take advantage of a neighbour's distress, and extort *unlawful* interest from him, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. A hard, grasping, grinding spirit, is condemned by Christ Himself.

Here then is the picture which the Psalmist draws of a truly godly man ; of one who is fit for God's presence. And he adds in the last verse, “ He that doeth these things shall never be moved ;” he shall abide with God for ever.

Such an one is safe for time and for eternity. His foundation is sure. He will be secure in all the storms of life, and sheltered when the cold waves of death beat around him. In this world he may meet with affliction, like other men. He may be spoken against, as his Master was. He may be poor and friendless here. But he is trusting to One who will never deceive him. His house is built upon a rock, and therefore it will stand for ever.

PSALM XVI.

Preserve me, O God : for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord : my goodness extendeth not to thee ; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god : their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel : my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

THIS Psalm is called, in the heading to it, a Michtam of David, which is supposed by some to mean a Golden Psalm, or a Precious Psalm.

It begins with a prayer to God, and an expression of full confidence in Him : " Preserve me, O God ; for in thee do I put my trust."

In the second verse the Psalmist addresses himself, and says, " O my soul, thou hast said unto the

Lord, Thou art my Lord : my goodness extendeth not to thee." He felt that no goodness or kindness of his could benefit God ; but it would benefit God's people, " the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent in whom is all my delight." Towards them his heart went out, and in their love and welfare he took the truest interest.

In the fourth verse he declares that sorrow and misery are the portion of all who reject God. And as for their idolatrous offerings, he can take no part in them, no, nor even speak of them ; " Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god : their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips."

Then, to the end of the Psalm, he speaks thankfully of his own happy lot as a servant of God. " The Lord," he says, " is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot." The cup that we drink, that cheers, refreshes, and sustains us, is the Lord's. We find all our comfort and happiness in Him. The Lord is for His people a cup which is never empty. He is to them the source of all good. He is their inheritance too, their riches, and their all.

" The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage." In this expression David seems to refer to the " lines"

used in portioning out the land of Canaan. He speaks of his own lot being a happy one, for which he had reason to praise God.

“I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel (or advice): my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.” By his “reins” he meant his inner man. Whilst others felt lonely in the hours of darkness, he enjoyed peace. There was a fountain of holy joy ever springing up within him.

“I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Here was the groundwork of his confidence and peace. Here was the secret of his happy frame. He felt God’s nearness, and was content.

“Therefore,” he goes on to say, “my heart is glad, and my glory (or tongue) rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (or the grave); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Here David expresses his confidence in a resurrection to a happy life; that his soul would not be a prisoner in the grave; but that it would live for ever with God in a state of perfect bliss. He felt, and we may feel the same, that there is much joy for God’s people here on earth; but that this joy will be increased a hundredfold, when we are

received into God's own blessed presence. There will not only be joy there, but "*fulness of joy*;" not only "pleasures," but "*pleasures for evermore.*"

But these last verses have a yet fuller meaning. They refer to David's Lord, the Holy One, who, though He took upon Himself man's nature, "saw no corruption." (Acts, ii. 25-27; xiii. 35-37.) Jesus died and was buried; but death could not master Him; the grave could not possess Him long. He soon burst its bonds, and rose a mighty Conqueror. And now the language with which He cheers our hearts is, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

PSALM XVII. 1-5.

Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

IN the parable of the Importunate Widow, our Lord says that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And He asks, "Shall not God avenge (or justify) his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

Now all that David asks here is that justice may be done, as that Widow was assured that it would be done in her case; "Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry." He had been unfairly and unjustly treated, and he asks that he may be righted.

"Let my sentence," he says in the second verse, "come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal" (or just). He felt sure that a sentence or judgment from God would

be in his favour, and he could safely leave it therefore in His hands. He was ready to say with Job when unjust charges were brought against him, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." (Job, xvi. 19.)

As to his own character he appeals to the great Searcher of hearts. The Lord, he says, had "proved him, and visited him in the night;" that is, He had looked closely into his inner heart in those still hours of solitude when no one else observed him. And at other times too He had tried him in various ways, and had found him true.

In the fourth verse he says, "Concerning the works of men (that is, concerning their wicked works) by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." He speaks of having avoided the ways of evil men, and of having kept himself clear of their bad example, by the powerful influence of God's word in his heart. He had treasured it up within him, and by this means he was preserved in a course of rectitude. He makes much the same declaration in Ps. cxix. 11, saying, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." And we too shall find that if God's word is received into the inner man, and carefully laid up there, it will influence our whole life, and be the most powerful preservative against temptation.

Still David felt that he needed help from above

to guide his feeble steps ; and therefore he prays, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

And who is there that does not need to offer such a prayer day by day, and hour by hour? Even the strongest of us are like little children. We are weak and unstable, and require an Almighty arm to support and strengthen us. It is well for us if we have made this discovery, and if in the consciousness of our own weakness we have applied for that strength which God gives to His own children. St. Paul felt this, and therefore said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." St. Peter learned it by experience, for when he attempted to walk unaided upon the water, he would have sunk had not Jesus stretched out his hand to save him. And the strongest of us will soon stumble and fall, except the Lord sustains and strengthens us by His grace.

PSALM XVII. 6-15.

I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God : incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. They are inclosed in their own fat : with their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps : they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth ; like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down : deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure : they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

THE reason that David applies to his God is that He is a prayer-hearing God ; “I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God : incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.”

And what does he ask ? Why, that God would treat him with the same wondrous loving-kindness which He bestows upon His children who trust in

Him ; "Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about."

The pupil, or "apple," of the eye is the most important and tenderest spot. And as a person guards it, and watches over it, with the greatest care, not allowing anything to touch it ; so we may well ask God to protect us with the same watchful care. A similar expression is used in Deut. xxxii. 10, where Moses, speaking of God's love for Israel, says, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness ; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." In Prov. vii. 2, it is written, "Keep my commandments, and live ; and my law as the apple of thine eye." And again in Zech. ii. 8, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

Having just spoken of "the wicked" in the ninth verse, the Psalmist continues to dwell on their doings in the next three verses. When he speaks of their being "inclosed in their own fat," he means that in consequence of their prosperity they were become proud and self-confident.

And now he turns to God, and asks Him to thwart their wicked devices ; "Arise, O Lord, dis-

appoint him, cast him down : deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures : they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes."

According to our translation, the wicked are here spoken of as God's "sword," and also as His "hand." They are the instruments whom He sometimes employs, and the hand with which He chastens us. He had already spoken of them in the tenth verse, and so again he speaks of them here, as full of worldly blessings, having their portion in this life, filled with earthly treasures, and enjoying family prosperity.

Whilst David prays to be delivered from such men, it was a happy thing that he could say of himself and of his prospects, as he does in the last verse ; "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

He sought repose from his many trials. He was oppressed, and looked for consolation ; and he felt sure that there was something higher and better to be found above. He felt happy in the thought that he would soon be with God, out of the reach of his untiring foes, in a purer and holier world.

PSALM XVIII. 1-19.

I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail-stones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me,

he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me ; for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity ; but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

WE find this very Psalm, with a few variations, in 2 Sam. xxii., where we are told that "David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." It was probably written in the latter years of his life, when he was completely freed from the hands of all his cruel persecutors, and was firmly established on his throne.

In the first three verses he declares his thankful confidence in God, who had been all in all to him. You will see that he speaks of God in seven different ways.

1st. As his "Rock." In times of danger he had fled to many a refuge ; but all the while the Lord was his true Shelter, his spiritual Rock.

2ndly. As his "Fortress." As soldiers in battle often flee into some strong city for safety, so David looked upon the Lord as his Stronghold, his sure Defence in the time of danger.

3rdly. As his "Deliverer." For did he not find that God was ever at hand to defend him in the hour of his greatest peril ?

4thly. As his "God." He knew that the Lord was not only *an* Almighty one; but he loved to feel, and to say, Thou art *my* God, *my* Almighty Friend, the never-failing Defender of my body, and the Saviour of my soul!

5thly. As his "Strength." Utterly weak in himself, he was "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Though a poor defenceless man, in the Lord's strength he had been able to face a host of enemies.

6thly. As his "Buckler." A buckler or shield was commonly used in warfare, as a protection for the body. And no soldier had a better shield than David, for God Himself preserved him from the fiery darts of his enemies.

7thly. He speaks of God as "the Horn of his salvation." Now, the horn is to many animals the great means of defence. Their strength lies in the horn. And God was to the Psalmist what the horn is to animals.

Lastly. He calls the Lord his "High Tower." The like expression is used in Prov. xviii. 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Such are the glowing words in which David pours out his grateful heart to God. And sweet it is to feel that if we, like David, are trusting God, He is all this to *us*—our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer, our God, our strength, our

buckler, the horn of our salvation, and our high tower.

In the fourth and fifth verses he refers to his past sorrows. He calls them "the sorrows of death," "the sorrows of hell" (or the grave), and also the "snares of death." He speaks of them thus, because they had been so overwhelming that they were ready to crush him, and bring him to the grave. But in his bitter distress his faith never forsook him, and he found relief in prayer; "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

And then in the next thirteen verses he describes in very poetical language the way in which God showed forth His almighty power in the destruction of His enemies, and the deliverance of His servant. We must not take the words literally, but the expressions are somewhat high-flown, and are intended to give us some idea of God's great and glorious power.

Without dwelling on each of these verses, let me notice two or three of the expressions which are used.

It is said in the ninth verse that God "bowed the heavens and *came down*;" that is, the Lord manifested forth His presence, showing Himself mighty to save. And so too, when wicked men, immediately after the Flood, built the Tower of

Babel, and the Lord determined to interfere and stop their work, He used something of the same language, saying, "Let us *go down*, and there confound their language." There are special times when God displays His power, and makes it to be *clearly seen*.

He speaks, in the eighteenth verse, of his enemies "*preventing* him in the day of his calamity:" that is, they were beforehand with him. And in the nineteenth verse he says that God "*brought him forth into a large place*;" by this he means that the Lord delivered him and set him free.

Happy David! He could thus take up the song of thankfulness, and speak of what God had done for him. He had had sore trials, but great deliverances. His enemies had swarmed around him, but his soul was kept in peace, for the Lord was his stay. And now he could raise the conqueror's shout, and thank God for a glorious victory. So it was with our blessed Lord; for all this reminds us of His trials and victories.

PSALM XVIII. 20-29.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness ; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful ; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright ; with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure ; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people ; but wilt bring down high looks. For thou wilt light my candle ; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop ; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

IN this portion of the Psalm David speaks of the justice of his own cause, and the righteous way in which God had dealt with him. "The Lord," he says, "rewarded me according to my righteousness ; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me." And he speaks in the same strain in the next four verses.

The reason why David here dwells so much on his own righteousness, is not from a wish to bepraise himself, but because he desired to show the good-

ness and righteousness of his cause, and the utter injustice of his enemies. Like the Saviour, he had many false charges brought against him ; but he fearlessly declares his innocence, and thankfully acknowledges that the Lord had dealt with him accordingly.

If David had not been a child of God, could he have reckoned on his heavenly Father's protection? If he had not endeavoured to walk in God's ways, God would not have been so gracious to him. His own conscience bore witness that such had been his endeavour, and that he had avoided the iniquity which abounded on every side. "*Therefore,*" he says, "hath God blest and delivered me."

And if *we* desire to have the comfort of God's constant care and blessing, let us live a life of humble obedience, taking His law for our rule, and the whispers of His Spirit as our guide. Let us show plainly that we are His servants.

The twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses show that God is in the habit of dealing with men according to their characters. "The merciful" will find mercy ; "the upright" will have ample justice done them by the great Judge ; "the pure" will find that purity marks every act of God ; but "the froward" must expect to grapple with an Arm that will either humble or destroy.

Looking at the future, David does not feel a single misgiving as to how God will act towards

him. He judges from the past, and therefore is full of confidence; "For thou wilt light my candle; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness."

The shining of a lamp is an image of prosperity, just as darkness is an image of misfortune. Thus Job says, "The light of the wicked shall be put out." (Job, xviii. 5, 6.) David meant then that God would prosper him and show him success.

Again he says, "By thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." Here he evidently refers to the wars in which he had been engaged. He feels that, by God's help, he had been terrified by no assaults, he had contended against all kinds of enemies, he had leapt over walls as it were, and faced everything that opposed him.

Every Christian is thus engaged. He is daily fighting against a troop that is leagued against him. But with God's help all shall give way before him, and he will be enabled to overleap the highest wall that is built up against him. God being our Helper, it matters little who opposes us. (Philip. iv. 13. 2 Cor. ii. 14.)

PSALM XVIII. 30-50.

As for God, his way is perfect : the word of the Lord is tried : he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation ; and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them ; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise : they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle : thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies ; that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them : even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind : I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people ; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen : a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me : the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. The Lord liveth ; and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people unto me. He delivereth me from mine enemies : yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me : thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his king ; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

IN the first two of these verses the Lord is spoken of in a general way, as One on whom we can rely ; “ As for God, his way (or course of proceeding) is perfect : the word of the Lord is tried : he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. For who is God save the Lord ? or who is a rock, save our God ? ” The word (or promise) of the Lord, he says, is tried ; that is, it is sure and to be depended upon ; it will bear testing.

David goes on to speak of his own experience ; how he had found in God all that he wanted.

For instance, he had found *strength*, when he needed it : “ It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect (gives me complete success). He maketh my feet like hinds’ (or deer’s) feet, and setteth me upon my high places.”

He had obtained *skill*, which enabled him to overcome his foes ; “ He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.”

He had found *protection* in the time of danger ; “ Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation :

and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness (that is, thy favour or mercy) hath made me great."

- When difficulties stared him in the face, God had *removed every obstacle*, and enabled him to walk without hindrance; "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip."

With God's help he had been *enabled to put down every foe*; "I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me."

He goes on in the same strain to the end of the Psalm, praising God for his deliverances.

There are many expressions here which evidently refer to our blessed Lord, especially in the forty-third and forty-fourth verses; "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me."

It is true that David was enabled to put down all the efforts and strivings of his enemies. It is true that God so blest his rule that several nations, such as the Philistines, the Moabites, and Syrians,

were brought under his dominion; and thus he was made "the head of the heathen." But more truly could this be said of Christ; for to Him were given in the fullest sense "the heathen as his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as his possession;" and at His name every knee shall one day bow.

The forty-ninth verse is quoted by St. Paul to show that the Gentiles, or heathen, would glorify God by submitting themselves to the Saviour. (Rom. xv. 9.)

May God in mercy hasten this promised time! May those who now stand aloof from Him draw near, and submit themselves unto Him, becoming His true servants! And may we, who are His professed followers, live closer to Him day by day, acknowledging Him as the true Saviour and Lord of our hearts!

PSALM XIX. 1-6.

The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

THE houses of the Jews were so built that the inmates could go up to the roof, and walk there, or sit and meditate, without fear of being disturbed. Perhaps David, on some clear starlight night, went thus upon the house-top of his palace. And having feasted his eyes upon the beauties of the spangled sky above him, he poured out his heart in these glowing words ; “The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth his handy-work.” We have only to look above, and we shall see innumerable shining witnesses which proclaim God’s glory and goodness. Each day and each night have a lesson for us. Indeed if all human preachers should grow silent, and every mouth cease from

publishing the glory of God, the heavens above would never cease to declare it.

“There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line (or sound) is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” This means that there is no country in the wide world to whom God’s wondrous works do not preach. St. Paul declares that for this reason the heathen are inexcusable. What they behold around and above them would be enough to show them the goodness and majesty of God, if their hearts were not blinded.

The Psalmist calls attention more especially to the glorious Sun, which comes forth in the morning like a bridegroom from his chamber in the east, and like a mighty giant strides across the sky, scattering his rays in all directions, and gladdening the earth with his genial heat. He speaks of the sun having “a tabernacle,” or dwelling-place in the heavens; “In them (that is, in the heavens) hath he set *a tabernacle* for the sun.” And the Prophet Habakkuk uses a like expression, chap. iii. 11, where, speaking of God’s glory being displayed, he says, “The sun and moon stood still *in their habitation.*”

Surely we have daily proofs enough to strike us with wonder and admiration at God’s doings. We feel His power and taste His goodness day by day. But to know Him and to love Him we need

the special grace of His Holy Spirit, in order to open our eyes and enlighten our darkened souls.

From the Book of Nature then—from the outer works of God which meet the eye—we may learn, if we will, the greatness and goodness of God. But there we must stop. We must open another Book, even the Book of Revelation, in order to learn what He has done to redeem us from death, and to open to us the way of everlasting life.

PSALM XIX. 7-14.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever : the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned : and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have dominion over me : then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

IN the first part of the Psalm, David, as we have seen, had the Book of Nature spread out before him. The heavens and all their wonders were open to his gaze. And these, he says, "declare the glory of God."

But he goes on now to speak of another Book—of that which will prove to us a better and more perfect teacher than the works of nature—God's revealed Word. What he had said in the opening verses was a kind of preface or ladder, leading us

up to what he wishes to declare concerning God's law. By "the law" he means the instruction or teaching which God has revealed to us. He here speaks of it under several different names. He calls it "the testimony of the Lord;" "the statutes of the Lord;" "the commandment of the Lord;" "the fear of the Lord" (or that word which leads us to fear God); and lastly, he calls it "the judgments of the Lord."

And David here bears his testimony to the sweetness and preciousness of God's truth; that it is of more value to us than gold, and sweeter to the taste than honey and the honeycomb. And he adds that he himself had felt the blessing of it to his own soul.

But clear as God's word is, and plainly as it teaches, who does not go astray from it? "Who can understand his errors?" Therefore David prays, and we should pray too, for God's pardoning mercy, and for His sustaining grace; "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

You see he passes from "secret faults," which perhaps were sins of infirmity, to those which were of a more deliberate character, and which he calls "presumptuous sins." For the first he asks pardon, and from the last he entreats for preservation. So

in the Lord's Prayer, we are taught to pray "Forgive us our trespasses," and then to ask, "Lead us not into temptation."

Oh, for pardon, a full and complete forgiveness for Christ's sake, on account of all our faults both secret and open : and oh, for grace to keep us from sins for the future ! May our walk with God be a holy, upright, blameless walk ! May His word be our guide, more precious to us than gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb !

Some think that the last verse contains a prayer that *what has been said in this Psalm* may be acceptable to God ; " Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." Or perhaps he expressed a wish that *all* his words, and *all* his meditations, might ever be such as God would approve.

And is not this the wish of every true servant of God ? Is it not your wish and mine—that whether we speak, or think, or act, all may be to the honour and glory of God ?

PSALM XX.

The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee ; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion ; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners : the Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed : he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses : but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen : but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, Lord : let the king hear us when we call.

IT is thought by some, that in this Psalm the Church addresses *Christ* as its King. But I should rather think that it is an address to *David* from his subjects, perhaps at a time when he was going forth to war, and wishing him good luck in the name of the Lord.

Let us take it in this way, bearing in mind however that we must every now and then lift up our thoughts higher, and consider the words as referring to David's Lord.

The first five verses contain a Prayer from the people, that the Lord would be with David in his wars and other troubles ; " The Lord hear thee in

the day of trouble ; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee ; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." They felt that God was ever present in His sanctuary on Mount Zion, and they expected His help to come from thence.

"Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice." This refers to the king's offerings, as he was going to battle. "Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. We will rejoice in thy salvation (that is, in the prospect of thy safe keeping), and in the name of our God we will set up our banners." Soldiers are accustomed to raise their banners, that it may be seen for whom they are fighting. So may we be ever ready to show who we are, and in whose cause we are engaged! May we never be ashamed to unfurl our banner, and declare our hearty allegiance to Christ!

From the sixth verse to the end a firm confidence is expressed that the Lord will protect His anointed, or His king, and prosper his cause ; "Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed : he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

Here is the difference between the people of the world and the people of God. The one place

their whole dependence in war-chariots and horse-soldiers ; the others rely upon God's strong arm to help them. Look at David and Goliath. The one comes forth armed from head to foot : the other has nothing but a sling and a stone. But there is trust in God on the one side, but only a proud self-reliance on the other. "Thou comest to me," says David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." (1 Sam. xvii. 45.)

Where is *our* trust? Do our eyes turn to God in the hour of danger, and in the day of adversity? Is He our only refuge, and on His arm do we lean? If so, it is well; and we may say of our enemies, as God's people did of old, "They are brought down and fallen : but we are risen, and stand upright." For if God is on our side, every foe shall fall before us.

The Psalm closes with a prayer that the great King of heaven would hear His people: "Save, Lord : let the king hear us when we call."

It must have been a great source of strength to David to know that he had the prayers of his subjects offered for him. And if we are fighting the Lord's battles, and trusting in Him, it is no small comfort to us to feel that we are not alone, but that our brethren are pleading for us with the great King and Lord of all.

PSALM XXI.

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord ; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice ! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness : thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation : honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever : thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance. For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies : thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger : the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee : they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them. Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength : so will we sing and praise thy power.

THIS is one of David's thanksgiving Psalms, written probably in consequence of the victories he had gained over his enemies. The last

Psalm was composed when he was preparing to go forth to battle : the present Psalm on his return as a conqueror. When he speaks of "the king" in the first verse, he means himself.

In the six following verses the Psalmist thanks God for the great mercies He had shown him, for granting him his "heart's desire," and "the request of his lips," and for giving him even more than he had prayed for.

"Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness:" that means, Thou art beforehand with good gifts and blessings. Thou givest them even before they are asked for. "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head;" that is, Thou hast so entirely subdued his enemies, that he now feels himself firmly established on his throne.

But what does he mean when he speaks, in the fourth verse, of God having given him "length of days *for ever and ever*?" Perhaps if we turn to 2 Sam. vii. 13, it will help us to understand this. God there promises concerning David, "He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom *for ever*." By this the Lord meant to assure him that he and his seed after him should possess the throne for years to come.

But if we think of the true David, God's Anointed One, do we not see that these words are perfectly fulfilled in Him? He it is who lives for ever, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In the eighth and following verses, it is declared that God's enemies would all be overcome, and the cause of truth would in the end prevail; "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit (or offspring) shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform."

It was so with Joseph's brethren. They "thought evil against him," but they were "not able to perform it;" for "God meant it unto good, to save much people alive." (Gen. l. 20.)

So it was too with our Lord. "They intended evil against him: they imagined a mischievous device." They tried to thwart the great work of His redemption. They denied the truth of His resurrection. But still He prevailed, and came forth a glorious Conqueror.

"Therefore," says David, "shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them." He likens God to a mighty Warrior going forth against His foes, and forcing them to retreat before Him.

The last verse expresses a desire that God may triumph over all His enemies; "Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength, so will we sing and praise thy power."

Such should also be *our* great wish, the end we are aiming at; namely, that the Lord may be glorified and honoured. It is natural to wish that our enemies may be subdued, and that we ourselves may be benefited. But it is a sign of much grace, when this desire is uppermost in our hearts, that God may be glorified and His Son honoured.

PSALM XXII. 1-18.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

THERE is much of Christ in this Psalm. There is much in it that is true of *any* righteous person ; but still more so of *the* righteous One, the Lord Himself.

First, we will take it as the utterance of David's heart, or of any other righteous man's, in the time of great sorrow.

He is tempted in his grief to think that he is forsaken by his heavenly Father. "My God, my God (he exclaims), why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me?" He feels that he had offered up prayer, and was not heard; "I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." But notwithstanding this, he is confident that there is a righteous purpose in all that God does; "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." This language seems to refer to the praises offered up in the Tabernacle. God might be said 'to inhabit' that sacred building, and to be surrounded by those who praised Him.

In the fourth and fifth verses he speaks of those of old who trusted in God, and found Him faithful; and then he contrasts their happiness with his own misery. He speaks of himself as the vilest of beings, as "a worm," and as one who was the object of reproach and scorn.

Still he feels sure that God will care for him, as He had done from his earliest childhood; "I was

cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." The Lord's past dealings encourage him for the future. And ought they not to encourage us, and lead us to say, 'I will trust, and not be afraid: God has hitherto helped me, and He will help me for the future?'

He likens his enemies for fierceness to the "strong bulls of Bashan," to "ravening and roaring lions," and also to "dogs," which inclosed and hemmed him in.

But now, for a moment or two, let us look at the Psalm in another point of view. Let us see if it does not express the feelings of Him who was, beyond all others, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

The opening words were actually uttered by our Lord Himself, when He was upon the cross. Feeling that He was suffering alone, and that His Father's countenance was for the moment turned from Him, He exclaimed, in the bitterness of His soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And was He not looked upon as "a worm," and "a reproach," by the unbelieving Jews? Did not His enemies taunt Him, saying, "He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him;" "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross?"

The words contained in the sixteenth and two following verses can refer only to Christ ; for He alone could exclaim, " They pierced my hands and my feet. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

And now, was I not right in saying that this portion of Scripture is full of Christ? Just as in the dress of the Jewish high priest gold and precious stones glittered here and there, so in one verse and another of this Psalm Christ shines forth, and makes the whole " more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

Our afflictions may be great, and almost ready to overwhelm us ; but our Almighty Protector is at hand to help us. And if at any moment we are so bowed down with sorrow, that we are ready to feel that He has for a time deserted us, and hidden His face from us, let us fall back on that sure promise, " I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The sun may set under a cloud, and all may be dark for a while ; but there it is in the heavens, ready to burst upon us again with its cheering and healing rays.

PSALM XXII. 19-25.

But be not thou far from me, O Lord : O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword ; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth : for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him ; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him ; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted ; neither hath he hid his face from him ; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation : I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

DAVID, in the former part of this Psalm, had spoken of his own great sorrows ; and in so doing he had glanced at the still deeper sorrows of his Lord.

And now he prays for deliverance in the nineteenth and two following verses ; “ But be not thou far from me, O Lord : O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword ; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth : for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.”

It is difficult to understand the meaning of the expression “ my darling.” Some explain it to

signify *my life*, which is so precious to me. For what is dearer to us than our lives? and what calls forth so readily our anxiety? When he says, "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns," he means that when his enemy, like an unicorn or buffalo, was in the act of goring him to death, the Lord heard him, and came to his rescue.

And now he turns to his fellow-men, and declares his determination to speak to them of the Lord's goodness; "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." And he forthwith invites them to join him in pouring forth words of thankfulness; "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel."

He then gives a reason why God deserves all our reverence and all our gratitude; "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." As if he had said, 'See, and learn from my example. I, who have been the most despised and rejected of all men, have been heard and cared for by the Lord.'

And he therefore adds, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation (in the temple worship): I will pay my vows before them that fear him." He loved to thank God for His goodness

to him ; and never did he delight so much in the work of praise as when he stood up in the midst of the congregation, and offered up his thanks in the sanctuary.

This was David's chief delight, and it should be ours. Oh that God may tune our hearts, and make us joyful in His House of Prayer! Oh that He may put a new song in our mouths, even thanksgiving unto our God!

PSALM XXII. 26-31.

The meek shall eat and be satisfied : they shall praise the Lord that seek him : your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord : and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's : and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship : all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him : and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him ; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

IN these last six verses the Psalmist declares that God shall one day receive praise and honour from all His creatures, who shall then own Him as their King and their God.

First, He shall receive praise from *the meek and lowly* ; "The meek shall eat and be satisfied : they shall praise the Lord that seek him : your heart shall live for ever." For such there is a spiritual feast prepared in the Church. The bread of life and the waters of salvation are set before them ; and they shall be abundantly filled. Their hearts too, which were ready to sink, shall revive, and live for ever.

Next, *the Heathen* shall praise Him. He had

before mentioned, in the twenty-third verse, "the seed of Jacob," and "the seed of Israel;" and now he looks forward to the time when those in distant lands should know His name, and should speak His praises; "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations."

3rdly, *the rich and prosperous* shall join in this blessed work; "All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship." Their souls shall be fed, and their hearts shall rejoice.

4thly, *the oppressed and afflicted* also shall praise Him; "They that go down to the dust (that is, those who have been brought low by misfortune) shall bow before him." And it is added, "And none shall keep alive his own soul." This may perhaps mean that all men shall be led to feel that the Lord is their effectual Preserver from danger and from death.

But what does the Psalmist mean in the last two verses, when he says, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this?" The "seed" which "shall serve him" is that seed of righteous ones, who in every age shall serve God, and be accounted as His people. These shall speak

of the Lord's righteousness, and declare His goodness from one generation to another. The aged ones shall tell it out to those who shall be born, so that there shall be a constant succession of thanksgiving and praise.

I have considered this Psalm as coming from the mouth of David ; but no doubt the language of it was the utterance also of the Saviour's heart. He it was who, as He hung upon the cross, was under the hidings of His Father's face, and exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was looked upon as "a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." His hands and His feet were pierced by His enemies; His garments were parted among them; and lots were cast for His vesture.

'I regard the whole of this Psalm,' says a modern commentator, 'as applicable to the Messiah, and believing it to be inspired, I cannot but feel that we have here a most interesting and affecting account, given long before it occurred, of what actually passed through the mind of the Redeemer as He hung upon the cross, in those hours of unspeakable anguish, when He "made his soul an offering for sin."'

PSALM XXIII.

The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

THERE is a holy calm and peace about this Psalm, which is truly refreshing to the soul. It is a part of Holy Scripture, which has cheered many an one in the time of sorrow, and brought comfort in a dying hour.

May we be enabled to take up David's words, and say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd. He is not only the Good Shepherd who has laid down His life for the sheep, but He is *my* Shepherd, even mine!' And if this is the case, we may also add, 'I shall not want. If I have Christ, I have all; for no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.'

The title of *Shepherd* was given to our Lord even in the Old Testament. It was there foretold

that He should "feed his flock like a shepherd," and that He should "gather the lambs with his arm." And when He came into the world He said, "I am the good Shepherd." Of all names that of a Shepherd is perhaps the most beautiful that could have been chosen; it reminds us of the Lord's care for us, and of our safety in Him.

This idea is enlarged upon in the verses which follow. As a Shepherd leads his flock into rich pastures, and gives them food and repose there, so does the Saviour guide, and comfort, and refresh His people; "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

"He restoreth my soul;" that is, He revives my spirit when it droops. The sheep of Christ may err, but they shall be restored; they may stumble, but they shall not fall. For He takes them by the hand, and leads them on "in the paths of righteousness." But why are the words added, "For his name's sake?" Because He does all this for us, that His name may be honoured, and that men may praise and glorify Him for His great goodness.

David seems to have felt that the journey we are called to take may be a little difficult; but in our most trying hour the Lord will stand by us, and support us; "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they

comfort me." There is no path so dark that our God cannot cheer it. There is no way so difficult and dangerous that He cannot make it easy. And even when death comes, and we are called to pass through *that* dark valley, it will not be dark to us, if God is near. There will be light in the darkness, and comfort in that hour, if only Thou our Lord and Saviour art with us. Thy "rod" will protect us, and Thy "staff" guide and support our steps.

But God not only helps His people *in* their trials, and *out of* their trials, but He also bestows upon them a rich fulness of joy, and satisfies them with good things. He "prepares a table" for them "in the presence of their enemies," compelling them as it were to look on and see how graciously He meets the wants of those who are dear to Him. And just as a guest used in former times to have sweet-smelling oil poured upon his head, so does the Lord bless, and honour, and satisfy His people; making their cup to run over with mercies.

What God *has* done for us encourages our trust in Him for the time to come. Experience of past "goodness and mercy" begets in us an assurance of their being continued to the end. Under my Good Shepherd's care I can lack nothing. He has never failed me yet; nor will He in days to come.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

The Psalmist speaks of “dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever.” He loved God’s House. Again and again he tells us so. (Ps. xxvi. 8 ; xxvii. 4 ; lxxv. 4 ; lxxxiv. 4, 10.) His happiest hours were passed in the courts of the Lord. And such too will be the feeling of all God’s people. His house will be their resting-place on earth, and His presence their home above—a fold into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs.

May this Psalm lead us to trust our Good Shepherd more entirely ! For in whom else can we ever find such tenderness, patience, and love ? Why should we fear, who have such a Friend ? How can we want who have such a Shepherd ? Look upon us, O Lord, as we are in ourselves, hungry, and thirsty, and feeble, and defenceless ; do Thou feed us, cherish us, defend us, and carry us in Thy bosom ; till at length Thou hast brought us in safety to Thy fold in heaven.

PSALM XXIV.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

IT is supposed that this beautiful Psalm or Hymn was written in order to be sung when the ark was taken up to Jerusalem, and deposited there as its resting-place.

Picture to yourself a grand procession of priests and others, exclaiming as they approached the hill of Zion, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Thus they ascribed

glory to the great Creator, who at the first separated the earth from the sea. They seem to say, 'Thou, Lord, art the God of the whole earth; the glorious Creator and Upholder of all things.'

But "who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" Who is worthy to approach this holy hill of Zion, and stand near the sacred spot where God promises to dwell? The answer is given; "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." No one is fit to take part in that blessed act but the true servant of God. He shall be accepted, and he only. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." That is to say, Such is the character of those who belong to Thy people, and who approach to worship Thee, O God of Jacob.

We may suppose that the procession with the sacred ark has now reached the gates of the city. The Psalmist therefore calls upon the gates to open, and receive the King of glory, whose presence is with the ark; for there, on the mercy-seat, the Lord promised to dwell; "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

A portion of the singers then ask, "Who is this King of glory?" And the rest answer: "The Lord

strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." And almost the same words are repeated in the following verses.

But this Psalm was not written for those only who lived in the time of David. It was written for us also. We may ask, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" Who shall draw near to God with acceptance as one of His worshippers? And who shall dwell with Him hereafter? None but the holy: none but "the pure in heart," for they alone shall "see God." They shall receive a constant, daily blessing from the Lord; and they shall enjoy His presence in the temple above.

Our hands are the instruments by which we act: are they clean, and free from sin? The heart is the seat of our affections: is it pure? Is all consecrated to God, and under the influence of His Holy Spirit? Is all devoted to His service?

The last four verses remind us of Him who was once here among us, and then ascended into heaven as our Forerunner. At His summons the gates were lifted up, and the everlasting doors were opened, and the King of glory entered in.

And so will it be with His true and faithful people. They will enter where He is gone before, and will dwell with Him and share His glory for ever. He is not only gone to prepare a place for us;

but He longs to have us with Him. This was His prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Let us serve Him heartily now, and where He is, there shall we be also.

PSALM XXV. 1-10.

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

THERE are many things spoken of in these verses. But the leading subject is a Prayer for instruction and forgiveness; and the prevailing thought throughout the Psalm is that God is the Teacher of those who fear Him, and the Guide of the erring.

In the first three verses David speaks of the comfort he found in prayer. He draws near to his God, and says, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." It is not enough to raise the voice, and utter words, however good. The *soul* must also

be lifted up ; the inner man must speak to God. This alone is true prayer, and this alone will God hear and answer. There is much false prayer—much that scarcely deserves the name. There are many words which never reach God's ear, for they come not from the heart, but from the lips only.

Again, there must be a holy trust in God. We must feel Him to be our Father and our Friend ; or we shall find but little comfort in prayer. Hear how David speaks in the second verse ; “ O my God, I trust in thee : let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed : let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.” Let no one laugh me out of my confidence, and so put me to shame. Rather let those be put to shame who are living a life of sin and forgetfulness of God ; for He will never suffer His true servants to lack His favour, nor will He permit the ungodly to enjoy it. Protection and honour will be the portion of His children, and shame the inheritance of His enemies.

David next speaks of God's “ ways,” of His “ paths,” and of His “ truth ;” and asks to be led into them. By His *ways*, he means His dealings ; by His *paths*, the course He marks out ; and by His *truth*, the revelation of His will. “ Show me thy ways, O Lord ; teach me thy paths ; lead me in thy truth, and teach me : for thou art the God of my salvation ; on thee do I wait all the day.”

And in a verse or two on, he says, "Good and upright is the Lord : therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment ; and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

God's ways are the ways of peace and happiness ; and He is ever ready to lead those into them who look up to Him for guidance. Especially does He love to take the meek and lowly by the hand, and guide them into the path of truth. A proud person, who thinks that he already knows enough, cannot be taught. The first requisite therefore in the work of religion, is a meek and teachable spirit, a prayerful waiting upon God, and a willingness to learn of Him ; for it is only when we come to Him as children to a father, that He will help us, teach us, and lead us on.

PSALM XXV. 11-14.

For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

WE must look back for a moment to the words contained in the sixth and seventh verses. There David prays thus; "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord."

He asks God, in His future treatment of him, to remember what He *has* done, and to treat him in the same manner still. He feels that God had always been kind and gracious to him, and he asks for a continuance of those favours. And then, when he thinks of his sins, he entreats Him not to remember *them*, but to blot them out.

And now, in the eleventh verse, he returns to the same subject. He speaks again of his sin, and entreats God to put it away. He does not ask its

forgiveness on the ground of its being excusable. He does not plead its littleness, as if God might *therefore* overlook it. No, he at once acknowledges its greatness, and urges this as the reason why he so much needs its removal. The burden of it was too heavy for him to endure, and therefore, casting himself on the mercy of God, he prayed, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; *for it is great.*"

Oh that God may deal with us, not according to the measure of our sins, but according to the measure of His mercy in Christ! Oh that the attribute of love may be His guide, rather than the attribute of strict and severe justice! We none of us deserve pardon. We cannot claim it. It is our wisdom therefore to cast ourselves unreservedly on God's mercy, as David does here.

In the twelfth and two following verses certain blessings are promised to the God-fearing man.

1st. It is declared that God Himself will be his Teacher; "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." He will not be like a ship that has lost its rudder, going adrift before the wind; but he will have a heavenly Pilot to steer him in the right track; a Director, who will both point out the way, and keep him in it.

2ndly. It is said that "his soul shall dwell at ease." He shall enjoy peace. He shall not only

be safe from danger, but he shall be calm and peaceful in the enjoyment of God's favour.

3rdly. It is declared that "his seed shall inherit the earth." In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall *inherit the earth.*" To inherit the earth, in both these passages means to enjoy a blessed portion even here. And such will be the case with those who are of a humble spirit, and have the fear of God before their eyes. Both worlds are theirs. Their portion here is one of peace, and hereafter of complete blessedness. They are happy here in the constant enjoyment of their heavenly Father's love, and they look forward to a brighter inheritance in that happy Land, which is to be their abode for ever.

4thly. It is promised that the Lord will reveal Himself to such; "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." He draws near to those who fear Him. He receives them into His friendship. They enjoy fellowship with Him.

May it be so with us! May we know something of this holy fellowship with God! And amidst all our necessary intercourse with the world, may there be an inner life of communion with Him!

PSALM XXV. 15-22.

Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord ; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me ; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged : O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain ; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies ; for they are many ; and they hate me with cruel hatred. O keep my soul, and deliver me : let me not be ashamed ; for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me ; for I wait on thee. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

IN this last portion of the Psalm David breaks out again into prayer, and asks God to help him in his trouble. His eyes were "ever towards the Lord." They were always looking that way ; and he felt assured that, although many snares were laid for him by his enemies, God would deliver him out of them all. He felt certain that, although entrapped like a hapless dove in the snare of the fowler, he would be rescued by the strong arm of God ; "He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

This "turning our eyes towards the Lord" should be, not merely our *occasional* attitude, but our *constant* habit of mind. We should be "ever" looking to Him, and seeking His direction. We

should fly to Him in every season of difficulty, doubt, or danger, seeking to be guided by His gracious hand.

David speaks, in the eighteenth verse, of his "pain;" and probably refers to that pain especially which embittered his heart more than any other, the pain which his transgressions left behind them. He therefore prays, "Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive *all my sins.*" The stricken deer suffers when the arrow reaches some tender part; but death soon relieves him. Not so with the sinner, when his conscience is pierced. The wound in his soul is intolerable; and not even death brings him relief. The Saviour alone can give him peace, and rest, and cure. His blood alone "cleanseth from all sin."

In the twenty-first verse, David prays that "integrity and uprightness" may "preserve" him. He falls back upon his own honesty and sincerity of purpose, and prays that these may keep him right. And indeed it is only when we are true to ourselves and to God that we can reckon upon His protecting care, and feel safe in His hands.

The last verse contains a Prayer for Israël; that is, for all God's people. David felt that his brethren were as dear to him as his own soul. And therefore he asks a full and complete deliverance for them as well as for himself. What we all need is a present pardon here, and a still more complete

redemption hereafter. And this is expressed in the words, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." In this world we shall have our troubles. Such is the portion we must expect. No one is exempt from them. But God can give us grace to bear them, and He can rescue, or deliver, us from their overwhelming pressure.

In heaven, however, it will be otherwise. There sin will be no more ; and there too there will be an entire absence of all trouble, for God shall then "wipe away all tears from our eyes," and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

PSALM XXVI.

Judge me, O Lord ; for I have walked in mine integrity : I have trusted also in the Lord ; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ; try my reins and my heart. For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes ; and I have walked in thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers ; and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass thine altar, O Lord ; that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men ; in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity : redeem me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place : in the congregations will I bless the Lord.

OFTENTIMES the heading to a Psalm gives us its contents very truly, and in a very few words. It is so with the Heading to this Psalm, which runs thus ; “David resorteth unto God in confidence of his integrity.”

In the opening verses he makes a solemn appeal to God in behalf of his sincerity ; “Judge me, O Lord ; for I have walked in mine integrity : I have trusted also in the Lord ; therefore I shall

not slide." He was so conscious of his own uprightness that he had no fear of being moved off his ground. Nay, he entreats God to examine him and prove him, and to try his reins and his heart—his most hidden and inmost parts. He asks to be dealt with as we deal with a metal in order to test its genuineness.

He then goes on to mention some proofs of his integrity. He speaks of having the love of God constantly before his eyes; of walking in the way of truth; of shunning the company of sinners, and of delighting in God's worship; "For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

This last desire of his soul he often refers to, as we have already seen in other Psalms. But David was well aware that his presence in the Lord's house was not enough; he must come to God with a clean heart, or his offering would not be accepted. And therefore, in the sixth and seventh verses, he declares, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord; that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." Washing the hands was an emblem of purity; and we can fancy David

entering the courts of the Lord with a heart full of pious feelings, clinging to God's altar with true affection, and pouring out words of thankfulness and praise. God's house is to such worshippers the very foretaste of heaven.

In the ninth verse he prays that his portion may never be with the ungodly, "in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes." Wholly different was his character and his feelings; "But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth in an even place;" that is, not in the dangerous path of sinners, but in the congregation of the righteous.

It is beautiful in this Psalm to see David courting inquiry into his own character, and not shrinking even before the penetrating eye of God. He does not speak of his own integrity in any boastful spirit, but merely appeals as an upright man, from the charges brought against him by his enemies, to God, who knew the whole history of his heart and life.

It is clear from the eleventh verse that he felt his need of mercy, for he prays, "Redeem me, and be merciful unto me." And such will be the feeling of every holy man; for the nearer he lives to God, the more earnestly he will be disposed to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

PSALM XXVII. 1-6.

The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion : in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me : therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

THIS Psalm consists of two parts. The first part, which is now before us, is an expression of the most assured confidence in God, whatever enemies may threaten. The Psalmist rises up to heaven, as it were, on the wings of faith, and looks down with contempt on the troubles and dangers below. "The Lord," he says, "is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ?" He looks upon God as his Light, his Salvation, and his Defence. Here was the triple shield he

trusted in ; and he knew that if God was with him all must be well.

He looks back to the past, and remembers how his enemies, like ravening wolves or hungry lions, sought to devour him ; but when God fought for him they were powerless ; “ When the wicked,” he says, “ even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.” And this gave him confidence as regards the future ; “ Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.” And truly, though the hosts of darkness should attack us, and the world should take the field against us, we are safe if only the Lord is our light and heaven our ally.

When David thought of God’s protecting care, it made him long to be where he might enjoy His special presence ; “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” This was the one main object, the ruling desire of his heart, to draw near to God in His own house, and to hold communion with Him there. David was indeed a happy worshipper, and his most blessed moments were those which were spent in the sanctuary of the Lord.

In the fifth and sixth verses he speaks still

further of his entire confidence in God's sheltering care ; " For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion : " (that is, in His tent or house) " in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me ; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me : therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord. " He knew that in the times of danger or of trouble God would be his refuge, and that, shielded by Him, he would be both safe and happy. And in the full confidence of this he begins at once to sing the song of triumph and of joy.

May we copy David's *trustful* spirit ! We often dread trouble, even when it is a long way off ; we look out for it, and realise it, though perhaps it may never come. Expected trials are sometimes worse than real trials ; indeed, half our trials are imaginary. But he who simply and confidently commits himself to God fears no evil ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

May we also copy David's *thankful* spirit ! He deeply felt God's goodness, and his greatest delight was in praising Him, especially in public. This it was that made the service of the sanctuary so sweet to him. Let us cultivate this grateful spirit. Thankfulness recoils upon ourselves, for it brings down fresh and fresh blessings from above.

PSALM XXVII. 7-14.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice : have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me : put not thy servant away in anger : thou hast been my help ; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies : for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord : be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.

IN the first part of this Psalm we saw that David expressed his full confidence in God, however his enemies might threaten him. And now, in the second part, he puts up an earnest prayer that God would help him in his present need. And is it not well, when we have been lifted up by the full assurance of faith, to come down to the humble utterance of prayer to God, who can alone keep us from falling ?

With David, Prayer was a reality. He asks God to hear him, to show him mercy, and to an-

swer his petitions ; “ Hear me, O Lord, when I cry with my voice : have mercy also upon me, and answer me.” God had bidden him again and again to draw near, and his heart at once responded ; “ When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

He felt that if he had his deserts, God would surely reject him ; and such too must sometimes be our feeling. Have we not then need to pray, “ Hide not thy face far from me : put not thy servant away in anger : thou hast been my help ; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up ?” Though my condition should be hopeless and friendless, like that of a child deserted by his parents, still my trust is in God. The world may look coldly upon me. My friends may turn away from me ; even my father, my mother, my brother, may act unnaturally towards me, and forsake me ; but still God will never leave me, if I am truly His.

The Psalmist speaks, in the eleventh and twelfth verses, of his enemies who beset him on every side, and who especially endeavoured to lead him away from his Protector. He therefore throws himself upon God, and entreats Him to guide him aright ; “ Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies : for false

witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." He earnestly prays for deliverance, and asks to be led into a plain path—not one of wells and stones, but where the way is even—because of those who are always observing him, and laying snares for him.

He was so harassed and beset with foes, that he would, as he says, have fainted, he would have sunk down in despair, but for his persuasion in the goodness of God, and in His readiness to help him; "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

This therefore was his own determination; and this is the counsel he gives to all who are in any kind of distress or difficulty: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Here is the first remedy for despondency—to look up and fix our eye upon God. Our safety and our happiness is to fly to Him in our hour of need, and then to wait patiently till the promised relief comes. We may have to wait perhaps long; but we shall not wait in vain; for God never disappoints His expecting servants. We shall receive His blessing now, but still more abundantly hereafter. Then the few and evil days of our pilgrimage will be past, and we shall reach the mansions prepared for us in our Father's house.

PSALM XXVIII.

Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock ; be not silent to me : lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. Draw me not away with the wicked and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours : give them after the work of their hands ; render to them their desert. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up. Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield ; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped : therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise him. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

HERE we have again an earnest and trustful Prayer from David. He leans upon God as upon a rock, which is able to support him, feeling that all depends upon his prayer being heard : “ Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock ; be not silent to me : lest, if thou be silent to me, I become *like them that go down into the pit.*”

There is something very touching in the words, "Be not silent to me;" as if he felt that he did not deserve to gain God's attention; and yet he would be lost without it—he would "become like them that go down into the pit."

He presses God to hearken to him; "Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle." David looked towards God's "holy oracle;" or, as it is in our Prayer-book version, "the mercy-seat of his temple." This mercy-seat was the place above all others where God vouchsafed His presence of old. It was, as it were, His audience-chamber, where He met His people. And every pious Jew looked with the eye of faith towards that spot, where he desired to meet his heavenly Father.

We Christians too have a mercy-seat, where Christ, our great Intercessor, is ever present to plead for His people, and no one ever looks there in vain.

In the three next verses the Psalmist refers to his ungodly oppressors, and to the wicked generally; and beseeches God not to class him with them, or to allow him to fall into their net; "Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness

of their endeavours : give them after the work of their hands ; render to them their desert. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up."

Though many of these men were breathing forth words of peace, "mischief" was "in their hearts." And when the Psalmist thought of them, he felt assured that, although they might prosper for a time, they would one day be destroyed, and their building would fall to pieces.

This Psalm, like many others, finishes hopefully. The mind of the anxious pleader becomes calm ; the peace which was sought for is obtained ; David speaks of his prayer being answered : "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications." He speaks, too, of God being a true defence and support to him : "The Lord is my strength and my shield ; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." And this filled him with joy, and awakened in him a song of praise.

Yes, he felt that the Lord would not only be his support, but the support of all His true people. And therefore he adds, "The Lord is *their* strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever."

PSALM XXIX.

Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name : worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful ; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness ; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests : and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the flood ; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people ; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

THE almighty power and majesty of God are dwelt upon in this Psalm ; and it opens with an appeal to the great ones of the earth to give Him glory and praise in consequence ; “Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name : worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

And now observe what a grand idea the Psalmist

here gives of God's greatness. He describes a Storm, and the Lord speaking to us, as it were, in the thunder and in the hurricane; "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

All nature proclaims the glory of God. He speaks to us in everything; in the gentle breeze as well as in the hurricane. But in a storm, the Lord specially makes Himself to be heard. The thunder is His "voice." He is described as rending the trees by His power. The Cedar is mentioned as the queen of the forest; and the Cedars of Lebanon as the stateliest of all.

At His thunder the very hills quiver and quake; "He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn." The forests seem to be shaken by the violence of the storm. They are swayed to and fro by God's majestic power. The word "Sirion" is another name for Hermon, one of the mountains of Galilee. (Deut. iii. 9.)

It is further stated that "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire" (referring to the lightning flash, which appears in streaks and tongues). "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds (or deer) to calve, and discovereth the forests." Neither the sturdy trees

nor the tender deer can resist His power. That which is great cannot escape because of its greatness, nor that which is little because of its insignificance.

When it is said that the Lord "discovereth the forests," it is meant that He makes bare and uncovers the trees, stripping off their leaves, by the mighty force of the storm.

And then it is added, "In his temple doth every one speak of his glory." This refers perhaps both to His earthly Temple, and also to His Temple above, His Upper Sanctuary, where all unite in praising Him, and in admiring His glory.

And now for the lesson which the Psalmist would teach us. It is this:—*If God is the God of glory, His people need be afraid of nothing*: "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." By the thunderstorm, God displays to the wicked His awful power; but He shows also to His people that He is strong to protect and defend them.

In the storms and trials of life, then, let us never fear, so long as the Lord is on our side. He can calm our minds and give us confidence, even when all is turmoil around us. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee; because he trusteth in thee."

PSALM XXX. 1-5.

I will extol thee, O Lord ; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment ; in his favour is life : weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

HERE and elsewhere we find that words of praise were ever uppermost in David's mouth. He had probably, at this particular time, experienced a deliverance from some painful illness, and his grateful heart scarcely knew how to contain itself ; " I will extol thee, O Lord ; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit."

He had been, as it were, at the pit's mouth ; but he had been rescued. And since God had in mercy thus lifted him up, he desires to show his gratitude by " extolling," or lifting up, the name of *the Lord*. He is not content however to offer up

his praises alone. He felt perhaps that solitary praise was too cold for him, and he longed to kindle a flame of thankfulness in other hearts also. So he calls upon all the Lord's people to join him in this work of praise; "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (or His mercy). "For," as he adds, "his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." United Prayer brings a blessing, and so does united Praise. God accepts it, and is honoured by it. And surely when we receive mercies from God, we should ask others to blend their note of praise with us, that it may go up as incense to His mercy-seat.

He looked upon his past trial as "a light affliction which endured but for a moment;" but his present joy was for a whole lifetime. His *Weeping* was like a Traveller, who in the morning leaves the lodging into which he had entered the evening before; and then another guest arises, namely, *Joy*.

And how often is it so with ourselves! We have our hours of darkness, and then comes a morning without clouds, a day of bright sunshine and peace. And even though our own lot should be continued sorrow here—one unbroken night—still, if we are indeed God's people, there is joy before us, an eternal day without a sigh

or a tear: for "in the Lord's presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Let us bear our trials then meekly, patiently, and even cheerfully, knowing that however painful they may be, they cannot last very long, and they will be followed by one long, calm eternity of happiness.

PSALM XXX. 6-12.

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong : thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to thee, O Lord ; and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ? Shall the dust praise thee ? shall it declare thy truth ? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord, be thou my helper. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing : thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness ; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

IN the sixth and seventh verses, the Psalmist acknowledges that he had been guilty of a fault, which had brought God's chastisement upon him ; namely, a presumptuous feeling of self-reliance ; " In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." God had so prospered him, that he imagined himself immovable, and beyond the reach of trial. His prosperity seemed strong and lasting, like a mountain, which nothing can shake. He had presumed upon this, and therefore God had chastened him ; " Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." This

brought him to his senses, and humbled him before God.

And now he reasons with his Heavenly Father, as to how it would be if he were to be utterly destroyed; "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" He is pleading for his life, and asks where would be the advantage in his destruction. He uses the same argument that Hezekiah used; "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." (Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19.)

Therefore he beseeches the Lord to spare him, and to have mercy upon him; "Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper." And then, feeling that he *is* heard, and that his prayer *is* answered, he exclaims, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." And have there not been times in our past experience, when God has done this very thing with us? We were sad and depressed on account of some loss or disappointment, and presently a blessing came, and our heart was cheered. Or we were mourning for sin, and our soul was bowed down with a sense of guilt, and Jesus spoke peace to our wounded spirit, saying to us, "Thy sins be

forgiven thee." Thus was our sorrow suddenly turned into joy, and our sackcloth was exchanged for gladness.

He closes the Psalm in the spirit of thankfulness and praise, desiring that his glory (or his tongue) should express the gratitude which his heart felt.

Have we ever experienced any great and sore trouble? Have we, for instance, been brought almost to the grave by sickness? In the hour of trial we perhaps called upon the Lord, and He heard us, and brought us out of our distress. Let us not forget our Heavenly Father's goodness to us. Let us praise Him, and that continually. And let us devote our restored life to His most blessed service.

PSALM XXXI. 1-8.

In thee, O Lord, do I put **my trust** ; let me never be ashamed : deliver me in thy **righteousness**. Bow down thine ear to me ; deliver me speedily : be thou my **strong rock**, for an house of **defence** to save me. For thou art my **rock and my fortress** ; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, **and** guide me. Pull me out of the **net** that they have laid privily for me ; for thou art my **strength**. Into **thine** hand I commit my spirit : thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I have hated them that regard lying vanities : but I trust in the Lord. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy : for thou hast considered my trouble ; thou hast **known** my soul in adversities ; and **hast not shut me up** into the hand of the enemy : thou **hast set my feet** in a large room.

WE cannot do better than divide this Psalm according to the four divisions which we find in the Heading, and we will confine ourselves at present to the two first of these divisions.

I. In the first six verses, *David, showing his confidence in God, craveth His help.* There is no feature in David's character more beautiful than his simple and entire confidence in God. This was brought out by his troubles. The more heavily they pressed upon him the more closely did he cling to the strong arm that was ready to support

him. The more the billows rolled, the higher they bore him upwards.

Twice over in these verses he says, "I trust in the Lord." He speaks of God as his "Rock," his "Fortress," his "Strength," "an House of Defence" to save him. And he lovingly and confidently entrusts his soul to His keeping.

If we had David's firm trust in God we should be able to overcome all obstacles as he did. Though a thousand times sent away, we should return again a thousand times to the same door, if we possessed the same assurance that David did, that God only is our Rock and our Fortress—that He can save, and He alone.

David says in the fifth verse, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit." Now, these are the very words which Jesus uttered when about to expire on the cross; and these are most suitable and precious words for the Believer to use, when trouble is at hand, or when danger threatens, or when death is near. At such times it is well to distrust ourselves, and to throw ourselves into the arms of our gracious Father.

2. *David rejoices in God's mercy.* This is expressed in the seventh and eighth verses; "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a

large room." The mercy of God had shone forth in his case: he had tasted of trouble more than most men. But his comfort was that it was all known to God, and measured out by Him. He had been in many a strait and many a difficulty; he had often been hemmed in by his enemies, so that there seemed little hope of escape; but God had rescued him; "Thou hast set my feet in a large room;" that is, Thou hast delivered me and set me at liberty.

As Abraham, at the moment of his greatest need, found God at hand to help and deliver him, so it was with David; and so will it be with us if we trust Him. "Our extremity will be God's opportunity." He loves to help us, and most of all when we are ready to despair in ourselves.

PSALM XXXI. 9-24.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble : mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing : my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance : they that did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind : I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many : fear was on every side : while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O Lord : I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand : deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant : save me for thy mercies' sake. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord ; for I have called upon thee : let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence ; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men ! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man : thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the Lord : for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes : nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when

I cried unto thee. O love the Lord, all ye his saints : for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

WE have observed that this Psalm may be divided into four parts. Two of these we have already considered ; and we now come to the third, in which David is thus described in the Heading ; *He prayeth in his calamity.*

We see this in the ninth and following verses. He speaks of being "in trouble," of his "life being spent with grief, and his years with sighing," of being overlooked and "forgotten as a dead man," of being counted as a worthless "broken vessel." But in the midst of these bitter complaints he trusts in God, feeling that He is not merely the God of all men, but especially *his* God ; "I trusted in thee, O Lord : I said, Thou art my God." It is this feeling—that God is *our* God, *our* Friend, *our* Father, whom we can claim as *our own*—it is this that gives us confidence at all times and under the most trying circumstances.

From the nineteenth verse to the end we have the Psalmist *praising God for His goodness.* He speaks of the Lord hiding His people "in the secret of his presence from the pride of man," and "keeping them secretly in a pavilion (or tent) *from the strife of tongues.*" He compares them

also to soldiers who have found refuge within the walls of "a strong city." Such was the safety which he experienced, and such safety will all find who trust in Him.

There are many expressions in this Psalm which remind us of Him who suffered from scorn and persecution more even than David, and who was beyond all others "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He could truly say, "I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God."

If we are partakers of our Lord's sufferings, may we be partakers also of His consolation! If we are conformed to His death, may we be also of His resurrection-life! If we share His cross, may we also wear His crown! Then will it be seen that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

PSALM XXXII. 1-5.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me : my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

IN the opinion of the world that man is "blessed" who enjoys health, and is rich and prosperous. But how different is God's estimate ! "Blessed (says our Lord) are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted." (Matt. v. 3-12.)

And here we have David's opinion. He pronounces a special blessing on the pardoned man ; "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity (that is, doth not lay iniquity to his charge), and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Happy indeed is such an one ; for he can look up and feel that God has accepted him, and that *peace* reigns in his soul. It is said of Luther, that

when he was yet in his convent he felt much troubled on account of his sins. One day an old monk entered his cell, and Luther opened his heart to him. The venerable old man repeated to him a clause in the Creed, '*I believe in the forgiveness of sins.*' These simple words, pronounced with much solemnity, diffused great consolation in Luther's mind; and from that moment light sprang up in his rejoicing heart.

In the third verse David proceeds to speak of his own case. He had fallen, as we know, into grievous sin; and bitterly did he smart for it. For a long time he kept his feelings to himself. They were locked up in his own bosom; "When I kept silence (that is, before I confessed my sin) my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

During all this while he was conscious of sin, but unwilling to acknowledge it. The consequence was that he suffered bitterly. His strength was exhausted. It seemed as if the decrepitude of old age was coming upon him. The burden was constant and insupportable. He was dried up and withered, like a plant in the burning heat of summer.

At length however he found relief in pouring out his soul to God; "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and

thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." How true in his case were those words of Solomon, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13); or those still fuller words of the Apostle, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John, i. 9.)

The relief that he found was like that of the Prodigal when he said, "I will arise, and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned." For from the moment he acknowledged himself wrong, and threw himself upon his Father's mercy, he no doubt felt a relief which he had never experienced before. And then when he heard words of kindness from his Father's lips—kindness which he so little deserved—a thrill of joy must indeed have passed through his very soul. And so it was with "the woman who was a sinner," and of whom Jesus declared, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much."

Oh that we may know something of the blessedness which David speaks of, and which he himself felt! With the full consciousness of our guilt, may we go to that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, and may we come away washed and cleansed! May Jesus Himself whisper to our souls, "Thy sins be forgiven thee: go in peace!"

PSALM XXXII. 6-11.

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place ; thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding : whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked : but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous : and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

IN the former part of this Psalm David not only speaks of the blessedness of pardon, but he describes the process through which he himself obtained it ; namely, by acknowledging his sin, and throwing himself upon a gracious and forgiving God.

He goes on to say, "For this (that is, encouraged by my example) shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." Those troubles and trials which overwhelm the wicked shall not

come nigh the godly. He shall be protected, as Noah was in the great Deluge that swept off a guilty world.

David found it so as regards himself. And therefore he says, "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." And where, I ask, can any of us hide ourselves when trouble comes upon us, or when the Tempter assails us, or when we are suffering under the bitterness of sin, but in God alone? He only can protect us, shield us, and cover us with the robe of His righteousness. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe."

With regard to the eighth and ninth verses, there is a doubt whether they are God's words or David's. Perhaps it is more natural to suppose that David is speaking and giving his counsel; "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Or as it is in the margin, "I will counsel thee; mine eye shall be upon thee."

And then follows a word of warning; "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee"—or, "because they will not come near unto thee." God sometimes is forced to act with obstinate sinners, as we act with animals. He puts a bridle in

their mouth to curb their pride, and bring them into subjection. He did so with Nebuchadnezzar, and with Manasseh, and with Pharaoh. When the Psalmist says, "Lest they come near unto thee," he means that unless they have this severe treatment, they cannot be brought to God.

David winds up this beautiful Psalm by declaring that the wicked may well be sad, but exhorting the righteous to "rejoice and shout for joy." We may indeed rejoice in God's pardoning mercy; rejoice in our perfect safety, when all around us are in danger; rejoice in Him as our hiding-place and refuge. And not only *may* we rejoice, but it is our *duty*, as Christ's ransomed people, to cultivate a spirit of joy and gladness. "It becometh well the just to be thankful."

PSALM XXXIII. 1-12.

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous : for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp : sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song ; play skilfully with a loud noise. For the word of the Lord is right ; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment : the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap : he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord : let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

THIS Psalm opens with a call to the righteous to praise God. And some reasons are given why they should do so.

First, because "the word of the Lord is right ; and all his works are done in truth." As regards His *word*, He is a faithful and true God ; what He promises He performs. And if we look at His *works*, we see in them that righteousness is the

law that governs Him. The heavens above and the earth beneath are "full of the goodness of the Lord." The creation of the world, the government of the world, and, above all, the redemption of the world, show this. Each proclaims that the Lord is good, and wise, and righteous.

This not only calls forth our thankfulness but also our reverence and awe. Since God is our Creator, we should revere Him. Since He is almighty, we should be awed before Him. And since He is good and gracious, we should be all the more careful not to offend Him by word or deed. His love should win us over to His blessed service. "Let all the earth," says the Psalmist, "fear the Lord : let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast."

A second reason why we should praise God is because He takes the part of His people against the wicked. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought : he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

The heathen and the godless may oppress and persecute ; but God can in an instant put them down, and vindicate His own cause. They may rise up in opposition to Him and to His people ;

but He can render them powerless in an instant, and turn their devices against themselves, whilst His own plans and purposes are sure to prevail.

Well then may the Psalmist pronounce a blessing here upon "the nation whose God is the Lord ; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." A sure blessing will be theirs. Moses, in like manner, exclaims, "Happy art thou, O Israel. Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?" And we too may add, 'Happy art thou, O Believer, for the Lord is on thy side, and thou needest not fear what man can do unto thee.'

PSALM XXXIII. 13-22.

The Lord looketh from heaven ; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike ; he considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host : a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety ; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy ; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord ; he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

WE have already seen two of the reasons why we should praise God. And now another is mentioned ; namely, because when God looks down from His throne in heaven, He concerns Himself about His children and directs their ways ; “ The Lord looketh from heaven ; he beholdeth all the sons of men ; he fashioneth their hearts alike ; he considereth all their works.” Every true servant of God feels comfort in the thought that there is an all-observing eye which is ever upon him, watching his steps, interested in his difficulties, and measuring out his trials. The Keeper of

Israel never slumbereth, nor sleepeth. From the watch-tower of His eternal dwelling He marks our course, and is ready to give us the needed help. He does for us more than an arm of flesh can do. For "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength." But He is the great and effectual Deliverer, and His "eye is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."

For these reasons the Psalmist expresses his thankful confidence, and exclaims with holy joy, "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."

Those are indeed happy who are of this waiting, trusting, hopeful spirit; who in the time of danger calmly and patiently "wait for the Lord;" who have no anxiety or misgivings, but feel that all will be well, and whose motto is, "He is our help and our shield"—our *help* when evil comes, or our *shield* to ward it off. They are persuaded that God is their God, and their great delight is in praising Him for all His mercies.

In the last verse the Psalmist looks up with a heart full of believing confidence. He commends himself to God's mercy, and expresses a hope which was to him as an anchor of the soul, both

sure and steadfast ; “ Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.”

Truly the Christian has a hope, a precious hope—“ a hope that maketh not ashamed,” a hope that God will be with him to the end ; and that, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in His righteousness, he will be received into those everlasting mansions, where he will abide with Him for ever.

PSALM XXXIV. 1-10.

I will bless the Lord at all times : his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints : for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

IN the first part of this Psalm, David praises God for His goodness generally, and perhaps also for some special deliverance vouchsafed unto him ; “I will bless the Lord at all times : his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”

He then invites his brethren not to be content with expressing their thankfulness apart, but to blend their praises with his ; that so they might go up as a bright flame, which would be far more glow-

ing than mere scattered sparks; "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

He himself had cause above all men to be thankful; for his prayers had been again and again answered, and his course had been strewed with mercies. "I sought the Lord (he says in the fourth verse), and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." And he adds, "They (that is, those who were with me) looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." Just as a child in sickness, in the midst of much suffering, looks up into the face of its mother, and a smile from her brings comfort, so is it with the Believer. The eye of faith turns to Christ, and He gives light and joy to the soul. A look at Him restores peace. There is a holy calmness within.

Again, David refers to himself as an instance of God's mercy; "This poor man" (he says, meaning himself) "cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He was poor, not in the sense of want, but in the sense of being afflicted, forsaken, desolate. Then it was that he drew near to his heavenly Friend, and found Him to be a prayer-hearing God. And therefore he calls on others to do the same; "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

He speaks of "the young lions" sometimes being in want, and suffering from hunger; but God will

never let His children suffer. He does not of course mean that the righteous have an exemption from the common lot of men. They may *be* in want as well as others ; but they shall *feel* no want.

Let us profit by David's teaching. Let his experience encourage us ; and let us rest perfectly content in God's hands. If the helpless infant is happy, so long as its mother's arms are round it ; and if the soldier feels safe, when he has found shelter in some strong tower of defence ; much more should the Christian feel safe, and happy, and contented, when he knows that God is his Father, and that Christ is his Sun and his Shield. God gives His angels charge concerning His people ; and oftentimes, when in danger, they are near to protect us. Surely if we trust God, He will come to our aid. And if our eyes are opened, as were those of Elijah's companion, we shall often, in the time of danger, see horses and chariots of fire round about us ; for there is no trial so great, but that God can make a way of escape for those who are dear to Him.

PSALM XXXIV. 11-22.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good ; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked ; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants ; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

DAVID here teaches us what a godly life is. It consists,

1st, in keeping careful *watch over our lips* ; “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.” We must be careful to abstain from all hurtful and wrong words, and from saying anything which may deceive another.

2ndly, in *doing what is right*. We must not only avoid evil *speaking*, but also evil *doing* ; and

further, we must do actual good. A pure and holy life becomes the people of God.

3rdly, in *promoting peace*. We must try and live in peace with all. And not only this, but when peace seems to be far off and almost unattainable, we must "pursue it," and follow it up. St. Peter evidently quotes this passage, when he says; "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

The Psalmist then goes on to show what are the advantages of such a life. There are special blessings which the righteous enjoy.

1st, *the Lord's eye is upon them*, to guide them, to encourage them, and to defend them. As a father might say to his child, 'You are in danger, but I will keep my eye upon you. I am near you, and therefore you are safe,' so does God watch over His beloved ones. Both the righteous and the wicked are under His eye; the one for protection, the other for punishment.

2ndly, *their prayers are heard*. Wherever they are, and in whatever circumstances they may be placed, let them only turn to Him, and "his ears are open unto their cry."

3rdly, *God is their Deliverer*. The righteous are not exempt from troubles. Affliction is their

portion, as well as that of other men. But "the Lord delivereth them out of all their troubles." Religion does not free us *from* suffering, but it supports us *under* it, and shows us the only sure way of relief.

4thly, *God's presence is promised* to them; "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And if God is with us—if He is near at hand—if He is by our side—then will all our sorrow be turned into joy.

5thly, *God protects* the righteous. His shield is over each one of His people. Our Lord elsewhere assures His servants that the hairs of their heads are all numbered; and here it is declared that "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." He tells us, in fact, that we cannot be hurt without His permission.

In the last verse we are told that "the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants." That means that He rescues their lives, and saves them from death. And then there is a closing promise to the trustful and believing; "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

How happy then are God's people, and how blessed their condition! May we be numbered among His servants, and share their safety and their happiness!

PSALM XXXV. 1-10.

Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me : fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me ; say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul ; let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind ; and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery ; and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares ; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself : into that very destruction let him fall. And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord : it shall rejoice in his salvation. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him ; yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him ?

IN these first ten verses the Psalmist cries mightily to God to step forward and help him, promising that if deliverance comes he will show forth his gratitude.

He begins by asking God to "plead his cause," that is, to interfere in his behalf. Being a Warrior himself, he uses warlike language, and asks God to

fight for him. And then, at the end of the third verse, he begs the Lord to give him some assurance of His saving help; "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." And what is there that we cannot endure, so long as our hearts within are persuaded that God is with us, and that His shield is thrown around us?

The language of the fourth and following verses seems to savour a little of revenge. But the words may be taken as expressing the Psalmist's confidence that God would bring to nought the opposition of his enemies; as if he would say, "They shall be confounded and put to shame; they shall be turned back and brought to confusion; they shall be as chaff," &c. David felt sure that God was able to accomplish this, and that such would in the end be the fate of his enemies.

In the fifth and sixth verses, the angel of the Lord is spoken of as the pursuer and destroyer of David's foes. In other passages of Scripture angels are also mentioned, as being employed by God to punish those who rebel against Him. An angel is represented as "stretching out his hand" upon Jerusalem to destroy it, on the occasion of David numbering Israel contrary to the will of God. An angel too smote the camp of the Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah. But, as we saw in the last Psalm, it is very different with the people of God; "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about

them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Ps. xxxiv. 7.)

The wish of David expressed in these verses, or the prediction, if we regard it as such, has been wonderfully accomplished. His own great enemy, Saul, was put to shame, and caught in his own snare. The unbelieving Jews, the enemies of Christ, were scattered as chaff before the wind, and the blood for which they thirsted is to this day upon them and upon their children. And so will all the enemies of God and of His people one day perish, and be as dung upon the earth.

He adds, in the ninth and tenth verses, his own thankful resolution; "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?"

Our own deliverance from the hand of our enemies may render it necessary that they should be cut off. But what we rejoice in, in such a case, is not their ruin, but our own merciful deliverance. For this it does indeed become us to be thankful.

When David says, "All my *bones*" shall express my thankfulness, he means all my inner nature. The *bones* are here put for the frame, the whole man.

O God, let us not only acknowledge Thy great goodness to us, but let us get our hearts, yea, our whole nature, tuned to burst forth in songs of praise to Thee for all that Thou hast done. For who is like unto Thee, who hast redeemed our bodies from danger, and our souls from death ?

PSALM XXXV. 11-18.

False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

UNJUST accusations are hard to bear. David had to endure these, and so had David's Lord; "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not."

And this malice cuts all the deeper, when it comes from those who have received kindness from us. It was so in David's case; for Saul was his chief persecutor, and yet he had received from David repeated acts of kindness.

David goes on to speak of his own conduct, not in order to magnify it, but to show the base in-

gratitude of his opponents. "As for me," he says, "when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother."

He had sympathised with them in their sickness. He had humbled himself, as taking part in their sorrow for sin. He had fasted with them, and prayed for them. And yet now they rewarded him evil for good.

Some think that the words, "My prayer returned into mine own bosom," mean, 'My prayer was not lost; it returned in blessing to myself.' This is true with regard to our prayers for others; but it does not seem to be the meaning here. He probably refers to his very lowly attitude, bending his head down to the ground, so that his words beat as it were against his own bosom. It was as much as to say, 'I so fully entered into their grief, that I bent low before God in all the sadness of a deeply burdened heart. My sorrow was that of a true friend, a brother, or a son mourning for his mother.'

And then, in addition to all this, his enemies gloried in his misfortunes, and triumphed over him in his sufferings; "In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me, and I

knew it not (*i. e.* I knew nothing of what they laid to my charge); they did tear me, and ceased not."

The "hypocritical mockers in feasts" were probably paid jesters, who frequented public entertainments. These added their taunts to those of his enemies.

And now, whether the Psalmist was actually alluding here to Christ or not, does not this whole passage bring Him before our minds—the unjust Sufferer—the kind and gracious One, who met with such base ingratitude, and for His love encountered hatred—the untiring Friend of sinners, and yet the object of their scorn?

David naturally asks how long God would allow this to go on—how long He would forbear to punish. He implores Him to rescue his soul from their destruction, his darling (*i. e.* his own soul or life) from those who were acting as wild beasts towards him. And at the same time he speaks as if sure of deliverance; "I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people."

Let every oppressed one take encouragement from this. However strong our enemies, the Lord is our Deliverer, and only waits His time to appear in our behalf.

PSALM XXXV. 19-28.

Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me ; neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. For they speak not peace ; but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. This thou hast seen, O Lord ; keep not silence : O Lord, be not far from me. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness ; and let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it : let them not say, We have swallowed him up. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt : let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause : yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

AGAIN the Psalmist prays that his enemies may not rejoice over him, nor wink with their eyes in token of triumph. And then he complains a little more of their evil conduct. David would have desired to live a quiet and peaceable life in the land, but these men were ever seeking to make mischief ; “ They speak not peace ; but they

devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it." They pretended to say that they had found David out, and had exposed his sin.

But he appeals to God; "This thou hast seen, O Lord." Thou hast seen what they have done, just as they pretend to have seen what I have done. Thine eye has been upon all their movements, as they say that theirs has been upon mine. And now he entreats the Lord no longer to hold His peace, but to give righteous judgment, and stir up Himself to punish the ungodly.

God sometimes seems to sleep, and to be indifferent about the welfare of His people. But it is not so. He watches their conduct, marks their patience, counts the wrongs they receive; and then in His own good time He steps forward to vindicate their cause. Meanwhile it is a happy thing if we can bear with patience and submission the cross that weighs so heavily, leaving it to God to ease us of it when He sees it well.

And now David turns from those who are rejoicing in his sorrows to those who were his friends, and who considered his cause a just one; "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause; yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."

It is good to feel that we can reckon on the sympathy of our Christian friends, and that there are some at least who can both mourn with us in our sorrows and also rejoice with us when we experience any great mercy at God's hands. It is a blessed thought too that there are those whose hearts are large enough to praise God, not only for mercies shown to themselves, but also for those blessings of which their brethren are partakers.

The Lord "hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." He loves to make His people happy; and if at any time He brings sorrow upon them, it is that it may work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He wounds them, that He may bind them up; He brings them low, that He may exalt them in due time.

O Lord, remove our narrow selfishness, and teach us to enter into the joy of others, enabling us to make that joy our own.

PSALM XXXVI.

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit : he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed ; he setteth himself in a way that is not good ; he abhorreth not evil. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens ; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ; thy judgments are a great deep : O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God ! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house ; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life : in thy light shall we see light. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee ; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. There are the workers of iniquity fallen : they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

IN the four first verses of this Psalm David describes the character of the wicked, and especially of his persecutors.

They do not fear God ; “ The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,”—that is, the evil conduct of the wicked shows me—“ that there

is no fear of God before his eyes." They have no regard for the laws of God, and have no dread of offending Him.

They wilfully blind themselves as well as others; "He flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good."

When alone and in secret they lay their iniquitous plans; "He deviseth mischief upon his bed." Solomon says, in Prov. iv. "They sleep not, except they have done mischief." But how differently are God's people engaged! David says, on another occasion, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches;" and again, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." (Ps. lxxiii. 6; cxix. 148.)

It is sweet in the hours of loneliness, when the wicked are "devising mischief," to fix our hearts on God, to think of His love and goodness, and to feel that He maketh us to dwell in safety.

In the five following verses the Psalmist describes the goodness and faithfulness of God, and expresses his confidence in Him. He speaks of God's mercy being high as the heavens, of His righteousness being firm as the mountains, and of His judgments being as unfathomable as the ocean itself.

And then he bursts out with a fervent exclamation, saying, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." It is when we feel persuaded of God's goodness and love that we unreservedly trust Him; we delight in His service; His courts are our banqueting-house; and He Himself is the fountain of our life and joy.

David adds, "In thy light shall we see light." That is, we can only see the true light as God enlightens our minds to see it; for God, like the sun, cannot be seen except by the light which He Himself bestows. May He then be our Teacher, and we shall know Him truly and savingly!

The three last verses contain a prayer that God would continue to us His lovingkindness, and that proud and wicked men may not be able to move us from the path of uprightness and safety. The closing verse is an expression of strong faith. The Psalmist sees, as it were, his prayer already answered, and he speaks as if that which he had so earnestly desired was already done. He had spoken somewhat sadly at the beginning of the Psalm, but here his language is that of holy assurance and triumph.

Oh that we may ever thus "direct our prayers unto God, and look up," fully reckoning upon a gracious answer to our petitions!

PSALM XXXVII. 1-7.

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord ; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him ; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him : fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

THE different parts of this Psalm have but little apparent connexion. They are like so many precious stones or pearls, strung together upon one thread to form a necklace.

The Psalmist calls upon us not to allow a spirit of fretfulness to creep over us, when we see the conduct of the wicked ; “ Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.” For a while they may go on unchecked ; but it will not last long ; “ For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.” Their reign is a short one. Their prosperity will not last. It is like the grass

in the field, which is so green and luxuriant, but presently it falls under the mower's scythe; and then in a little while it is dried up and withered. It was so with Saul and Ahab, who, as soon as they were ripe, were swept away, and perished. Why then should we be filled with anger at them, and begrudge their short-lived prosperity? Let us rather pity their folly, and grieve for their end.

Hear now the voice of true wisdom; "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Instead of allowing yourself to be disturbed, simply trust God, and all will be well. We are advised to 'do good.' This is the great secret of contentment. If we allow ourselves to be for ever dwelling on this person's sin and that person's prosperity—on why the Lord seems to punish one and lets another escape—we shall be only encouraging discontent; but if we set ourselves to some *good work*, this will give a healthy tone to our minds, and make us happy.

But what is the meaning of the promise; "So shalt thou dwell in the land?" The promise refers, in the first instance, to the Land of Canaan, where God's people were to dwell safely and happily. It refers also to our present dwelling-place; for we are happy in this world if we are doing God's will, and living upon Him. But this promise will be completely fulfilled in that better land, where

God's dear children shall dwell with Him for evermore.

Again, the Psalmist exhorts us to find all our rest and joy in God. Then will He grant our petitions; He will give us all, and even more, than we desire; He will make our righteous cause to shine forth as the noonday sun; "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment (that is, thy just sentence) as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

Was it not so with David? He was in great trouble, in the darkest abyss of misery; but God brought him forth as a shining light, as the sun at noonday, happy himself, and a blessing to others.

And was it not so with our Lord Himself? A thick darkness fell upon Him. The Sun of Righteousness seemed to be almost eclipsed; but presently He burst forth, and with His rays enlightened the whole world.

PSALM XXXVII. 8-20.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath : fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off : but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be ; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth ; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him ; for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken ; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous. The Lord knoweth the days of the upright : and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time ; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs : they shall consume ; into smoke shall they consume away.

THIS portion of the Psalm, like the last, begins with a caution against fretfulness and anger at the course of the wicked ; for if we indulge in a murmuring spirit we shall be partakers of their sin. Then, in the tenth and eleventh verses, the

Psalms enlarges upon what he had said before about the passing away of the ungodly, and the firm footing of the righteous. Of the latter he says; "The meek shall inherit the earth;" and our Lord quotes the passage, adding His own blessing to it. And truly there is a special blessing on the meek even here. "All things are theirs, whether things present or things to come, all are theirs; and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." They have a part of their inheritance here, but the better part is reserved for them in heaven.

See what is here said of the ungodly. They are ever plotting against the just, and gnash upon them with their teeth, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against them. They draw the sword and bend the bow to attack God's people. But meanwhile He laughs at their boastings, and counts them but folly. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and pierce it through. Their arms shall be broken, and they shall perish, as fat melts away in the fire, and as smoke disappears.

Such is the fate of the ungodly. Now see how it is with the righteous.

We have seen that they will "inherit the earth" and enjoy peace. A blessed contentment also shall be theirs; for is it not true that "a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked?" Solomon declares the same fact when he says, "Better is a little with righteousness

than great revenues without right." (Prov. xvi. 8.) The godly may fare as ill, or worse, than others; but they have that which makes up for every loss. It is reported of Luther that on his deathbed he said to those about him, 'Children, I leave you no riches, but I leave you a rich God.'

And, again, it is said in the eighteenth verse, that "the Lord knoweth the days of the upright:" that is, He marks their course, He measures out their lives, and knows all that will befall them. He takes care too that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him."

And, further, it is promised that "they shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." In the day of calamity they shall be specially provided for.

The "evil times" here spoken of are days of trial and adversity. At such times the righteous will not be disappointed, like the man who goes to a fountain and finds it dried up. His wants will all be supplied. He will find God as good as His word.

PSALM XXXVII. 21-29.

The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again ; but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth ; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down ; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth ; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good ; and dwell for evermore. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints ; they are preserved for ever : but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

THE Psalmist again in these verses returns to the character and blessedness of God's people.

In the twenty-first verse he mentions the wicked, but it is only to bring out the character of the righteous ; "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again ; but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." Whilst the one is reckless and dishonest, the other is prudent, kind, and generous. This is repeated in the twenty-sixth verse ; "He is ever merciful, and lendeth."

To be a careless lender is positively wrong, as

Solomon shows us in the Book of Proverbs ; but to be ready to help others, even at our own risk, is a Christian's duty. Our gifts, if bestowed in a right spirit, will not impoverish us ; but, like vapours which ascend from the earth, they will return in showers of blessing upon us ; "The liberal soul shall be made fat : and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. xi. 25.)

The Psalmist goes on to speak of a good man's general course in life ; "His steps are ordered by the Lord." He asks for guidance, and he has it. His way is clear, for God has marked it out. Trouble may overtake him, it is true ; and he may make many mistakes. But "though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down ; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Just as the child may stumble through weakness, but if he is held by a father's hand he is perfectly safe, so is it with God's children, they are secure under His guidance and protection.

And on this point the Psalmist gives us his own experience ; 'I (he says) have passed through childhood, and manhood, and am now advanced in years ; and this I have observed as a general rule, that the righteous are not forsaken, and that beggars and vagabonds come from a different class.'

O child of God, be assured of thy Heavenly Father's love and care. He is thy God, and will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. He bids thee

ask Him for thy daily bread, and that command contains within it a promise. He will supply all thy need, both as regards thy body and thy soul, in time and in eternity.

And now for the great lesson to be learnt from all that he has said. It is this; "Depart from evil, and do good." Live a holy life, waiting upon God, and trusting all to Him. Fret not thyself about the prosperity of the wicked. God will deal with them as is right. But be very careful thyself, that thou walkest in the straight and narrow way that leadeth to eternal life.

David adds, "And dwell for evermore" (or, thou shalt dwell for evermore); that is, whilst the wicked are for ever shaken and unstable, thy footing shall be sure. Thou shalt enjoy safety and happiness, and dwell for ever with God in the home prepared for thee above.

PSALM XXXVII. 30-40.

The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

LET us see what is said of the righteous in this concluding portion of the Psalm.

First, It is said that his conversation is wise and just; "His mouth speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment." As a man is, such will be his speech.

Secondly, God's will is so deeply imprinted upon his heart, that he is sure to go right; "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall

slide." In another place David says, "Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I might not sin against thee." This is the best preservative against a wrong course, to keep God's word as a treasure laid up within us. It will be a check to us when we are disposed to go wrong: it will point out to us the right path.

Thirdly. God protects His people from the assaults of the wicked; "The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged." Though he may be condemned by his fellow men, God will acquit him. He may be found guilty at an earthly bar, and yet God may advance him to a throne among saints and martyrs.

Fourthly. His life is upright and his end peaceful; "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

How different is the life and the death of the wicked: "I have seen (says David) the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree;" great in the world's eyes, prospering, and rich. Such was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Such too was Saul. And such are some in the present day, men of great power and influence, rolling in wealth, and possessing all that this world can give them, cutting a great figure in their day, admired, envied, and carrying all before them. But in a moment what a change takes place! The rich man dies; his place is empty, he is for-

gotten : " He passed away, and, lo, he was not ; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

This is the history of many who were great in the world's eyes, but are nothing in God's sight.

Lastly, whilst the wicked perish, the righteous have an ever-present Deliverer ; " The transgressors shall be destroyed together : the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord : he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them : he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." The wicked or the worldly man flourishes oftentimes, but it is for a very little while ; and then he is cut off, and that for ever.

Let us never forget that our " salvation is of the Lord." In the time of trouble, He alone can give us peace. When our own sin condemns us, He only can pardon us. In the hour of death and in the day of judgment, He only can give us deliverance. Oh that He may be ever near to help us, and to save us !

PSALM XXXVIII. I-12.

O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath : neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger ; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head : as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled ; I am bowed down greatly ; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease ; and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken : I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee ; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me ; as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore ; and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me ; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

THIS is one of the Penitential Psalms, and much resembles the Sixth. Some think that David wrote it at a time when he was suffering from bodily illness ; but we should rather look at it as expressing the misery and hatefulness of sin, which is here spoken of as a *spiritual disease*.

He begins by asking God not to deal with him

as a judge, not to condemn him as he richly deserved, nor to punish him in anger, but rather to chasten him in love.

Then he describes his spiritual disease and its bitter sufferings; "Thine arrows stick fast in me." God had brought home to him his guilt, and made him feel its bitterness. Job uses the same language, saying, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." He speaks of there being "no soundness in his flesh," nor "rest in his bones." He compares his iniquities to a mighty wave "going over his head," and nearly overwhelming him; and to "a burden too heavy" for him to bear. He goes even further, and speaks of his sin as a leprosy,—so "loathsome a disease" that there was "no soundness in his flesh."

Is this language exaggerated? No, it expresses the experience of a true penitent. Sin is often regarded as a light matter; but it is no longer felt so, when we are brought under the convincing power of the Holy Spirit. Then it is that sin becomes "exceeding sinful" in our eyes, and we feel the fulness of its guilt and misery. Do we not say in our public prayers, 'There is no health in us;' 'The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable?' And are not the words before us suited to our case; "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my fool-

ishness ;” “ My loins are filled with a loathsome disease ; and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken : I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart ? ”

It is well for us if such is the true and deep-felt utterance of our hearts ; for then we shall be looking out for One who can give us relief. We shall say, as David does here, “ Lord, all my desire is before thee ; and my groaning is not hid from thee.”

Again David returns to his bitter complainings, and speaks of their being aggravated in his case (as they were in Job's) by the coldness and unkindness of those on whose friendship he had reckoned, and by their turning treacherously against him. So it was with our Lord Himself. He too could say, “ My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore ; and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me : and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.”

And if Jesus bore the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and the treacherous faithlessness of friends, shall not we be ready to endure all with patience and submission for His sake ? Shall we not meekly bear our cross, which He has shared so lovingly with us ?

PSALM XXXVIII. 13-22.

But I, as a deaf man, heard not ; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O Lord, do I hope : thou wilt hear, O Lord my God. For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me : when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity ; I will be sorry for my sin. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong ; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries ; because I follow the thing that good is. Forsake me not, O Lord : O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

DAVID tells us how he was enabled to behave himself under the painful treatment to which he had been referring in the former verses ; “ But I, as a deaf man, heard not ; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.”

Such was his meek and godly bearing under the malicious attacks of his foes. How Christ-like ! For was not this also the conduct of the Saviour ? “ *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he*

opened not his mouth." He bore with patience and uncomplaining resignation the unjust oppression of men. And grace will enable us to do the same, especially when we are suffering for His dear sake.

And then, in the next verse, he gives us the ground of his patience: he believed that God would maintain **his** cause; "For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." And this too strikingly reminds us of David's Lord, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but *committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*"

What a blessing that we may, at all times, even in our darkest day, turn to God with the assured confidence that if we place ourselves in His hands all will be well. This will enable us to bear much that would otherwise weigh us down.

See too how very humbly the Psalmist speaks; "For I am ready to halt (or sink), and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." It is a good thing when we are not disposed to hide our sin, but are willing to acknowledge it before God. If we come to Him in a self-condemning spirit, He is sure to receive us graciously. "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

O Lord, show me my sin, and make me willing

to acknowledge it both to Thee and to **my fellow-men**. Instead of excusing myself, let my prayer rather be, "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

There is something very touching in the Psalmist's concluding prayer. He had felt God's nearness, and the great comfort of His protection, and he beseeches that He will not leave him in his distress; "Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation."

Oh that God may never be "far from us" in the time of our trouble; and may He be specially near to us in the hour of sickness and of death! When heart and flesh fail, may He be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever!

PSALM XXXIX. 1-6.

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue : I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good ; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned : then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth ; and mine age is as nothing before thee : verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show : surely they are disquieted in vain : he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

HARD pressed by the wicked, and almost overwhelmed, the Psalmist here describes the struggle that was going on within him. Words of discontent had arisen in his soul, but he had checked their utterance for a while ; but now at length the cord is broken, and he speaks out his misery.

It was so also with Job for a time ; for we read, "In all this Job sinned not, and spake nothing foolishly against God." And David also kept the bridle in his mouth, and restrained himself, more especially whilst his enemies were present, lest they should blame him. He "held his peace, even from

good." There was much that he might justly have said, but he abstained.

He speaks of his "heart being hot within him," and of a "fire burning" in his soul. And at length, when he could hold in no longer, he gave vent to his complainings; "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is." Show me, that is, how long I have to suffer thus. Show me when it is that death will end my sufferings.

There is undoubtedly something of impatience here—something which David seemed at the time to feel he was hardly justified in expressing. Job seems to have felt the same, when he exclaimed, "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!" (Job, vi. 8, 9.) And Jonah too, showed the same impatience when he prayed, "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah, iv. 3.)

But David did not go so far as either Job or Jonah. He did not reach the point of wishing straightway to die. He only asked to know *when* he might expect death; "Make me to know mine end, and the number of my days."

Even this however was wrong; and in David's better moments he felt very differently. He could *bear* the heaviest cross for his Master's sake. His

faith was proof against the sorest persecutions. He could say, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." (Ps. xxvii. 2, 3.)

God give to us an humble, patient, enduring spirit, so that we may be able to say, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy." Give us grace, Lord, and make us to feel that "as our days, so shall our strength be." Make us willing to bear all that Thou layest upon us, assured that Thou wilt be with us in the furnace, and wilt bring us out of it purified by our sufferings.

PSALM XXXIX. 7-13.

And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

IN the world around him, David saw little else but trouble; he therefore turns to God, and looks to Him as the source of true consolation.

By the expression, "What wait I for?" he would seem to ask, What is my hope and expectation? In the time of trouble, we shall wait long enough for brighter days, unless we look to Him who is the Giver of all peace, and throw ourselves into His arms. But at His word the day of joy will dawn after a night of sorrow.

David asks for deliverance from sin; for he well knew how sin and sorrow go together, and that the one is the parent of the other. And this *he desired* all the more, as it would stop the mouth

of his taunting enemies ; “ Make me not the reproach of the foolish.”

“ I was dumb,” he says—I dared not say a word, or utter a complaint—“ for thou didst it.” The rod was Thine. The cup was administered by Thee. It was my Father’s doing ; therefore I dared not complain. I had not a word to say against it.

And yet, with this submission, he earnestly entreats God to remove His heavy hand. For when He punishes, our joy is turned into sorrow ; and our very beauty is eaten away, as a garment fretted by a moth.

Is it not so ? Oh, what terrible inroads does affliction make upon our health, our youthfulness, and our peace ! The heart knoweth its own bitterness ; and there is many a man who is wasted and worn out by some distressing care which troubles him, when, if he could but cast that burden upon the Lord, He would sustain him, speaking peace to his soul.

And now David implores God to have compassion on his affliction ; “ Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry ; hold not thy peace at my tears.”

He pleads his condition as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. And is not this the condition of every one of us ? We are not dwellers here, but only sojourners. We are strangers in a foreign land. This thought should help us to bear our

trials. They may be great, but they cannot last long. And each one, as it comes, seems to tell us that this is not our rest, and to remind us that when we reach our Home every sorrow will flee away.

Though David felt that he was but a traveller, that his journey would soon end, and that he was near his home, he asks for a little breathing time; "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."

Who is there that feels himself altogether ready? Like a Bird preparing to migrate to a better clime, the Christian needs to prune his wings for the hour of his heavenward flight. Spare me, Lord, O spare me, till I am ready for my departure.

PSALM XL. 1-10.

I waited patiently for the Lord ; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God : many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward : they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee : if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire ; mine ears hast thou opened : burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation ; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

THE leading idea in this Psalm, and especially in the first part of it, is gratitude to God for deliverance.

The Psalmist speaks of having "waited patiently for the Lord," and of his being rewarded

for so doing by an answer to his supplications ;
“ He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

As the Archer shoots his arrow, and then looks to see the effect, so when our prayers are sent up to God, we must not be content with having uttered the words, but we must patiently and expectantly wait for a response. And if we receive it not, we must ask again and again, and give God no rest until He grants our request.

We read of Joseph being cast into a pit by his envious brethren, and of Jeremiah being let down into the deep dungeon ; and both were rescued from their pitiful condition. But David’s was a still deeper and more horrible pit. He had sunk into the lowest depths of sorrow ; but God, with His own right hand and with His holy arm, delivered him, and set his feet upon firm ground again.

And now hear how thankfully he speaks ; “ He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God : many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” He describes too the happiness of trusting in God, and not in man. *They* are “ proud,” but *He* is gracious ; *they* deal in lies, and deceive us and disappoint us ; but *He* is faithful and true. Therefore is it not our wisdom and our happiness to trust God, rather than lean upon an arm of flesh ?

In the sixth and following verses, the Psalmist

speaks of the mere formal offering of sacrifice, as being of little value in God's sight, in comparison with a holy and cheerful obedience to His will. Well is it if it is our delight, as it was David's, to do the will of God.

But these words were not David's only; they were also Christ's. This we learn by referring to Heb. x. 5-9. Yes, David's Lord could say more truly than any other, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation (before assembled multitudes): lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest."

Instead of sacrifices, He came to offer Himself. He gave Himself willingly, feeling it to be His great delight to do the work His Father had committed unto Him. And oh that "our ears may be opened" to know the will of God, and may our hearts be so influenced by His Spirit, that it may be our greatest enjoyment to labour in His service!

PSALM XL. 11-17.

Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord : let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about : mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of mine head : therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me : O Lord, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it : let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee : let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified. But I am poor and needy ; yet the Lord thinketh upon me : thou art my help and my deliverer ; make no tarrying, O my God.

IN this second part of the Psalm David gives himself unto prayer ; and from it we may learn how to pray acceptably in the time of distress ; “ Withhold not thou (he says) thy tender mercies from me.” As if he had said, ‘ There is abundant mercy treasured up in Thee : O let me be a partaker of it ; let it flow out towards me.’

He speaks of his troubles, and especially that greatest of all troubles, his sins. These, he says, have so overwhelmed him, that he is “ not able to

look up." The tears he has shed have made his eyes dim, and a sense of his guilt has made him ashamed to lift those eyes up heavenward.

Sometimes we need to be thus brought low and humbled before God. It is a blessing when the Holy Spirit shows us the exceeding misery of sin. And far better is it to stand self-condemned like the Publican in the temple, than to have the ill-founded confidence of the self-satisfied Pharisee. From the one God turns away His face, but to the other He extends the loving arms of His forgiveness.

Having simply asked for deliverance in the thirteenth verse, he goes on to express his desire that his enemies may be altogether disconcerted and disgraced; "Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it: let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha;" that is, Silence their taunts, and bring their enmity to nought.

And then he also asks that this may be a cause of rejoicing to the people of God—that when they see how graciously He deals with His servant, and how He throws the shield of His protection around him, they may one and all exclaim with the voice of adoring gratitude, "The Lord be magnified!"

Once more David thinks of his own distress, and exclaims, "But I am poor and needy; yet the

Lord thinketh upon me : thou art my help and my deliverer ; make no tarrying, O my God." Though he had no helper and deliverer on earth, he felt that he had a Helper in heaven. And though God might seem slack in affording His promised aid, it would come, and there would be no unnecessary tarrying.

These words were suitable to David, suitable also to Christ in the day of His humiliation, and suitable to each one of His followers. 'The Church,' says good Bishop Horne, 'like her Redeemer, is often poor and afflicted, but Jehovah is her Help and her Deliverer. With such a Father, and such a Friend, poverty becomes rich, and weakness itself is strong.'

PSALM XLI. 1-4.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor : the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed upon the earth ; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. I said, Lord, be merciful unto me : heal my soul ; for I have sinned against thee.

OUR Lord says, in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And this seems to be the idea in David's mind, and he expresses it in the opening verses of this Psalm. He pronounces a blessing on those who have compassion on the poor. And when he speaks of "the poor" he does not refer merely to those who are poor in pocket ; but to the suffering and afflicted generally.

Now see what he says of one who is thus compassionate ; "The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." As he has a heart to feel for the afflictions of his brethren, God will draw near to him in the time of his affliction. The compassionate man will receive compassion from God, and those who are ready to weep with the weeping may console

themselves with the assurance that their own sorrow will be turned by God into joy.

Again, "The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies." Here is a gracious promise of Preservation, of Blessing, and of Deliverance. And what more comforting than to feel that we are in His safe hands, under His sure protection, and that our bitterest enemies cannot harm us, so long as we are under the Lord's promised care?

And further, the Psalmist specially declares that, when such an one is laid down with illness, God is very near to him, administering strength to him in his weakness, and comfort in his suffering. And just as one is relieved and soothed in sickness by having his bed made up by some tender hand, so are we greatly comforted by the kind and gracious consolations which God bestows; "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

And now the Psalmist puts up an earnest prayer to God for His merciful and healing grace; "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul." He comes to God, pleading His mercy, and throwing himself upon His compassion. He draws near to the great Healer, and asks Him to supply the needed remedy.

And he adds as a reason, "For I have sinned against thee." He does not plead any goodness of

his own ; but he pleads his own misery, and therefore his utter need of God's merciful interposition. He felt that sin was the cause of all his sorrow ; and as he looked within he felt that every trouble must be traced to that source.

Is any one afflicted ? Here is a prayer to suit his case. Is any one bowed down with a sense of guilt ? Here are words with which he may approach his heavenly Father : " Lord, be merciful unto me : heal my soul ; for I have sinned against thee."

PSALM XLI. 5-13.

Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

DAVID'S sorrow was increased by the unjust reproaches and calumnies of his enemies. Their feeling was so bitter against him, that they exclaimed, "When shall he die, and his name perish?"

And when any one came to visit him in his trouble, it was not on an errand of kindness, but in order to frame some lie against him, and to circulate some report to his discredit. Like Job's comforters, they attributed his sickness or his affliction to some

sin that he had committed ; " An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him ; and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more."

His wound too was deepened by the piercing thrust of those who were nearest and dearest to him ; " Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

This was a bitter aggravation of all his trials—that his friend, and one even nearer to him than a friend, his own child, was acting the part of his enemy. One can feel that this was hard indeed, very hard, to bear.

This verse makes one feel that David's troubles were not his alone, but were shared by a greater and a holier Sufferer. For He, of all others, could say that His own familiar friend, the close companion of His earthly life, the partaker of His bread and of His cup, treacherously turned against Him. The base conduct of Judas was the dagger that pierced Him in the tenderest part.

But now again he turns to his God, and is lightened. He asks God to show him mercy, especially by the discomfiture of his enemies. There is certainly somewhat of a revengeful spirit in the words to which he gives utterance. But there is such a thing as a righteous vengeance, which is ready to withdraw itself when the offender shows the first sign of repentance. David could doubtless love his

enemies, though he longed to see their wicked devices overthrown.

With full confidence he adds, "As for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting." He is thankful, even in the midst of his complaint. Praise bursts forth even in the midst of his sorrow. He thanks God, for he already sees with the eye of faith his desire accomplished. And one source of his comfort is that God knows well the uprightness of his cause, and ever looks upon him with an eye of mercy.

The two Amens are supposed to be a kind of Doxology, or expression of thankfulness, closing this first division of the Psalms.

PSALM XLII. 1-5.

As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me : for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

IF this Psalm was not actually penned by David, it must have been written by one of his confidential followers.

The writer expresses in it his love for God's House, and his misery at being absent from it, and thus cut off from the enjoyment of public worship. He compares his earnest desire for communion with God in His Temple to the thirsty longing of the hart, or stag, for the water-brooks on a sultry day.

Oh that we may all feel this desire, and hasten to the well of life, that we may be satisfied : "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness (says our Lord), for they shall be filled." If we have experienced happy moments in communion with God, we shall yearn for a repetition of them in the sanctuary.

There had been a sorrow upon the Psalmist's mind, so that "tears had been his meat day and night." He had lost his appetite, and could only weep. And his sorrow was aggravated by the cruel taunts of his enemies, who were continually exclaiming, 'Where is thy God?' As much as to say, 'Thou hast spoken often of thy trust in God. Thou hast professed that He is thy Friend. But thou art now forsaken, and God seems to be far from thee, and to have no concern about thy welfare.'

But when thus distressed, brighter thoughts connected with God's House, and the happiness of meeting Him there, come into his mind; "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." God's worship was a true feast to David. Never was he so truly happy as when he joined the multitude in those courts.

He was now shut out from religious privileges; but past enjoyment in them fills his heart, and the bright anticipation of a renewal of them on his return to Jerusalem comforts him. He hopes again

to join the happy throng of worshippers on some future feast day.

“Why, then (he asks), art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?” He reproaches himself for his momentary distrust, and summons up all his faith, saying to his soul, “Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” There is now a cloud, as it were, resting upon me, but ere long it will be dispersed, and the light will again shine upon me from Heaven.

PSALM XLII. 6-11.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me ; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts : all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

CAST down, as the Psalmist was, and removed for a time far away from the sanctuary of God, he still thinks of Him, and turns towards Him as the only sure source of comfort; "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." This was probably some spot where he passed a portion of his exile; and whilst there, he often turned in thought towards his beloved Zion, and the delights of public worship.

What are the beauties of nature to any of us, and the fairest scenes that our eye can rest upon, if we are shut out from the means of grace, and if we cannot enjoy communion with God? His presence and His worship are better to us than all else.

How intense must have been the Psalmist's grief, when he uses such language as this; "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Just as on the sea, when a storm is raging, the waves and billows mount up, and then go down into the great abyss, so that deep calls upon deep as it were, and the sea seems ready to swallow everything up; so is it with the turmoil and unrest of an afflicted soul. But God has the floods in His power, and can calm them when He pleases, so that the waves thereof shall be still.

This was the Psalmist's comfort. This thought comes as a bright ray of hope amidst the gloom; "Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." He will not only trust God; but, like St. Paul and Silas, he will sing His praises at midnight, in the very midst of his sorrows.

God had often proved Himself to be his Rock, and why should he now distrust Him? "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten

me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" The reproaches of men are oftentimes like a sword that pierces us through. But we can bear even this, much as it makes us smart, so long as we can feel that God is near, and that He is on our side.

Let trouble come then, or persecution, or let the malice of the wicked be sharpened against us, we will not sink under it. We will keep our feet firm on the everlasting Rock, and smile upon the waves that dash around us.

Once more the Psalmist asks why he should allow himself to be cast down, and then he encourages himself to trust Him "Who is the health of his countenance, and his God." He is ashamed of his distrust, and is determined to exercise a calm and hopeful confidence in God.

PSALM XLIII.

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation : O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength : why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth : let them lead me ; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy ; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

THE sentiments expressed in this Psalm are so like those in the last, that many suppose the whole to belong to one and the same Psalm.

The sacred writer asks God to “judge” him, or do him justice, and to plead his cause against his own rebellious people, whom he here calls “an ungodly nation.” He asks also that he may be delivered from “the deceitful and unjust man.” This may refer to Saul, or to any one of his treacherous foes.

Our enemies may deceive us, do us injustice, and oppress us ; but so long as God is our strength, we are safe. He can check their violence, He can thwart their plans, and entirely shelter us from

their malice. Think of Goliath coming out to fight against David. He had everything in his favour. He was a mighty man of valour, trained up to war from his youth. See how he is armed from head to foot! He strides across the valley conscious of his own power. And yet David, who was but a stripling, and had no arms, but only a shepherd's sling, was in fact stronger than he. Why? Simply because God's unseen hand was helping him. "Thou comest to me (said he to the Giant) with a sword, with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." And here is David again, speaking in the same trustful, confiding spirit in the words before us, "Thou art the God of my strength"—my strength in the time of weakness—my strength when all other helpers fail me.

But he prays still further; "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." The word "light" here means favour or mercy; and he asks God to show him His mercy, and to restore him again to his beloved Zion, and to the temple which was so dear to him. See how the uppermost desire of his heart comes out! He does not so much desire to be restored to his home, and to the comforts and blessings of his own family. What he chiefly longs for is, to stand once more within the courts of God's House. This was the

true home of his soul ; “ Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.”

And he adds, “ Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”

Can *we* speak of God as “ my exceeding joy ? ” Do we find our happiness not merely in the ordinances of religion, but in God Himself ? He is not only the great Giver of all joy, but the Fountain-head from which it comes. We must not only go to God’s altar, but to God Himself, if we desire to be made happy. Then will the voice of joy be heard proceeding from our hearts, and the blessed work of praise will be our delight.

This Psalm, as well as the last, closes with the Psalmist’s appeal to his own soul no longer to be cast down and disquieted, but rather to trust God ; “ For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

PSALM XLIV. 1-16.

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, for the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

THE writer of this Psalm, in the first three verses, recounts the gracious dealings of the Lord with His people Israel ; how He drove out the heathen possessors of Canaan, and made it over to His own people ; and how He did this with His own right hand, and with His holy arm ; thus reminding them that they owed it all, not to their own power, but to "the light of his countenance," or favour towards them.

And he goes on to state that God will still show Himself as the King and Deliverer of His people ; and he declares that in His strength he is determined to fight the good fight ; "Thou art my King, O God : command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies : through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us."

In the sixth and seventh verses, he declares that he will never trust in an arm of flesh, but in the arm of God ; and adds, "In God we boast all the day long ;" that is, If we boast at all, it will be of His doings, and not of our own.

In our spiritual warfare, as well as temporal, it is our duty to *use* the appointed means, but we must not *trust* in them. We should ever look up to God, and place our whole reliance on Him who can alone insure the victory. In sickness it would be wrong not to use the prescribed remedies ; but it would be equally wrong to place all our trust in

them. If our house were in flames, it would be folly to despise the fire-engine, or the escape-ladder ; but still we should feel that these would be utterly useless, except the Lord were willing to deliver us. And so in all our doings must our eye be ever turned towards Him who is the Saviour and Defender of His people. " Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

In the ninth and following verses, the Psalmist describes the pitiable state of the Church and People by reason of persecution ; so much so, that they felt for a time forsaken of God ; " But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame ; and goest not forth with our armies."

In the twelfth verse, he says, " Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price ;" that is, Thou permittest them to be accounted as vile and worthless, and to be sold into slavery for little or nothing. And he adds, " Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us."

It is painful to think how often those who are dear to God are exposed to the scoffs of the unbelieving, and are made a byword among their enemies. It must be so ; it will ever be so ; else were the offence of the cross at an end. Well is it if no blame lies at our own door, and if there is nothing in our words or conduct to make the enemies of God blaspheme.

PSALM XLIV. 17-26.

All this is come upon us ; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way ; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god ; shall not God search this out ? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long ; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord ? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression ? For our soul is bowed down to the dust : our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

THE Psalmist had been speaking of the various calamities which had befallen him and his countrymen. And now he proceeds to declare that, in the midst of these, they had remained faithful to God ; " All this is come upon us ; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant."

Of course there had been individual sins committed by them ; but in the main the nation had been faithful, and that whilst they had been suffering deeply ; " Though thou hast sore broken

us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death." He refers here to the desolation of their country, which had made it the abode of wild beasts, and had overspread it with a death-like gloom.

Thus does he describe his own misery, and that of his people, as a ground for God's interference. And again he speaks of their faithfulness, which not even the sorest persecutions could shake; "If we have forgotten the name of our God (that is, if we have been guilty of apostacy), or stretched out our hands to a strange God; shall not God search this out?" He has too keen an eye not to detect it. But David and his brethren could appeal to Him, and say, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Therefore awake, and rise up for our defence.

It often happens that God allows His people to suffer for a while, in order to show them their insufficiency, and to lead them to prayer. It was so with the Israelites in Egypt: they were oppressed, and bruised, and broken; and God seemed for a while regardless of their misery. But all the time He was sympathising with them; and then, at the right moment, He stepped forward and delivered them.

So too it was when the Disciples were in the storm; Jesus seemed to be unconcerned, until at length He was awakened by their cries, rose up to

their assistance, and by a single word stilled the waves, and calmed their fears. This should teach us the great lesson which it is so hard to learn; "Be not faithless, but believing."

The Psalmist uses very strong language to express his affliction and utter prostration; "Our soul (he says) is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth." And then he lifts up his prayer with all earnestness; "Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake." You see, he bases his request on God's mercy. And such should always be our plea. Oh that our cry may ever be the humble cry of the Publican—"God, be *merciful* to me a sinner!"

' Mercy, good Lord, we mercy ask ;
This is the total sum :
For mercy, Lord, is all our prayer :
O let Thy mercy come !'

PSALM XLV. 1-9.

My heart is inditing a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made touching the king : my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men : grace is poured into thy lips ; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness ; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies ; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness : therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women : upon thy right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir.

HERE is the wedding-song of a great king, whose bride is exhorted to forget her father's house and to yield herself entirely to her spouse and lord. There can, I think, be no doubt that this King is Christ, and the Spouse His Church. Again and again in Scripture Christ is represented as the Bridegroom, and His people as the Bride, and it is so in the song before us.

The writer, whoever he is—for this probably was not one of the Psalms of David—begins by telling us that his “heart is inditing,” or bubbling up, being full of the subject before him and longing to pour forth his praises concerning the heavenly king. “My tongue (he says) is the pen of a ready writer;” it is like the pen of a rapid scribe, almost too quick for utterance.

He then proceeds to describe the King in the following manner :—

First, He is the fairest among men. He is “altogether lovely.” His words too are such as “never man spake;” for “grace is poured into His lips.”

2ndly, He is described as a warrior; “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.” Our Lord is described thus in the Book of Revelation; “Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword;” a sword to destroy His enemies and to subdue His people.

He is described, in the fourth verse, as prospering in His warfare, “because of truth;” that is, in the cause of truth, winning victims for the truth. And it is added, “Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things,” or shall lead thee to the performance of mighty acts.

His “arrows,” or weapons, are spoken of as “sharp” in piercing the hearts of His enemies. One of His chief weapons is the Word, and we are

here reminded of St. Paul's description of its power: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

3rdly, He is described as a Divine King: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

4thly, as a lover of righteousness; "The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness."

5thly, as clad in robes of beauty, and surrounded by a goodly band of followers; "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;" "King's daughters were among thy honourable women." And then the Church is described as exalted to the highest post of honour; "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir."

And now that we have been dwelling on these words, may God give us grace to feel as we ought to feel towards this great and glorious King, our Saviour and our God! May He have our truest allegiance! May we know no will but His! May our hearts be given to Him! May He have our best and deepest affections!

PSALM XLV. 10-17.

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear ; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house : so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty ; for he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift ; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. 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 : the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought : they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations ; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

THE Psalmist now addresses the Bride, of whom he had already spoken. He urges her, if she would live in the king's favour, to give up the objects of her worldly affections ; "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

We are not called upon to steel our hearts against earthly relationships, and to burst the natural ties of flesh and blood ; but we are called upon to place Christ first, and to love Him supremely. In comparison with Him we must forget, yea even hate, friends and relatives—"our own people, and our father's house."

“The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.” This perhaps refers to the conversion of the Gentile nations. They shall come from far, and bring their offerings to the Lord. The Prophet Isaiah says that “The merchandise of Tyre, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord.”

In the thirteenth and following verses, the Psalmist speaks of the inward splendour of the Church; “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.” Perhaps this describes the internal grace and beauty of true believers—that great work of holiness wrought in their hearts by the influence of the Holy Spirit, purifying them, and making them to abound in the fruits of righteousness.

He next describes the great increase of the Church, the many children that shall be born to her. So that instead of looking back to her ancestors, she will rather boast of her descendants and those that shall come after; “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”

If God is pleased to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, who can tell what numbers will be added to His Church? Children will be born to Him in a day. They shall come from the east and from

the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

And then will there be one glorious song of praise going up continually; "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and has made us unto our God kings and priests." "Therefore (as the Psalmist says) shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

PSALM XLVI. 1-7.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved : God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved : he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

THIS has been called 'Luther's Psalm.' For in the most troubled times, when days were dark, and danger threatened, he used to say to his brethren, 'Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm.'

Truly it is a most consolatory Psalm, declaring that God protects His people even in the worst of times. It is supposed by some to have been written after the destruction of Sennacherib's army before the gates of Jerusalem. On that occasion Jerusalem stood secure and untouched, when every other stronghold was taken. And so the Church stands firm and unshaken amidst surrounding convulsions.

Since God is our refuge, the Psalmist declares

we will not fear, even if the earth should be shaken, and the mountains, which are the firmest of all things, should be cast into the sea. And even at that last great day, when sea and land will be confounded, and every mountain and hill removed for ever, the righteous shall have no cause to fear, but shall lift up their heads with joy and triumph.

What is meant by the "river" mentioned in the fourth verse; "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God?" There is probably no allusion here to any particular river; but the image is intended to represent a state of peace and calm security, in contrast with the rough and troubled waves of the ocean. Religion is that river, or even God Himself, for He it is who is the very emblem of peace, from whom all calmness proceeds.

Blessed be God, though the whole earth be in a state of uproar and confusion; though the people rage, and the kingdoms reel, God is the help and protection of His people. There is around His City, or Church, a calm and peaceful river which no foe can pass, and no mighty one can bridge over. When "the heathen rage," as the Psalmist expresses it in the sixth verse, and "the kingdoms are moved," God has only to "utter His voice," and all will be silence; the very earth will melt before Him.

Happy those who can say, in the language before us, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

PSALM XLVI. 8-11.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

WE have already observed that this Psalm probably refers to the defeat of Sennacherib's army when it besieged Jerusalem. And now, with this wonderful victory in his thoughts, the Psalmist bids men go forth and see what God hath wrought; "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." See how He strikes down with His arm the proudest foe, and spreads desolation where all was lately secure.

And yet He is the great peacemaker. His wars are for the establishment of peace; "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

This is something like the language which the Prophet Isaiah uses, when speaking of the wicked king of Babylon, whose power God had crushed; "How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city

ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet.”

Yes, it is God above who can make wars to cease, and peace prevail. And this, we know, will one day be the case. Hasten, O Lord, that blessed time, and prepare us for the enjoyment of it.

In the tenth verse the Lord Himself addresses us; “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” There is a holy stillness, when God’s power is seen and felt. All opposition gives way, and He alone is exalted. Feebleness yields to omnipotence, and rebellion is silenced by His word.

Oh that the Lord’s power may be felt in our individual souls! Oh that every proud feeling may be quelled, every high imagination cast down, and every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ! And may we “be still,” and feel that we are but as the clay in the hands of the potter, to be moulded and fashioned as He pleases!

Once again, at the close of the Psalm, a note of confidence is raised, “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Blessed truth! This calms all our uneasiness, and quells every rising fear.

PSALM XLVII.

O clap your hands, all ye people ; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible ; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises : sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen : God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham : for the shields of the earth belong unto God : he is greatly exalted.

THIS Psalm, so full of exultant joy, calls upon all nations to praise God for His excellent greatness ; “For the Lord most high is terrible ; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet ;” making them bow before Him either by the power of His almighty arm, or by His all-subduing grace.

“He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.” He gave to His people of old Canaan as their promised portion ; and He grants us a still better inheritance in the

Canaan above. Oh that we may not come short of it through our unbelief! Oh that we may go up, and possess the land in the name and in the strength of the Lord!

In the fifth verse the Psalmist speaks of God having "gone up with a shout." This may refer to the bringing back the ark amidst the sounds of triumph and the songs of praise, after being carried into the field of battle by the conquering hosts of Israel; or it may refer to that still more glorious occasion when Jesus ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and entering heaven itself amidst the shouts of rejoicing angels. This was indeed an act of triumph, calling forth our thankfulness and praise. Our Lord's Ascension into heaven was the crowning event which completed His atoning work on earth, showing that that work was finished, and that God accepted it, whilst the very angels shouted for joy.

And now, in the seventh and eighth verses, God is spoken of in the voice of prophecy as "the King of all the earth," and as "reigning over the heathen." In one sense He already reigns, sitting upon His throne above; but the time is coming when His sovereignty will be owned and acknowledged, and all men shall bow before His glorious sceptre.

By the expression, "the shields of the earth belong unto God," is meant that God raises up

protectors for His people. And is not this our comfort and our security? In the hour of danger He can protect us. He is able to work deliverance for us when we least expect it. He protected David in his unequal contest with Goliath. He shielded Daniel from the fury of the lions. He stood between St. Paul and his foes, so that they could not hurt him. And when our spiritual needs press us, when we feel that our souls are in danger, and we are groaning under the pressure of unpardoned sin, or are harassed by the Tempter's power, He is able to deliver us, and to speak peace and comfort to our souls.

PSALM XLVIII.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled ; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God : God will establish it for ever. We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth : thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her ; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death.

HERE we have a glorious song of praise for the deliverance of Zion from its attacking enemies ; and all by the wondrous power and providence of God.

The beauty of the city and temple is spoken of in the second verse ; “ Beautiful for situation, the

joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." God dwells there, making Himself the refuge and defence of His people.

Then the invaders are described as gathered under its walls; but they are awe-struck as they gaze upon the city; "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind."

The kings of Assyria and others had gone against Jerusalem; but scarcely had they looked upon the city, when they hastened away from it in anxious flight. They were soon scattered, like the ships of Tarshish in a storm. A panic seized them: they approached the city, they looked, they fled.

The people of God are described as being filled with joy and thankfulness, as they gaze upon their heaven-defended city. They exclaim, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts;" our hearsay is now exchanged for actual experience; for we now see that God is as good as His word: "God will establish it (the city) for ever. We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to

thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth ;” according as men know God, they will praise and magnify Him for His unceasing goodness. And they will see that that goodness is unbounded; it extends to the very ends of the earth.

There seemed at one time to be a cloud hanging over the city of Jerusalem, as the enemy approached it with his threatenings. It seemed to be a night of terror. But suddenly the sun rose, and the clouds dispersed, and she stood out safe and unscathed, so that they could but exclaim, “Walk about Zion, and go round about her. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following.” And then it is added; “This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”

Such are the cheering words of this glorious Psalm. And surely, if God thus stood forth as the Defender of His holy city Jerusalem, will He not defend His Church for ever? Her enemies are many and great; but she is under His protection; and no weapon formed against her shall prosper.

And as it is with God’s Church collectively, so will it be with each one of His children individually. You and I may take up this language, and say, “This God is my God for ever and ever: he will be my guide even unto death.”

PSALM XLIX. 1-14.

Hear this, all ye people ; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world : both low and high, rich and poor, together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom ; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable : I will open my dark saying upon the harp. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about ? They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches ; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him ; (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever) ; that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations ; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not : he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave ; death shall feed on them ; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning ; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

THE writer of this Psalm calls upon all persons, of every class, "both low and high, rich and poor, together," to hear what he has to say ; for he

has much wisdom to utter, and an important "parable" or lesson to unfold.

He then speaks of the impotence of the wicked, and of the temptation which the righteous often feel regarding their apparent prosperity; "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil?" that is, why should I be distressed or disturbed when ungodliness seems to have the upper hand? Though God may appear as though He overlooked it, surely He does not slumber or sleep.

What are we to understand by the expression in the fifth verse, "When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?" It probably means, when the iniquity of my pursuers or enemies presses upon me.

The Psalmist shows that those who "trust in their wealth" cannot buy off death, either in their own case, or in that of others. Money may purchase much, but it cannot redeem a soul; eternal life it cannot buy. There have been those who would have offered all their wealth to the physician who could have said, "Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." There have been those who have hung over the dying bed of a beloved child, or wife, or brother, and were ready to say, 'O Lord, stay now Thine hand; and give me any cross but this. Take what thou wilt, but spare, O spare this loved one.' And yet how utterly powerless man is to ward off the hand of death either from himself,

or others, unless such be the will of God. None can by any means redeem another, that he should live for ever, or even that his life should be prolonged for a single day.

The Psalmist goes on, in the eleventh verse, to show the folly of these persons in regarding their possessions as something substantial and lasting; "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever;" and yet, in fact, they are but tents, pitched for a few short days, and then removed again. A man may be honoured for his learning, or his wealth; but if he is without God he will soon pass away, and his stay in the world will be like that of a traveller at an inn, who tarrieth for a night, and then is unheard of; or, as the Psalmist here speaks, "he is like the beasts that perish."

Then what folly to trust in our strength or our wealth, to build houses, and add field to field, so as to gain a name for earthly greatness. Soon, very soon, all will be gone from us—money, lands, and name; and if these are our only possessions, we shall be left alone on the earth, without God, and without hope.

PSALM XLIX. 15-20.

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave : for he shall receive me. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased ; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away ; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul ; and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers ; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

THE Psalmist, in the first of these verses, contrasts his own happy condition with that of the ungodly, though they may be rich and flourishing. Whilst *they* depart to the grave, to be no more seen or heard of, *he* speaks of his own redemption, and his own acceptance with God. He could not hope to escape death ; but he had a blessed assurance that God would receive him into His own happy presence, and this greatly comforted him.

“Be not thou afraid (he says, in the sixteenth verse) when one is made rich.” Though he has much in this present world, he can only retain it whilst here ; he cannot carry it away with him ; it will pass into other hands. He may flatter himself too, and utter self-praise ; and he may hear this

echoed back by others. But presently it will all die away. His lamp will be put out for ever. He shall "never see light." Like the Fool in the Parable, he may say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but God may require his soul to-night.

Truly a man may "bless his own soul," and yet he may be without God's blessing. Men may praise and exalt him, but God may regard him with righteous disapproval. He may "do well to himself;" that is, he may succeed in life, and his industry and sagacity may be rewarded; but he may yet forfeit that eternal recompense, which is alone worth having.

This then is the Psalmist's conclusion, that "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish;" that although he may prosper in the world, yet if he possesses not true wisdom, he is nothing.

Oh that God may give us that best understanding which is from above—that He may teach us to know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent! Oh that our souls may be redeemed in the highest sense, from the power of sin and from the chains of eternal death, by Him who hath shed His blood for us, and would have us live with Him for ever!

PSALM L. 1-15.

The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

IN the first six verses of this Psalm, the Lord is represented in a very solemn manner as speaking to men. There are times, when He seems as it were to come forward giving certain outward signs of His presence, and addressing men in a manner that claims attention. He speaks, and they must hear.

When He came down, for instance, upon Mount Sinai, it was so. He then spoke with a voice of thunder.

Again, when God "visited his people" in the person of His beloved Son, He manifested forth His glory. And then "out of Zion, the perfection of beauty," He shone forth.

And yet, once more, He shall come forth as a glorious King; and all the world will be summoned to yield Him obedience; "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."

It is to each, and all, of these different manifestations of God's presence, and not to any one alone, that David probably refers in the beginning of the Psalm. And in the seventh and following verses the Lord addresses Himself first to His own people, and afterwards to His enemies.

To His people Israel He speaks in words of kindness, and yet of censure, reminding them who He is; "I am God, even thy God." And what a mercy it is that God should so address any of us; "I am thy God"—thy Father, and thy Friend—the God who has kept thee in past years, and will keep thee to the end. We must not rest till we can take these words to ourselves, and say with David in another Psalm, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee."

He then complains of the utter worthlessness

of mere outward ceremonies ; and uses almost the same expressions as those which we find in the first chapter of Isaiah. He speaks in the Lord's name, saying, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me." His complaint was not as to the *number* of their offerings. No amount of these would satisfy Him. Were it so, He could command the whole creation ; "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." But God is a Spirit, and what He requires is a *spiritual* offering ; "Offer unto God thanksgiving ; and pay thy vows unto the most High."

Praise and *Thanksgiving* are here mentioned, rather than *Prayer*. And why is this? Probably because Praise is a most important element in spiritual worship, and is the very reverse of that which is formal. God would have us come before Him with hearts beaming with gratitude, full of love and thankfulness for all His great mercies to us. Let us come in this spirit, thanking Him for past deliverance ; and then we may rest assured that He will be very near to us to help us in every emergency. Cling to His promise of protection, and you need fear no evil ; "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

PSALM L. 16-23.

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.

IN the former part of this Psalm we observed how the Lord addresses *His own people*. He speaks to them as a Father, lovingly remonstrating with them for the formal service they too often rendered Him, and encouraging them to come before Him with the sacrifice of prayer and praise.

But in these verses He speaks to *the wicked*; and what does He say to them? He tells them that their knowledge of His laws, their profession of obedience, and their boasting of His covenant, were worthless, seeing that their lives did not

accord with this; "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?"

St. Paul uses very much the same language in speaking to the ungodly Jewish professor in Rom. ii.; "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" And then he enumerates the sins which these professors indulged in.

And so here the Psalmist speaks of "the wicked" to whom he is referring, as being—

1st. Impatient of God's teaching, and rejecting His counsel; "Thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee."

2ndly. Consenting to what is evil, and taking part with the thief and the adulterer.

3rdly. Indulging in gross and unseemly language; and

4thly. Slandering their neighbour and their brother, whom they should have loved and helped.

And all this was done because God seemed not to notice it. He was silent. He did not directly interfere. And so they presumed upon His forbearance, and imagined that He would overlook their wickedness, like one of themselves.

But not so; for God is a jealous God. "I will reprove thee," He says. "I will arraign thee at

my bar : I will charge thee, one by one, with all thy sins." And then He adds, with a voice of solemn warning, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The time is coming when God's patience will have an end. He may bear with sinners now, but He will punish them then. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and to be dragged away to punishment. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, deliver us from the judgment we deserve. Blot out all our sins for Thy mercy's sake.

In the last verse, the Lord turns once more to His beloved people, and closes with words of encouragement to them. He had bidden them, in the fourteenth verse, to offer Him thanksgiving, as being the sacrifice that He loved best; and now He leaves them with a gracious promise; "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation (or course of life) aright will I show the salvation of God."

We must not say one thing with our lips, and another with our lives. If we come before God with thankful words, our daily conduct must show that we have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious.

PSALM LI. I-III.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness : according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts ; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness ; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

THE breathing of David's heart in this Psalm is much like the language of the repentant Prodigal, and also of the heart-broken and humbled Publican, in our Lord's two parables.

It was probably written at the critical time when God, by His Prophet Nathan, brought home to David his grievous sin, and when his earnest desire was to obtain forgiveness. He may at that

time have put up many prayers to heaven, but this only is preserved to us.

Feeling, and owning, his exceeding guilt, he throws himself upon God's mercy and loving-kindness. David speaks of his sin being "ever before him." It haunted him night and day. It clung to him like an evil disease. And he was ready to cry out with St. Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Again, he speaks of his sin as against God Himself—not merely as a grievous wrong done to Uriah whom he had slain, or against Bathsheba, whom he had corrupted, but against God whom he had offended; "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." No one seems to stand between him and God. The arrow of his guilt strikes Him alone. And truly this is what the true penitent must ever feel, when, under the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, he discovers the real nature and extent of his sin. His exclamation is, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin *against God?*"

And now see how earnestly he cries for pardon. He implores God to "wash him," to "blot out his sin," to "cleans[e] him from it," to "purge him," to "make him whiter than snow;" and all this, not because he *deserves* pardon, but because he *needs* it. He knows that he brought sin with him into the world, and it has clung to him ever since. He

feels too that God might well cast him off. But great as his sin is, he believes that God's mercy is greater, and therefore he has hope. He acknowledges the compass of his guilt; but God's pardoning love can stretch even beyond it.

The expression, "Purge me with hyssop," needs a word of explanation. It appears from Lev. xiv. and Num. xix., that according to the Jewish law a branch of hyssop was used to sprinkle the person stained with uncleanness or sin. This was especially the case in the purification of the leper. David remembers this, and asks that he too may be cleansed. He is a leper, and needs purging. He is blood-stained, and God only can remove the stains.

Pardon is what he wants, and nothing less will satisfy him. But it is not only pardon that he asks for. He entreats God to give him a new, and holy, and pure heart, and to grant him the inward gift of the Holy Spirit.

And this too will be our prayer. If we hate sin, we shall ask not only to be set free from its condemning guilt, but also from its indwelling power within us; "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

PSALM LI. 12-19.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation ; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips ; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice ; else would I give it : thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion : build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering : then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

DAVID, in the verses which have gone before, implores forgiveness for his many sins. And now he proceeds to declare what his feelings will be as a pardoned man.

Restored to God's favour, and upheld by His Spirit, he will do all he can for others ; " Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." In proportion as we experience God's pardoning grace ourselves, we shall long that our fellow-men may taste of that grace also. When St. Peter, after denying Christ,

was restored to his Lord's favour, he went about calling men to repentance, and "strengthening his brethren." St. Paul, having himself "obtained mercy," laboured to make others partakers of it also. And so it will be with us. Forgiven ourselves, we shall desire to lead sinners to the open fountain where they may wash and be clean.

In the fourteenth verse, the Penitent recalls to mind his sin. Blood-guiltiness oppresses his soul. It seems as if he not only heard the voice of innocent blood crying from the ground, but as if he saw the murdered Uriah coming upon him for vengeance, like an armed man. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness," he exclaims. And if he can but obtain the pardon of this sin, so exceeding great, then he will publish to the world the righteousness of God, who showeth mercy to the penitent.

But David felt that he could not repay God for His great goodness to him; "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering." No quantity of formal sacrifices would please Him. All he could do would be to bring to God the sacrifice of a broken heart, and the offering of thankful lips. And what a blessing it is that God does accept this offering from His penitent children. He neither despises their broken hearts, nor scorns their songs of praise.

The two closing verses seem at first sight to be somewhat disconnected from the rest of the

Psalm ; but we can see how they bear upon what has gone before. The Psalmist's thoughts turn from his own ruin and restoration to his beloved Zion, the city and people that were dear to him. He prays for them, and asks God to build them up, and to make Jerusalem once more a praise upon the earth.

And such should be the prayer of God's people now ; "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem." Build up Thy Church, strengthen her, stablish her, settle her. Then will many a spiritual offering be brought to God, the offering of hearts devoted to His service.

PSALM LII.

Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever; he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him; Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it; and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

THIS Psalm evidently refers to Doeg, who was the persecutor of David, and the murderer of the priests of the Lord. But it has reference also to the wicked generally.

The ungodly man is described in the first verse as a boaster. And yet, what has he to boast of? He may succeed in *distressing* God's people, but he cannot *destroy* them, for God in His goodness defends them. Doeg might boast of killing eighty-five helpless priests of the Lord; but he could not kill David, for the Lord's shield was over him.

Herod might glory in the slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehém ; but he could not touch a hair of the Saviour's head. Persecution may produce suffering among the faithful ; but the gates of hell cannot prevail against them.

He is described too as a great mischief-maker, and a lover of what is evil and false ; “ Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs ; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good ; and lying rather than to speak righteousness.”

God may seem to bear with such evil conduct for a time ; but ere long He will punish the sinner. And see what strong expressions are here used ; “ God shall destroy thee for ever ”—He shall make thee a monument of eternal ruin. “ He shall cast thee away ”—as chaff is scattered before the wind, or as worthless branches are put aside for the burning. He shall “ pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place ”—as one is dragged out of a tent, whither he has fled for shelter. And lastly, he shall “ root thee out of the land of the living ”—as a tree is torn up from the spot in which it grew.

We know nothing of Doeg's end, unless the tradition of the Jews be correct, who say that he was Saul's armour-bearer, and fell in the battle on Mount Gilboa.

Meanwhile the righteous will look on with wonder at God's power, and with thankful confidence in their own security ; “ The righteous also

shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

The expression, "The righteous shall laugh at him," would not, certainly, justify us in exulting over another, however much he deserved punishment. It has been remarked that there is a two-fold laughter. One, when a man, from an evil spirit of revenge, laughs at his enemy; this of course no Christian can do, but rather he feels compassion for his fallen foe. The other arises from a consideration of God's righteous judgment, when a man has contended with Him, and sinned presumptuously against Him.

In the two last verses, David contrasts his own happier lot, with the miserable end of the ungodly; "But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." *He* was "in the house of God;" *they* were in the world. *He* was as a fruitful olive-tree; *they* were as barren and useless wood. And all this because he had "trusted in the mercy of God," whilst they "in the abundance of their riches."

What reason have God's people to praise Him for past mercies, and to wait upon Him for future blessings! It is good to do this, both for our own sake, and for the sake of others who may be led to take courage by our holy example.

PSALM LIII.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

THIS Psalm is so essentially the same as the Fourteenth, that it will not be necessary to consider it afresh.

PSALM LIV.

Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God ; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul ; they have not set God before them. Behold, God is mine helper : the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies : cut them off in thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto thee : I will praise thy name, O Lord ; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble ; and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

IN the first three verses of this Psalm we have David's prayer for deliverance from his oppressors and from those who forget God ; and in the four last verses he expresses his full confidence in the Lord as his Helper and Deliverer.

By the "name" of God is meant God Himself ; "Save me, O God, by thy name ;" that is, by Thy Godhead, by Thy own almighty power. David had but little confidence in man's help, but he had great faith in God's ; he therefore puts himself in God's hands, and asks Him to save as none other can save. And he adds ; "Judge me by thy strength." By this he means ; Vindicate my cause, and show, by exerting Thy strength on my behalf, that Thou art on my side.

No one was more continually beset with foes than David. He had enemies in his own house and enemies without, who maligned him, and sought to take away his life. He might well say, "Strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul," or my life.

But from all these he turned in sadness and found rest in God. "Behold, God is mine helper," was his thankful exclamation; and so let it be ours. Are we in trouble? He will support us. In our dreariest moments He is near; and underneath are the everlasting arms bearing us up. Are we in doubt or difficulty? He will help us through; He will be our unerring Counsellor. Are we lost in sin? He can stretch out His arm to save us; He can pardon every sin, and endue us with strength to resist it for the time to come.

Yes, Christian, God is thy helper. Therefore trust, and be not afraid. Put thyself in His hands, and thou art safe.

So confident was David that God would hear his prayer and give him the needed help, that he here says, "I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good." He brings to God the freewill offering of a grateful heart—the best sacrifice he could offer. And here is the great secret of all true service. Our prayers, our praises, our gifts, are all worthless unless our hearts go with them. God does not require the

service of slaves, but the free, willing, hearty service of those who really love Him.

The Psalm closes with the words : " Mine eye hath seen his (or its) desire upon mine enemies ;" that is, ' I have seen my foes checked and overthrown, as I desired.'

He foresees this with the eye of faith, as if it were a thing already done ; and he praises God for that deliverance, which he feels sure will be accomplished.

God give us faith to trust Him, and then we shall feel happy even in the midst of trouble.

PSALM LV. 1-8.

Give ear to my prayer, O God ; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me : I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise ; because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked ; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me ; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

THAT was an anxious time with David, when he poured out his soul before God in this Psalm. The rebellion of Absalom was at its height ; and both he and Ahithophel were devising fresh schemes for his destruction.

And now he prays with intense earnestness, and asks God not to "hide himself from his petition." And does the Lord ever turn away from our entreaties ? No, He is never deaf to an earnest prayer ; but He sometimes *appears* to disregard it, and then we are apt to complain. David speaks touchingly of his own inward distress. His grief finds an utterance, and that relieves him ; and the best utterance too, for it is the utterance of prayer.

The expression of our sorrow often gives relief to the burdened mind. We are often glad enough to find vent by pouring it into the ear of some sympathising friend ; but never are we so much comforted as when we carry our troubles to God, and tell them out to Him.

He tells us, in the third verse, what was the cause of his troubles ; “ Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked ; for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.” His enemies had spoken against him ; wicked men had oppressed him ; they had laid to his charge things that he knew not. And all this was very hard to bear.

But David bore it meekly and patiently. And so did David’s Lord. He was hated, slandered, and persecuted by those whom He came to redeem. He was the great Sorrow-Bearer for a burdened world ; and to every mourning one He says, “ Come unto me, and I will give you rest : ” so that whatever our trouble is, we may find a sure repose in Him.

David’s sorrows make him long for some quiet spot in which he could find a retreat : “ And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.” Jeremiah’s language was nearly the same ; “ O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men ;

that I might leave my people, and go from them ! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men."

How often in trouble do we wish the same ! How often do we sigh for some place where we can be free from all annoyances and all strife. There is such a place, but not here. There is a world which trouble never enters, where sorrow is unknown ; and if we are God's people, we need not "the wings of a dove" to "fly away, and be at rest ;" for we are on our way to that resting-place, and it will be our Home for ever.

PSALM LV. 9-15.

Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues ; for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof : mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof : deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me ; then I could have borne it : neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me ; then I would have hid myself from him : but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell ; for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

DISTRESSED as David was at “the violence and strife” that was going on “in the city” at the wicked instigation of Absalom and others, he entreats the Lord to “divide their tongues,” so as to overthrow their plans. There is probably an allusion here to the confusion of tongues among the Babel builders. The Psalmist prays that the counsels of those engaged against him may be confounded, and that their plans and purposes may become distracted. We are told that on hearing of Ahithophel’s treachery, he exclaimed,

“O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness.” (2 Sam. xv. 31.)

There were many aggravating circumstances connected with Absalom's rebellion; and among these was the base treachery of David's own friend Ahithophel. To this he feelingly alludes in the twelfth and two following verses; “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”

We know what we have to expect from an *Enemy*, and we protect ourselves accordingly; but if a *Friend* aims a blow, we feel it, even though we may escape it. David must have deeply felt this blow of Ahithophel's; for it came from one who had once been his friend and his companion.

So too when Judas betrayed our Lord, it must have been as a sword piercing Him to the very quick; “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”

In the next verse David prays that death may seize upon his enemies, and that they may “go down quick into hell.” The word “quick” here means *alive*, and the word “hell” signifies *the*

grave. He asks, as it were, that the earth might open and swallow them up, as it did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. In short, he prays that his enemies may be swept away by the hand of God, and cut off from the land of the living. And this will surely one day be the case with all those who conspire against the Lord and against His people. They shall be destroyed, and that for ever.

PSALM LV. 16-23.

As for me, I will call upon God ; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud ; and he shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me ; for there were many with me. God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him : he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart : his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction : bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days ; but I will trust in thee.

PRAYER, says Bishop Horne, is the believer's medicine for all the disorders of the soul within, and his invincible shield against every enemy that can attack him from without ; " As for me, I will call upon God ; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray (that is, I will 'pray without ceasing'), and cry aloud ; and he shall hear my voice."

Evening, morning, and noon, were the three hours of prayer among the Jews. We find Daniel

faithful to this holy custom, even when in Babylon. And well will it be for us if we observe it also; for thus will our souls be brought into constant nearness to God, and thus shall we be kept in peace from the battle that is against us.

It is here said of the ungodly that "they have no changes." One day is like another with them. They have no fears and no misgivings; all is quiet within. But it is the calm which precedes the coming storm.

In the twentieth and twenty-first verses, traitors like Ahithophel and Judas are described. A kiss is upon their lips, but it is the kiss of treachery; there is malice all the while in their hearts.

In conclusion, the Psalmist addresses his own soul, and all those who are suffering as he suffered, saying, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Whatever be the burden that presses upon us, we may cast it upon the Lord. He can, and will, bear it for us. He does not promise to remove it altogether, but rather to sustain us under it, and thus enable us to bear it.

O blessed remedy for all our troubles! Take them, O child of God, to your heavenly Father. Open your grief to Him. Tell Him of your distress. Ask Him to pour strength and comfort into your soul, and to be Himself with you whilst you are in

the furnace. Thus will your burden become light, and your yoke easy to be borne.

Meanwhile it is declared that God will bring down the wicked "into the pit of destruction ;" and "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." It was so with Absalom, it was so with Ahithophel, and it was so with Judas. And so is it often with the enemies of God. Sometimes, it is true, they live long and prosper ; and then their destruction comes in another world. But most assuredly it will come, either here or hereafter.

"But I will trust in thee," says David. And Isaiah speaks in the same happy strain ; "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song : he also is become my salvation."

PSALM LVI. 1-7.

Be merciful unto me, O God : for man would swallow me up ; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up ; for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust ; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. Every day they wrest my words : all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. Shall they escape by iniquity? In thine anger cast down the people, O God.

THE Psalmist, hard pressed by men, raises himself in faith to God, and implores His help. Psalm after Psalm shows us how hard that effort was, and how acutely he suffered : "Man (he says) would swallow me up ; he fighting daily oppresseth me." Men came upon him everywhere with open mouth. They attacked him on all sides. It was not one enemy that he had to face, but many. Their name was Legion.

Feeling therefore that human help was worthless, he cast himself on God, and appealed to His mercy. Whenever a momentary feeling of alarm came over him, he flew to this strong refuge ; "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

Let this be our maxim in every time of danger.

Are we persecuted? Is the voice of slander raised against us? Are we travelling by land or by sea, and does some sudden danger threaten us? Whatever be our trial, let it send us to God for help; "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

He adds, "In God I will praise his word;" that is, 'In reference to God, I will be thankful for His word of promise, and on that word I will rely.' Here is something reliable to trust to, something that will never fail us. If God has promised to help His people, and to grant them deliverance out of all their troubles, He will surely do so; and it is our wisdom to place ourselves in His hands.

Then follows a description of these malicious persons; "Every day they wrest my words." They give a false impression of my words. They twist and turn them against me. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

"All their thoughts are against me for evil." Not only are their words and actions hostile to me, but from the very depths of their hearts they breathe out cruelty and vengeance.

"They gather themselves together;" and are confederate against me. "They hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul." Like a tiger they crouch, and lie in ambush, so that they may spring upon me unawares.

Such was the enmity to which David was ex-

posed. And such was the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees towards our Lord. They watched their opportunity, and were ever on the alert. If then we think our case is hard when thus dealt with, let us remember that the Son of God was so used before us, and that we are His disciples.

But the time of their punishment is at hand ; "Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God." The wicked may succeed for a time, but their warfare is a hopeless one. God has only to give the word, and their destruction will follow.

PSALM LVI. 8-13.

Thou tellest my wanderings : put thou my tears into thy bottle : are they not in thy book ? When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back : this I know for God is for me. In God will I praise his word : in the Lord will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God : I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death : wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?

GOD knows all the trials that His people pass through. He knows their sorrows too, and sympathises with them in all their sufferings : "Thou tellest my wanderings (says David) : put thou my tears into thy bottle : are they not in thy book ?"

He speaks of his "wanderings," for his was indeed a wandering and persecuted life. In the days of Saul he was "hunted as a partridge in the mountains." And even when he was raised to the throne, his life was a constant escape from one foe and another. We are told that he fled to Gath, to the cave of Adullam, to Mizpeh, to the Forest of Hareth, to the Wilderness of Ziph, &c. But all the while it must have been a great comfort for him to know that the eye of an

Almighty Friend was "telling his wanderings," watching his steps, and marking out his course!

His prayer was, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?" The tears of the righteous may be despised by men, but they are gathered up and prized by God. Persecution must needs cause weeping eyes; but here lies a powerful consolation, that God is mindful of such tears, and takes them into His keeping, just as one would pour precious wine into bottles, and so preserve it. This applies to all His servants; and surely their foes will have a fearful account to give, when God shall one day convict them of having caused the tears of innocence through their oppression.

David felt that great indeed was the power of prayer, and therefore he says, "When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know, for God is for me." Let a cry of distress come up from God's afflicted people, and He is instantly by their side to protect them and to drive back their enemies.

In the tenth verse the Psalmist repeats the declaration he had made in the sixth, concerning his trust in God's word. That word was his rock. Upon it he took his stand; and while the waves were breaking against it, he exclaims, "I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

He declares that God's "vows were upon him."

He had solemnly pledged himself to be the Lord's servant, and he had no reason to repent of his pledge. He had tested the faithfulness of God; and would He not be faithful still? "Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" He is certain of his deliverance. He knows not *how* it will be, but he is sure that it will come.

We may well look back to God's dealings with us in the past, and be confident that He will work deliverances for us in the future. Our prayer then should be, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Take me by the hand, and lead me step by step through this tangled wilderness, until I reach that home which Thou hast prepared for me.

PSALM LVII.

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me ; for my soul trusteth in thee ; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high ; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions ; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ; let thy glory be above all the earth. They have prepared a net for my steps ; my soul is bowed down : they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp : I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people : I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens : let thy glory be above all the earth.

THERE was great earnestness in David's manner of approaching God, and with his prayer is mixed the fullest confidence in God's willingness to succour him. When he says, "I will cry unto God most high," he seems to feel that the great-

ness of God encourages him. From earth he turns to heaven, and from man's feebleness to God's almighty power. And when he takes in view the Most High, the giants of the earth become changed into pitiful dwarfs.

In the fourth verse, he speaks of the furiousness and savage malice of his enemies; "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Daniel's position in the den, as he lay among lions and tigers, must have been fearful indeed; but still more distressing was David's case, living as he did among men with the hearts and feelings of wild beasts, ever ready to attack him in their fury. And yet amidst all his dangers he was trustful and fearless. His great desire was that God should be glorified, though he for a time should be oppressed and afflicted. His prayer is, "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth."

May we not say that David's trials were a blessing to him? They led him to feel a settled rest in God. Just as a tree that is exposed to the highest winds strikes all the more deeply into the ground, and becomes the more firmly rooted, so is it with those who have been blown about by the roughest blasts of trial; they become rooted and grounded in God, so that nothing shakes or

moves them from their hold. Such persons can exclaim in truth, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing and give praise."

In the next verse, David calls upon his "glory," or his tongue, and every instrument within his reach, to praise God for His goodness. And he adds, "I myself will awake early." It is good to be "early" with our prayers and praises—early, before we begin the business of the day—early, before evil thoughts come rushing into our minds—early, before Satan has had time to tempt us. David says, in Psalm cxix, "I prevented the dawning of the morning;" that is, I was beforehand with my prayers. And there is a great secret in this; for many an intruder is ready to enter in, unless we can keep him out by making God Himself our guest.

And hear how the Psalmist speaks of the Lord's mercy and truth. They are as great as the wide expanse of heaven, and they reach unto the clouds; "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." God's goodness is immeasurable, and His love passeth knowledge.

PSALM LVIII.

Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away; like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

THE persons addressed in the opening verses of this Psalm were public men, probably filling the office of judges. And when the Psalmist puts it to them, "Do ye indeed speak righteousness? do ye judge uprightly?" it is as much as to say,

Although you fill posts of grave responsibility, you do not speak righteously; you do not administer justice as you ought.

He then describes the character of the wicked. From their earliest infancy they go wrong; "Their poison, (or malignity) is like the poison of a serpent;" and the very deadliest serpents too which cannot be tamed, and "will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

He entreats the Lord to destroy these wicked men by His power; "Break their teeth, O God." Check their means of doing harm, as wild beasts are rendered harmless when their teeth are broken. Destroy their schemes, as water poured out; as broken arrows shot from a bow; as a creeping snail seems to melt away; as a stillborn child that never sees the light; as half-burnt brambles which crackle, but do not burn.

"The righteous" are spoken of, in the tenth verse, as "rejoicing when they see the vengeance" which comes down upon the wicked. It does not mean that they will actually find pleasure in their punishment, but rather in the deliverance thus effected. The righteous will gain the victory; and as a conqueror walks over the field of battle and amidst the blood of the slain, so will the servant of God see his enemies overthrown, and laid low before him. And thus will all acknowledge that the Lord is a righteous God; and they will own

that instead of leaving the government of the world to chance, victory will surely come at length to the people of God, and shame and defeat will be the portion of **the wicked**: "So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."

PSALM LIX. 1-8.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God : defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul : the mighty are gathered against me ; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord. They run and prepare themselves without my fault : awake to help me, and behold. Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen : be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. They return at evening : they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth : swords are in their lips : for who, say they, doth hear ? But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them ; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

IN this Psalm, as in many that have gone before, David complains of the violence of his enemies, asks earnestly for deliverance, and expresses his full confidence in the Lord's promised protection.

Look at his description of his enemies in the third and fourth verses ; " They lie in wait for my soul " (or my life). As the tiger crouches, and then suddenly springs upon its prey, so were these wicked men ever ready to make an attack upon him.

" The mighty are gathered against me. " They come upon me in herds, and join hand in hand to

overpower me. And yet their attack is unprovoked; it is not occasioned by any offence on my part; "Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord;" and again, "They run and prepare themselves without my fault." It is well if, whilst suffering, our conscience acquit us of having done nothing to provoke the wrath of our enemies. "This (says the Apostle) is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

Now then he appeals to God to rouse Himself and come forward for his deliverance; "Awake to help me, and behold. Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen; be not merciful to any wicked transgressors." By "the heathen," he means those who act like heathen men, and have not the fear of God before their eyes. He addresses God as "the Lord God of Hosts;" as one who is Almighty, and has infinite resources at His disposal; and therefore is *able* to help him. He addresses Him also as "the God of Israel;" his covenant God, and therefore *willing* to help him.

And such a God have *we* to fly to—an all-powerful and gracious Being—our King, and yet our Father—our Judge, and yet our Friend—both able and willing to save us. Let us therefore fully trust Him, and put ourselves unreservedly in His hands.

In the sixth and seventh verses, the Psalmist again speaks of the malice of his foes; "They return at evening," (when the darkness covers their wicked intentions). "They make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city." They infest the streets, like hungry dogs, and prowl about ready to seize on any one who is unprepared to defend himself. "Behold they belch out with their mouth;" they pour out words of folly, abuse, and reproach. "Swords are in their lips; for who doth hear?" They utter sharp, cutting words; for they consider not Him whose ears are ever open, and whose eye is ever upon them.

But they are mistaken. God does hear them, and marks every word and every action. And how utterly does He despise their boasting, and their great pretensions; "But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision."

Truly the wicked are beneath His contempt; but He has always an ear to hear, and a heart to feel for, His own beloved people.

PSALM LIX. 9-17.

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee ; for God is my defence. The God of my mercy shall prevent me : God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. Slay them not, lest my people forget : scatter them by thy power ; and bring them down, O Lord our shield. For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride ; and for cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be : and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. And at evening let them return ; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied. But I will sing of thy power ; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning ; for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing ; for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

BECAUSE of his strength (David says) will I wait upon thee ; for God is my defence." By this he means, that seeing that his enemies are so strong and violent, it is beyond his power to resist them ; and therefore he looks up to God as his defender.

He speaks of God as the God of his mercy ; "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." He shall anticipate my wants, and be forward in

rendering me the help I need. What a blessing to be able to look upon God in this light, not only as a merciful God, but One who has ever shown mercy *unto me*; 'as the God from whom in days gone by I have received ten thousand blessings, and who is still dealing graciously with me! On His help I can surely rely.

In the verses which follow, David entreats the Lord to inflict a just punishment upon his enemies; not to slay them at once, but so to punish them that men may plainly see that God is avenging His servants; "Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

The Lord acted so with Cain. Instead of taking away his life at once, He made him a wanderer upon earth, a living proof of that justice which avenges murder. So was it also with the Jews. As a punishment for their repeated sins, instead of being entirely rooted up, they were scattered among the nations, a continued monument of God's wrath.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, these wicked persons are spoken of as returning to the city with hopeless disappointment; "At evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied." Having raged like furious dogs

against the righteous, let them suffer as hungry dogs for their sin. Such is often the portion of those who array themselves against the Lord and against His anointed.

“But I (says David) will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy.” Whilst the enemies of God are suffering the punishment they have brought upon themselves, His friends raise a song of thankfulness for His saving grace and sheltering care.

Let us look upon the Lord as our Shield and our Defence; and having committed ourselves to Him, let us feel perfectly safe. In the time of our weakness let us remember that He is our strength; and in the day of trouble, instead of looking here and there for help, let us betake ourselves to Him who can heal our wounds, and dry up all our tears.

PSALM LX.

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased ; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble ; thou hast broken it : heal the breaches thereof ; for it shaketh. Thou hast showed thy people hard things : thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. That thy beloved may be delivered ; save with thy right hand, and hear me. God hath spoken in his holiness ; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine ; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head ; Judah is my lawgiver ; Moab is my washpot ; over Edom will I cast out my shoe : Philistia, triumph thou because of me. Who will bring me into the strong city ? who will lead me into Edom ? Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off ? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies ? Give us help from trouble ; for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly ; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

THE disasters which had befallen the Lord's people are here referred to. They had by their sins rejected God, and He seemed for a while to reject them. But now their prayer is, "O turn thyself to us again." And truly, when

we return to God with humble penitence, He is ready to receive us and to help us.

“Thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment;” that is, Thou hast caused us to see reverses, disappointments, and trials: but still Thou art our Helper, and the Captain of our salvation.

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of thy truth.” Thou hast bidden us go forth lifting up our standard in Thy name, and displaying it in the cause of the true God.

From the sixth verse to the end, he speaks of the conquests already made, and of those which would follow; “God hath spoken in his holiness;” that is, a holy God has promised to give us the Land as our inheritance, and He will fulfil His promise. His holiness is pledged to its performance. “I will rejoice;” that is, I will gladly go forth to the work, trusting to this promise, and therefore assured of success. “I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;” I will make those divisions among the several tribes which the Lord appointed.

David speaks of Gilead and Manasseh on the east, and Ephraim and Judah on the west, as a part of his wide dominion. He describes Ephraim as “the strength of his head,” or that on which he mainly relied; and Judah as having much

influence among his neighbours. But of Moab he speaks with great contempt; "Moab is my wash-pot;" and of Edom he says, "Over him will I cast out my shoe;" or, I will subdue him and tread him under foot.

And then, towards the end of the Psalm, he shows how entirely he looks to God to bless his arms. He who in his youthful days relied upon an unseen Helper in his contest with Goliath, now in his old age looks to the same almighty arm to give him the victory over his foes. And shall not we utter the same prayer in our daily warfare? "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." In His strength we are strong; and if He fights we shall gain mighty victories.

PSALM LXI.

Hear my cry, O God ; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed : lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever : I will trust in the covert of thy wings. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows : thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. Thou wilt prolong the king's life ; and his years as many generations. He shall abide before God for ever : O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

DAVID was clearly in trouble when he wrote this Psalm, but by faith he saw his way out of it. He had been driven from his home and his throne by Absalom, but he relies much on the efficacy of prayer ; “from the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed.”

This world is to God's people a sea of troubles, and our only safety is upon the Rock which He has provided for us. Fixed upon that Rock, we may look down, and defy all the storms and tempests of this lower world, and enjoy peace in the midst of turmoil. Christ is our everlasting Rock, and resting upon Him we are safe.

David speaks, in the fourth verse, of "abiding in God's tabernacle for ever;" that is, in God's presence, of which the tabernacle was the emblem. And perhaps he also thought of those happy, peaceful moments which he had spent, and which he hoped again to spend, in God's sanctuary. Here he loved to dwell, and here he found unceasing refreshment for his soul.

He speaks too of his "vows having been heard"—those vows probably which were made during the time of his banishment, and which God accepted, restoring him again to his kingdom and promised inheritance.

His life had often been in great jeopardy; but now he speaks of days given back to him, and of years lengthened out. And here, as well as elsewhere, he no doubt alludes to that endless life, which he hopes to spend with God in Heaven, where there shall be no night, no trouble, no death.

He closes the Psalm with a determination to bless and praise God for His goodness; "So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows." And if David had reason to praise God, much more have we! Our blessings and our deliverances are even greater; and the light that shines upon us is even brighter than that in which he rejoiced.

PSALM LXII.

Truly my soul waiteth upon God : from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation ; he is my defence ; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man ? ye shall be slain all of you : as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency : they delight in lies : they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. My soul, wait thou only upon God ; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation : he is my defence ; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory : the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times ; ye people, pour out your heart before him : God is a refuge for us. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie : to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery : if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God hath spoken once ; twice have I heard this ; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy ; for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

UNLIMITED confidence in God was the strong point in David's character, and nowhere is this more clearly declared than in the Psalm before us.

In the two opening verses he expresses his per-

fect repose in God ; "Truly my soul waiteth (or resteth) upon God." Here is a calmness which the storms and agitations of the world could not disturb. He speaks of the Lord as his "Rock," his "Salvation," his "Defence." Here was a triple shield around him, which made him feel safe and at rest : here were so many strong pillars, by which he supports his stedfastness.

In the third and fourth verses, he shows *why* he had thus sought a Heavenly shelter ; namely, because of the wickedness of his enemies, who had sought to rob him of his dignity, and even of his life. But he feels assured that with all their violence they would be defeated ; they would crumble in pieces like an ill-cemented wall, or a brittle and tottering fence.

David's adversaries "consulted" together how to deprive him of those honours which God had bestowed upon him. And so too did the Jews take counsel against our blessed Lord, with the same intent. In both cases they scrupled not to make use of false pretences, and secret plans of evil. While they "blessed with their mouth, they cursed inwardly."

Therefore he is content to shelter himself under God's care ; "My soul, wait thou only upon God." There are other rocks and other defenders at hand ; but He is the only true one ; He is the only source of safety.

And he exhorts others also to trust in the same Almighty protection; "Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." Trust them not, or they will fail you. And as for making riches your trust, they will take to themselves wings and fly away when you most need them.

Lastly, the Psalmist gives his reasons for trusting in God. First, because all *power* belongs to Him. Secondly, because *mercy* belongs to Him. Now, it is a great point to feel that we are trusting in One who is able to defend us, One whose *power* is infinite. But is it not a yet further blessing to know that this all-powerful God is a God of *mercy* towards His poor needy children? And once more we are here told that He is a *just* God; He "rendereth to every man according to his work."

Happy are we to have such a God to confide in! Shall we not "trust in him at all times," and "pour out our hearts before him?"

PSALM LXIII. 1-4.

O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live : I will lift up my hands in thy name.

THE Psalmist here expresses his longing for God, and his earnest desire for communion with Him. It is well if we can address God as he did, saying, "O God, thou art *my* God." For as a magnet quickly turns towards the north, so, if our faith is true, it will be ever turning towards God.

"Early will I seek thee," says David ; that is, early in the day, before other things press upon the soul, and thrust God out ; and early in life, before the heart becomes hardened by sin and drawn away by the world. Let this then be our resolution— to begin each day with God, to give Him the first and freshest place in our hearts, and to put Him foremost in all our plans and purposes. This will make everything savour of God, and His presence and blessing will be in it.

Our Lord declares, "Blessed are they that

hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." And David speaks of this as his own experience; "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee." Nature does not give us this appetite for God. That soul only feels it which is under the influence of grace. Oh that we may know something of its blessedness; then, although every human fountain of consolation and happiness be dried up, the Divine Fountain will still be open to refresh us.

In the second verse, David speaks of the sanctuary. There he had often realised God's power and glory; and he desires this feeling still to possess his soul. He knew that to taste of God's greatness and goodness was the secret of true comfort; life would be worth less without it; "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."

What is our life? It is the greatest of earthly blessings; "All that a man hath will he give for his life." And yet to the true child of God there is a pearl of far greater price, namely, the "lovingkindness" of God, on which hangs not only the life which now is, but that also which is to come. The sense of this lovingkindness tuned the harp of the son of Jesse, and now tunes the harps of the ransomed spirits before the throne of God.

PSALM LXIII. 5-11.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips ; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee : thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword : they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God ; every one that sweareth by him shall glory ; but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

THROUGHOUT the Bible, heavenly things are compared to a feast. So David here speaks of being "satisfied as with marrow and fatness." The world can, and does, afford a certain amount of pleasure, but that pleasure does not last : it is "as the crackling of thorns under a pot : " it quickly blazes up, and as quickly dies out. But true religion *satisfies* the soul ; "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall not thirst."

And this enjoyment of God is felt not only in the public sanctuary, but when we draw near to

Him in private; for instance, when we "remember Him upon our bed, and meditate on Him in the night-watches."

His kindness, too, in the past, gives us confidence to trust in Him for the future: "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings-will I rejoice." So it is with our earthly friends; if they have been kind to us, and helped us in the hour of difficulty, this will not only make us grateful to them, but it will be to us an assurance of their future care. And shall not the same feeling lead us to trust God?

By the expression in the eighth verse, "My soul followeth hard after thee," David meant that his soul clung to God, and that amidst his many temptations to depart from Him, his determination was to cleave to Him.

He concludes by drawing a contrast between the certain destruction of his enemies, and his own joy in God's protection; "Thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth;" that is, they will go down to the grave, or perhaps their bodies will remain unburied, and be "a portion for foxes," or jackals. Truly the contrast is very great, between the confidence of God's servant that he will be upheld by his heavenly Father, and the sure destruction of his foes.

David had his trials and his sorrows ; but it might be said to his persecutors as Abraham said to the Rich Man in the Parable, " My son, thou, in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise David evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

PSALM LXIV.

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer ; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked ; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity ; who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words : that they may shoot in secret at the perfect : suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter ; they commune of laying snares privily ; they say, Who shall see them ? They search out iniquities ; they accomplish a diligent search : both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep. But God shall shoot at them with an arrow ; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves : all that see them shall flee away. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God ; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him ; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

THERE is no time when the voice of God's children sounds so keenly in His ear, as when they are in trouble, and when they tell out their trouble to Him. No one felt more persuaded of this than David ; and therefore he says, " Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer : preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked ; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity."

The closer his enemies pressed him, the nearer he drew to God. Here was his comfort and his safety, under the Lord's sheltering care.

In the third and following verses the Psalmist describes the venomous malice of his enemies. They "whet (or sharpen) their tongue like a sword." Their words cut deeply, inflicting a painful wound. They are like piercing arrows shot from a bow; and these arrows are aimed secretly and fearlessly—*secretly*, because they come from the heart of cowards; and *fearlessly*, because they are bold and shameless in the commission of sin. All is done stealthily, and in a hidden manner, to escape detection, and to ensure success.

But look at the seventh and eighth verses, and see how God deals with them; He "shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves." While they shoot at their victim, God sends forth a surer arrow to wound them; so that the blow which they tried to inflict will fall upon themselves.

And then mark the consequence. There will be a general alarm; "All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing." Just as when Ananias and Sapphira were stricken by the hand of God, "great fear came upon all them that heard these

things," so in this case also God's vengeance strikes terror even among His enemies.

But this is not all : there is a feeling of joy too, and thankfulness on the part of His people ; " The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him ; and all the upright in heart shall glory." So will it ever be when the wicked are overthrown, and when the Lord shows Himself to be the Avenger of His servants.

PSALM LXV.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion ; and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me : as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts : we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation ; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea ; which by his strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power ; which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens : thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it ; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water ; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly ; thou settlest the furrows thereof ; thou makest it soft with showers ; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness ; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks ; the valleys also are covered over with corn ; they shout for joy, they also sing.

THE praises of God's people are here spoken of as ever ready to be offered up in His temple ;

“Praise *waiteth* for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed.” There is a readiness on their part to put up their praises for past mercies, and to redeem the pledges they have made; and on His part there is a willingness to accept their prayers and offerings.

God is the great Prayer-hearer: to Him, therefore, all eyes are turned. This is simply the meaning of the expression, “Unto thee shall all flesh come.” It may however be also taken in a yet wider sense, as referring to that day, when every knee shall bow before Him, and every blessing be acknowledged as coming from Him alone.

But why does David speak, in the third verse, of his sin? saying, “Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.” He speaks of sin, because he felt it deeply, especially when he came before a Holy God: it was to him like the weight of heavy stone, and until the removal of it his soul could not mount up to God. But he also speaks of sin being purged away; for he accounted this as the first and foremost of all his blessings.

From the fifth verse to the end, the Psalmist describes the marvellous power and goodness of God; “By terrible (or wonderful) things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.” And he proceeds to mention some of these wonders.

He keeps the mountains in their places. He

calms the troubled ocean, and stills the uproar of the people. He regulates the morning and evening of each successive day. He refreshes the earth with its due supplies of rain, making the corn to spring up and the grass to grow; and at length crowns the year with its golden harvests, so that the rich valleys seem as it were to rejoice, and burst out into songs of praise. Such is the Lord's goodness; and the rejoicings of nature ought, indeed, to find a full echo in the human heart.

But there are even higher acts of God's mercy which should call forth the praise and thankfulness of His servants. Oh that we all realised the greatness of His love towards us in blessing our souls, and fitting us for everlasting happiness in His own presence!

PSALM LXVI. 1-9.

Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands : sing forth the honour of his name : make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works ! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee ; they shall sing to thy name. Come and see the works of God : he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land : they went through the flood on foot : there did we rejoice in him. He ruleth by his power for ever ; his eyes behold the nations : let not the rebellious exalt themselves. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard ; which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

THIS Psalm seems to follow up what was said in the previous Psalm. Men are invited to lift up their hearts to God in thankfulness for His great power and goodness : “ Sing forth the honour of his name ; make his praise glorious.”

In the last Psalm David had said, “ By terrible (or wonderful) things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation ; ” and here he twice over refers to these “ terrible things.” In the third verse he says, “ How terrible art thou in thy works ! ” and in the fifth verse he says, “ Come and see the works of God : he is terrible in his doing

calms the troubled ocean, and stills the uproar of the people. He regulates the morning and evening of each successive day. He refreshes the earth with its due supplies of rain, making the corn to spring up and the grass to grow; and at length crowns the year with its golden harvests, so that the rich valleys seem as it were to rejoice, and burst out into songs of praise. Such is the Lord's goodness; and the rejoicings of nature ought, indeed, to find a full echo in the human heart.

But there are even higher acts of God's mercy which should call forth the praise and thankfulness of His servants. Oh that we all realised the greatness of His love towards us in blessing our souls, and fitting us for everlasting happiness in His own presence!

us from day to day! We should indeed bless God for this, and never cease to sing His praises.

The terribleness of God's power is chiefly dwelt upon in these verses. By this He keeps men in check, and subdues their rebellious wills. But the mere putting forth of His power will never bring men into willing submission to Him. It is His *love* and not His *power* which must do this. The wicked may feel His power and yet remain wicked; but the moment we taste of His love our hearts are melted, and we bow before Him with peaceful submission and adoring gratitude.

PSALM LXVI. 10-20.

For thou, O God, hast proved us : thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net ; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads ; we went through fire and through water ; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings : I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams ; I will offer bullocks with goats. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me : but verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

IN the three first of these verses the Psalmist alludes to God's dealing with the Israelites in the wilderness. He speaks of the Lord having "proved" them, and "tried them as silver is tried ;" of having "brought them into the net ;" that is, allowed them to be taken captive by their enemies ; of having "caused men to ride over their heads," or conquered them ; and of His having led them "through fire and water ;" that is, through great trials and difficulties.

And why was this? He had no pleasure in punishing them; but He desired to school them during their wilderness life, and thus prepare them for their Home in Canaan. And so too does He deal with His people now. He makes this world our school of trial to fit and prepare us for our promised rest.

Having thus spoken of God's dealings with His people, and feeling how his own trials had all issued in mercy, the Psalmist resolves, as we see by the thirteenth verse, to come before God with the offering of prayer and praise. This is his resolution; "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows," &c.

And then see how anxious he is to tell out to all how the Lord has dealt with His servant; "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." He wished to show how God had acted towards him, and how this had called forth the expression of his thankfulness; "I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled (or praised) with my tongue."

In the eighteenth verse he puts in a word as to his own sincerity. Had he been untrue to the Lord, had he retained any false feeling in his heart, then his approach to God would have been in vain; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." But it was happily otherwise

in his case, and therefore he adds ; “ But verily God hath heard me ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.”

There is a great truth here, which we shall do well to lay to heart. We must be honest with God. We must come to Him with holy hearts. We cannot be true worshippers if we bring our sins in one hand and a devout offering in the other. God will not accept us ; but He will esteem our prayer as an abomination in His sight.

And here is the reason why our prayers are so often worthless—we regard iniquity in our hearts, and, consequently, God will not hear us. We come with the world in our hearts ; we cherish pride, or unbelief, or malice ; and then our prayers are hindered ; they never reach the throne of God.

A great preacher was once addressing a congregation in the open air, with the sun shining upon him, and he said ; ‘ I raise my hand, and that little hand hides the sun from me. So is it with sin ; that sin, though it may be a little one, if cherished in my heart, is quite sufficient to hide God’s face from me. It shuts Him out from our prayers, and we have no answer of peace.’

PSALM LXVII.

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

THIS is a large-hearted Psalm. The writer asks for God's mercy, His blessing, and His favour; "God be merciful unto us, and bless us." And he asks this, not for his own sake, but that the world at large may be led to acknowledge Him, and to love Him; "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health (or thy salvation) among all nations."

We all need God's mercy, for we have done much, very much, to offend Him. We need His blessing, for without it nothing we do can prosper. And we need to have His face to shine upon us, or this will indeed be a dark world to us. Do thou, Lord,

lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us; and then, though our path be dark, we shall have light within; and though trials be our portion, we shall have the peace of those whose minds are stayed upon Thee.

And truly if all God's people lived in the manifest enjoyment of His favour, and in the open acknowledgment of His constant blessing, there would be in us an attractive power drawing others to Him, and forcing them to see that our religion is not a mere painted thing, but a blessed reality.

The Psalmist then adds, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." For if the nations of the earth are brought to the knowledge of the Lord, they will see His love and goodness, and their hearts will be lifted up in praise to Him.

Again, in the fifth verse, he calls upon the nations to praise Him. And have we not, each one of us, much reason to do so? for great indeed are the blessings which we have received from Him. And if we praised God as we ought, then would still larger blessings be showered down upon us; "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." The more largely we thank God for gifts bestowed, the more abundant is He in His bestowal of them. Prayer is often said to be the key that opens God's trea-

sury; but that key will soon prove rusty, unless it is tempered with praise.

How glorious the prospect that "all the ends of the earth shall (one day) fear God!" Let those who have tasted most of His love and goodness pray most, and strive most, for its fulfilment.

PSALM LXVIII. 1-6.

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered : let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away : as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish in the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad ; let them rejoice before God : yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name : extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families : he bringeth out those which are bound with chains : but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

THIS seems to have been sung in the Temple after some great victory, when the Ark was brought back, and laid up in its appointed place. The opening words are almost the same as those used by Moses in reference to the Ark in Num. x. 35 ; and again by Solomon in 2 Chron. vi. 41.

They contain a prayer to God to display His power in the dispersion of His enemies, whom He is entreated to drive away as smoke is driven before the wind, and as wax melts before the fire. But very differently is He asked to deal with the righteous. He is asked to gladden their hearts, and to fill them with joy.

What a contrast do they thus present !—the one

scattered like worthless, empty smoke, like a mist before the gale : the other standing firm as a rock, with God as their support—the one melting away, till at last they have nothing left : the other prospering, and possessing a joy which no man can take from them.

The fourth verse contains a proposal to praise God by His name Jah or Jehovah; that is, the true God. And then comes a word or two descriptive of God's gracious character.

He is "*the Father of the fatherless*;" not so much of the great and noble, as of the poor and the destitute.

He is "*a Judge of the widows*." He loves to befriend such, and to measure out impartial justice to those who have no means of taking care of themselves.

He *befriends "the solitary."* He draws near to those who are alone in the world, and cheers them. He makes them feel that they are not alone, for they are members of His spiritual Body, children of His great family.

He *pities and delivers the prisoner.* He had compassion on Joseph when unjustly imprisoned, and on Paul and Silas when in the dungeon at Philippi. And never does He turn a deaf ear to the cry of the captive.

Such is the Lord's kindness towards His own people; but those who are not His, and who rebel

against Him, He hands over to barrenness and want: "The rebellious dwell in a dry land."

Is it not then our interest, as well as our duty, to fear and love God? To have Him with us, to claim Him as our God, to give in our whole allegiance to Him—this is our true happiness, and herein is our safety for time and for eternity.

PSALM LXVIII. 7-19.

O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon. The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan: an high hill as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.

THE former of these verses which have been read, refer to the wonders which the Lord wrought

for Israel, both in Egypt and in Canaan. The Psalmist alludes to His going before His people, and leading them through the wilderness; to the earth quaking when it swallowed up Dathan and Abiram; to Sinai itself being moved, when God delivered His laws; to His pouring down showers of manna for the support and refreshment of His inheritance.

In the tenth and following verses, he says, "Thy congregation (or thy people) hath dwelt therein;" that is, in the promised land: "Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor," or in other words, 'Thou hast provided for Thy people, when they were destitute and had no resources of their own.'

Then he goes on to speak of the Lord giving His command to gather together His hosts to battle, and immediately it was published far and near; "Kings with their armies did flee apace," and the women who remained at home made division of the spoil. So it was in the days of Sisera, as we see in Judges, v. 29, 30.

The Psalmist also declares, that although the people of God may be in an afflicted and low condition, brighter and happier days will come to them; "Though ye have lien among the pots," as a caldron discoloured by smoke and soot, "yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. When

the Almighty scattered kings in it (that is, in the land), it was white as snow in Salmon"—it became bright and joyous.

He then sings in praise of Mount Zion, which he calls "the hill of God." Other mountains may be higher; they may leap with exultation and pride; but this is the abode of God Himself. Here He dwells surrounded by His mighty chariots and hosts of angels. And yet His presence-chamber is higher still, even in Heaven itself: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men."

Let us think of God in His greatness; and thither let our hearts ascend, and with Him continually dwell.

PSALM LXVIII. 20-35.

He that is our God is the God of salvation ; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea ; that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. They have seen thy goings, O God ; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after ; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength : strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver : scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt ; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; O sing praises unto the Lord ; to him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old ; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God : his excellency is over Israel, and

his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places : the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.

IN this closing portion of the Psalm David ascribes power and greatness unto God. He is the God of Salvation, the only one who can save, and with Him are the issues from death. He can wound and destroy His enemies and deliver His people. He can bring back and restore His scattered people, though they be driven to the extreme borders of their land, even unto Bashan. So great would be the Lord's conquests that His very feet, as it were, would be dipped in the blood of His slaughtered enemies.

And this God who doeth all these wonders is "our God." This was David's comfort, and it may well be ours. This reconciled him to all his trials ; for so long as he could feel that God was his God, he could bear them all for His sake, and even rejoice in his sufferings.

In the twenty-fourth and three following verses, the Psalmist speaks of the Procession in the Temple ; "They (that is, the lookers-on) have seen thy goings, O God, in the sanctuary." First came the singers ; then the musicians ; and next the female choristers. He mentions four of the tribes as being present—Benjamin and Judah, perhaps because they dwelt nearest to the city of David ; and Zebu-

lun and Naphtali, because they were at the furthest distance from it.

The Lord—as king present—shall make even the heathen to rally round His temple; “Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.” In the thirtieth verse, a command is given to rebuke all opposers; and these are likened to fierce bulls; “Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people.” But even they shall be made to submit to God’s sway, and at length to bring their offerings to Him.

Towards the end of the Psalm all the kingdoms of the world are invited to sing praises unto God, and to ascribe unto Him glory and power, both on account of His dealings with Israel, and also the wonders which He displays in the clouds or heavens. Truly God is terrible to His enemies, and full of grace and goodness to His people.

The Psalmist adds, “Blessed be God.” And every true heart will respond; for the more we look into His character, the more are we struck with wonder and with thankfulness.

PSALM LXIX. 1-12.

Save me, O God ; for the waters are come in unto my soul.

I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing : I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying : my throat is dried : mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head : they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty : then I restored that which I took not away. O God, thou knowest my foolishness ; and my sins are not hid from thee. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake : let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach ; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment ; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me ; and I was the song of the drunkards.

THIS Psalm has much of Christ in it. Although, as a whole, it cannot be regarded as a direct prophecy of the Saviour, yet there are several passages in it which specially apply to Him, and are thus referred to in the New Testament.

The Psalmist breaks out into a bitter complaint, not with reference to himself individually, but as suitable to every righteous man. He alludes perhaps to Joseph, who was cast into a pit by his brethren, and to Jeremiah, who was thrown into a dungeon of mire. He describes his distress as so great that he exclaims, "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." He could say, and Christ still more, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head." And he adds, "Then I restored that which I took not away;" I was compelled, that is, to make satisfaction for wrongs that I never did.

And yet how humbly does he speak; "O God, thou knowest my foolishness." He remembers that there had been errors and follies in his past life; with these God was acquainted; and he had no desire to hide them from Him.

He further declares that it was for God's sake that he suffered, and he desires that others may not be put to shame by the way in which he bears his trial.

In the ninth verse, he speaks of his burning zeal for God consuming and wearing him out. And these words too are applied to Christ, whose zeal was such that it called forth the wrath of His foes, especially when it led Him to clear His Father's House of unholy intruders.

Surely it was not David only, but David's Lord, and each one of David's brethren, who could say, "When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb unto them. They that sit in the gate (that is, the rulers, and chief men in office) speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards."

It was so especially with Christ; and so it also is with all who are His. He was hated and persecuted; and all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall likewise suffer persecution. Therefore, O Christian, expect this. It is your portion; and if you suffer for your Lord's sake, bear it patiently, meekly, and cheerfully, remembering that He has trodden the path of suffering before you, and is now for ever beyond its reach.

PSALM LXIX. 13-28.

But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time : O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink : let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth against me. Hear me, O Lord ; for thy lovingkindness is good : turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. And hide not thy face from thy servant ; for I am in trouble : hear me speedily. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it : deliver me because of mine enemies. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour : mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart ; and I am full of heaviness : and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none : and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat ; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them : and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not ; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate ; and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten ; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity unto their iniquity ; and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

IN the former portion of the Psalm David had uttered his complaint, and had dwelt on the treatment which he had received at the hands of the unbelieving. And now he turns to God, as his all-sufficient refuge. Whilst they utter abuse, he pours out words of prayer; "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation."

And then he pleads for deliverance, and that speedily; for he is persuaded that all he suffers is known to God; "Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee." And speaking of reproach, he says, it broke his heart, and when he looked for comforters he found none, but they mocked his misery, giving him gall for meat, and vinegar for drink. Oftentimes God's servants meet with mockery in their sorrows. This aggravates their misery. But like David they find comfort in looking up to God, and committing themselves to Him who judgeth righteously.

What is here said of David was perfectly fulfilled in the case of Christ, as He hung upon the cross. We are told that "they gave him vinegar to drink mixed with gall, and when he had tasted he would not drink." And afterwards "They filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop;"

and the dying Saviour received it, and "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

In the twenty-second and following verses, the wicked are denounced; "Let their table become a snare before them;" that is, Let their prosperity become their ruin, "and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." They love darkness too more than light; therefore, "Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not." And truly the eyes of Christ's persecutors were darkened; God's indignation has been poured out upon them; and their habitation has become desolate. They, as a nation, have been blotted out of God's Book, and the righteous have been written there.

But what is the meaning of the words, "Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness?" It means, 'They have acted wickedly, let the stamp of iniquity be upon them, and let them not be counted among the righteous.'

O God, whatever be our trials and our sorrows, let our names be written in the Book of Life. Make us to be numbered among Thy saints in glory everlasting. For if we have a portion among that glorious band, our past troubles will soon be forgotten, and everlasting happiness will be ours.

PSALM LXIX. 29-36.

But I am poor and sorrowful : let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. The humble shall see this, and be glad ; and your heart shall live that seek God. For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein. For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah ; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it ; and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

AFTER speaking, as the Psalmist had done in the preceding verses, of the wicked and their punishment, he again places himself before God, and pleads his poverty and need ; “ But I am poor and sorrowful : let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.” And in the joyful prospect of this deliverance he begins at once to tune his heart ; “ I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.”

Thus the scene is changed from sorrow to joy, from a state of suffering to one of triumph, from a groan of complaint to the voice of joy and thank-

fulness. And this, he says, "shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs"—better even than the offering of a burnt sacrifice, however perfect the animal may be that is offered, though it be full grown with horns and hoofs. The Psalmist does not say that such a burnt offering would not be acceptable to God, but that the offering of the heart, the sacrifice of praise, would be *more* acceptable.

It is a blessing to know that our humble praises are ever welcome. None are so unworthy but that God is ready to welcome them; "For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners."

And now the Psalmist's heart bursts forth with a song of thankfulness at the thought of the Church's triumph. He feels not a doubt; but his heart is fully assured that better days are coming both for himself, and for the Church of God; "Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein. For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein."

How glorious the thought that the sufferings of God's people shall one day be exchanged for their glory, just as the Saviour's Cross and Passion prepared the way for His joyful Resurrection.

Let us be content then to suffer. Let us, Him, willingly "endure the cross, despising shame," mindful of "the joy that is set before and looking forward to that day when we be "set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

PSALM LXX.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.

THE words of this Psalm, being the same as those in Ps. xl. 13-17, need not be separately explained.

PSALM LXXI. I-13. *

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust : let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape : incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort : thou hast given commandment to save me ; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord God : thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb : thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels : my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many ; but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me ; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him : persecute and take him ; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me : O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul : let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

THIS is one of those Psalms in which we meet with fuller trust and confidence than we find expressed elsewhere.

In the second verse, the Psalmist pleads God's "righteousness" as the ground of his trust. God

is righteous, and therefore we can with confidence commit our case to Him.

He mentions a second plea in the third verse ; namely, the declared purpose of God to be the Deliverer of His servants ; “Thou hast given commandment to save me.” He likens God’s protection to a strong tower or fortification, which affords safety in time of war to those within it.

Former mercies are mentioned as another ground of trust ; “Thou art my hope, O Lord God : thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb.” The feeling that God has been our Protector from our earliest years makes us confidently trust Him for the time to come. He who *has* helped us *will* help us. He who *has* loved us from the beginning *will* love us unto the end.

“I am a wonder (he exclaims) unto many.” Whether David speaks thus, or Christ, it is equally true of both. David was a wonder unto his friends, on account of his many afflictions, and his confidence under them all ; and a wonder also to his enemies on account of the wonderful deliverances which he experienced. And Christ was a wonder unto all on account of His wisdom, for He spake as never man spake ; on account of His deeds, for all power was given Him in heaven and earth ; and also on account of the sea of trial that He passed through, for what sorrow was like unto His sorrow ?

What is said in the ninth verse leads one to think that this Psalm was penned by an aged Believer, for he says ; " Cast me not off in the time of old age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth." It is sad, at a time when friends grow tired of us and the world can do but little for us, to look up and feel that God is afar off. The Psalmist's enemies were ready to cast this in his teeth, saying, " God hath forsaken him : persecute and take him ; for there is none to deliver him." But this made him cling all the closer to God. His earnest prayer was ; " O God, be not far from me : O my God, make haste for my help."

To have God with us and within us—to enjoy His abiding presence—to feel His nearness—this is what every devout person will desire. This will constitute our highest happiness here, and this will be the fulness of our joy hereafter, to be ever with our Lord.

PSALM LXXI. 14-24.

But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee? Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long; for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

HOPE is the keynote of the second portion of this Psalm. Hope raises the Psalmist's head above the trials which oppressed him. It giveth songs in the night, and enables him to be thankful even in the dark season of affliction. Admonished

in the past by his own weakness, and remembering how often God had interposed, he says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only;" that is, Not my sword, my bow, or my arm, my chariots, or my horses, but Thou and Thou alone art all to me; my strength in weakness; my wisdom when I need guidance; my righteousness, when I feel that there is nought but sin within me.

And now that grey hairs were gathering upon him, he thinks upon all God's past mercies, and entreats Him to be with him still, so that he may honour Him in his old age; "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

Such is the holy desire of an aged Believer's soul—to glorify God whether living or dying, whether in the vigour of youth or in the infirmity of old age—to be His as long as life is spared. This was St. Paul's wish; for though he desired to "depart and to be with Christ," his earnest wish was to be useful to his Master as long as it was His pleasure to keep him here.

And now see how joyful his prospect is. There is no distrust, no weakness, to bring a cloud upon his soul, but all is bright and clear before him;

“Thy righteousness, also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things : O God, who is like unto thee ? Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles (that is, in days past) shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God : unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee ; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long : for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.”

It is a lovely sight to see an aged servant of God singing praises to Him with trembling lips. The tones of that voice sound sweet even in the ears of God.

PSALM LXXII. I-II.

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass : as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him ; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents : the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him.

THIS is called in the Heading "A Psalm for Solomon." It was probably written by David towards the end of his life in praise of his royal son. There are however many promises in it which cannot refer to any earthly king, and can only have reference to the Messiah. Indeed it has been acknowledged even by the Jews themselves that He is the subject of the Psalm.

The first verse contains a prayer that God

would do justice both to David and to his Son. The rectitude and prosperity of Solomon's reign are then described. Under his sway the very land would be fruitful; "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." Justice and equity shall mark his rule; "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They (that is, the poor and needy) shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." Here we have the character of Christ's reign. The poor and needy are the objects of His care; but the oppressor of His avenging power. He may seem to overlook the former; but they are all the while unspeakably dear to Him. And, with regard to the latter, He may appear for a time to bear with their violence, but He will in the end "break them in pieces."

In the sixth and following verses, Solomon is represented as scattering blessings around him, like showers of rain, which make the grass to grow abundantly. The subjects of Solomon did indeed prosper under his rule; but a truer prosperity belongs to Christ's people. In Hos. xiv. the Lord says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and send forth his roots as Lebanon." Have we felt that heavenly dew, that gracious shower, upon our own souls? If so,

there will be life and fruitfulness where before all was death and barrenness.

The Psalmist goes on to say, "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." This was in a measure true of Solomon, of whom it is said, that "he reigned over all the kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines. They brought presents, and served him all the days of his life." But what a picture we have here of that subjection of the whole world to Christ, which will assuredly one day take place!

O glorious time! Hasten it, O Lord, and bring it speedily to pass. Take up Thy sceptre, and reign over a fallen world. Above all, may our own hearts bow low at Thy footstool, and yield to the power of Thy grace!

PSALM LXXII. 12-20.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence ; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba : prayer also shall be made for him continually ; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains ; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon ; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever : and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ; Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

THE Psalmist continues to set forth the excellencies of Solomon's reign, and leads on to that of Christ. He speaks especially of his great regard for the poor. In the fourth verse he had said of him, that he would "judge the poor," and would "save the children of the needy." And here he adds, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save

the souls of the needy. He shall redeem (or rescue) their soul from deceit and violence ; and precious shall their blood be in his sight."

It is a great blessing when a Sovereign or one in authority concerns himself about the poor, and is anxious to do justice to those who are wronged. This was a noble feature in the character of Solomon, but much more so in that of our Lord. He did indeed consider the poor, and was ever ready to help them, and to minister to their wants. They especially received the gospel from His lips ; and when their bodies or their souls were in need, He loved to relieve them. Their poverty had always a claim on His mercy.

It is said, in the fifteenth verse, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually ; and daily shall he be praised." This might well be said of Solomon ; for his people did indeed bear him on their hearts before God. But in what sense could it be said of Christ ? Truly prayer is offered for the increase and spread of His kingdom, and that numbers may be added to His Church.

The next verse describes once more the prosperity of Solomon's reign. The fruitfulness of the country was to be so great, that from "an handful of corn," and that sown on the most barren spot, "the top of the mountain," so great would be the produce, that the ears would shake, and wave in the wind, like the woods of Lebanon. And such

too shall be the amazing increase in Christ's kingdom, when the Spirit of God shall descend in large measure upon the Church.

In the closing verses the Psalmist breaks out in words of praise for the Lord's wondrous acts. He utters a kind of Doxology, which concludes this part of the Book of the Psalms. And a happy ending it is; for the Psalmist's heart seems to have been full of gratitude, and his mouth of praise.

The words then, "The Prayers of David are ended," may mean that this division of the Psalms closes here. But it has been remarked by a learned writer, that this declaration may perhaps mean that David had nothing more to pray or to wish for, than what is here expressed concerning the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, and the happiness that would be enjoyed under His rule.

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