

PSALMS

By

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PREFACE

A brief statement will show the simple purpose of this work.

Christian households will surely be assembled on each day for domestic worship. Piety cannot allow the morning to open and the evening to close without united prayer for common blessings and united praise for common mercies. Religion will cease to be the pervading element in the house in which the inhabitants fail thus to present themselves together at the throne of grace.

It is impossible to overestimate the blessings which may be expected from such family solemnities. They sweetly sanctify the home, and are a holy picture of celestial oneness. Love will then cement the hearts which together seek a heavenly Father's face—together vow obedience to His will—together consecrate their every faculty to His service—together bless Him for their common hope—together adore Him for the gift of Jesus, and all the preciousness of the Gospel-revelation.

It is presumed, also, that a portion of Scripture will have a place in these exercises, and that suitable comments will enforce God's Word. The Book of Psalms will doubtless not be excluded. Its central position as the heart of Scripture—its devotional character as part of the Jewish liturgy—its adaptation to every circumstance of life, rather entitle it to especial consideration.

Survey most superficially its contents. *It traverses every condition of man.* It roams with the shepherd in the meadows. It sits with the mighty monarch on the throne. It flees with the fugitive on the hills, and hides with him in the caves. It leads the conquering host to victory. It walks with the busy in the crowded haunts, and leaves not the lonely in their solitude. It is a *prop* for the staggering steps—a *guide* for the wanderer—a *counselor* when perplexities bewilder—a *pillow* for the weary head—a *sympathizing hand* to wipe the

weeping eye—a voice to whisper *comfort* to the disconsolate. No words more cheer the dying saint.

The soul in extremest agony for sin finds here a ready outlet for the bitterest streams of sorrow. Words are here supplied to crave deliverance from wrath. When a saving interest in Christ is realized and joy is in the height of rapture, here are the wings to bear aloft to heaven.

But the main glory of this book is its *identity with Christ*. He brightly shines throughout its varied hymns. He is constantly the speaker, and in these breathings of His Spirit we receive convincing evidence that, without ceasing to be God, He was a perfect man, and preeminently a Man of Sorrows. We here are supplied with a vivid portrait of *His character, His work, His love, His sufferings, His glory*. It would be no difficult task to construct a Gospel from its prophetic language. It may be regarded as His manual during His career on earth. When, as the expiating God-man, He was uplifted on the accursed tree, and the iron entered into His soul, His misery goes forth in the moanings of a Psalm, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He gives up the spirit uttering its confiding terms, "Into Your hands I commend My spirit." He ascends amid the shouts, "Lift up your heads, O you gates!" He receives the welcome, "Sit on My right hand."

In it the history of Israel's Church is shadowed out from its cradle in the iron furnace of Egypt, through its days of light and darkness, through its triumphs and reverses, through its rejection in unbelief, through its long and dreary desertion to its ultimate recovery and final glory. Prophets, apostles, ministering servants, have gathered flowers from this field. Whenever the Gospel is preached, weighty arguments, convincing proofs, telling exhortations, dreadful warnings, are extracted from its vast mine. Thus wide is the expanse of suggestions for prayer to which the Book of Psalms invites.

I thus reach the unpretending object of this work. It seeks to give some little aid, when in due course the Psalms are opened out. Divisions are made of appropriate length for such exercise, and *devotional thoughts are adjoined tending to excite the spirit of prayer and praise.* All attempt to elucidate by *critical acumen* is utterly eschewed. If it had been possible for the writer to introduce conclusions of learning, they would have been rejected as adverse to the plan. Time has not been employed to establish a connection between the speaker's feelings and historic events. When the reference is clear, no notice is needed. When it is obscure, it is more easy to increase than to remove uncertainty. It is enough to know that the Holy Spirit depicts real and not imaginary cases. *It is the reader's profit to find identity in his individual experience.* He will often be constrained to feel that He who inspired these words knew accurately the secrets of each heart, and presents a mirror thoroughly divine.

It may interest the scholar to investigate the claims of diverse versions for acceptance. But the hour of prayer is not suitable for such research. Therefore the reasoning powers have never been thus summoned to give aid. *To help devotion has been the one and only desire.* Other works abound in which the gifts of mind have been nobly used to display the wonders of this Book. The one design here has been to make it a vehicle of piety. The object is attained whenever worship is made a real approach of the heart unto God. It is hoped that the frequent appeals to the heart may exclude formality—that enemy to direct communion with God.

This observation finds excuse in the growing desire to multiply the objective and the picturesque in places of public worship. Surely attention directed to artistic decorations and mimicry of Rome's showy service tends to divert from close dealings with Heaven. Real prayer is not kindled by extraneous sights. It is the Spirit moving in the inner man.

May He, whose glory only has been sought, give His blessing for the sake of Jesus Christ!

PSALM 1

Here two portraits are presented to our view. The godly man appears. His walk is holy, happy, fruitful, prosperous, heavenward—The ungodly is entirely diverse. His course is worthless, and his end is woe. Spirit of God, grant now Your light!

1. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."

All praise be to the grace of God that in this world of widespread sin some lovely spots are seen. There are the heirs of life. Born from above, to God they live. Abhorrence of all evil is their grand distinction. The godless have their schemes, their pleas, their plots, their evil counsels. In such vile course the blessed ones never walk. They resolutely shun the hateful path. Sinners have their chosen way. How broad! how thronged! what multitudes move down the sad decline! In this the blessed ones have no part. They hate the filth. They keep their feet unsullied. Wickedness has its topstone. Scorn and derision proceed to mock God's word, Christ's work, and all the lowly followers of the Lamb. Too many love the sneering seat, and impious jests find sympathizing smiles. Such company is counterpart of hell. The blessed man sits not in such fellowship. We here are taught that *in sin there is gradation*. Let us flee the first step. The rolling stone descends with quickening speed.

2. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law he meditates day and night."

The godly man has his delights. His cup is crowned with joy. His table is spread with richest pleasures. The Scriptures are his soul-refreshing feast. They gladden him with views of God as his own God; Christ as his own Savior; the Spirit as his guide and sanctifying Comforter; heaven as his home forever; and all things ordered for his well-being. The morning light invites him to this

sacred page. In the day his thoughts cling closely to it. The evening's shadows and night's wakeful hours call to rejoice in this treasury of truth.

3. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

Behold the tree on the brook's verdant bank, whose roots drink constantly the flowing stream! The laden branches bend with plenteous fruit. Unfading freshness decks the leaves. No lovelier object adorns nature's field. It is a picture of the godly man. Deep springs of grace supply his inner life. The fruits of righteousness, which are the Spirit's work, abound. His fertility of holiness is rich, and large, and real. The Lord is truly with him; and where the Lord is, there is every good. Of Joseph it is sweetly said, "The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." Of David we read, "He went on and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him."

4. "The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind drives away."

The scene is changed. The ungodly widely differ. Nature shows, also, their picture. The fruitful tree gives place to chaff—light, barren, hollow, worthless—the refuse of the barn-floor. It yields no profit. It is cast out, the sport of winds. Driven away, it leaves no trace behind. Such are the godless. They minister no grace. They benefit no souls. None gain by conversation with them. Unstable, they are tossed by every changing wind. Temptations drive them headlong. Terrible is their final doom. Jesus comes, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

5. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

Judgment is near. The Judge stands at the door. The great white throne will soon be set. The dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books according to their works. They cannot flee the dread tribunal. There is no escape. No mask can hide their guilt. Their sins are all recorded. No blood blots out the stains. They plead no Savior's merit. They have no interest in the saving cross. No solid ground sustains their feet. They cannot stand. Undefended, they receive the dreadful sentence, 'Depart! you cursed ones!' Thus they are cast far from the congregation of the righteous. May we live ever with this last scene before us, and never rest until clear evidence is ours that we have happy place in "the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven."

6. "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Amid all their trials, sorrows, pains, reproaches, let the righteous lift up rejoicing heads. The eye of God rests on their way. He called them to the narrow road. He upholds their feeble steps. He safely leads them to the glorious end. Unfailing watchfulness surrounds them. But the broad road, with its unrighteous throng, goes down assuredly to hell.

Holy Spirit, give us the portion of the blessed man! May we escape the doom of the ungodly!

PSALM 2

To oppose the kingdom of Christ is utterly vain, because it is established by the Father's power, and by the provisions of the eternal decree. Holy exhortation follows. May faith read reverently the prophetic hymn!

1. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

Pious anticipation might exclaim—Surely, when Jesus comes to bless this earth, adoring welcomes will receive Him. Surely each heart will call Him to its throne; each knee will bow; each tongue will shout His praise; thanksgivings will encircle Him. Those who thus reason little know *the devil's power and man's rebellious wickedness*. The Spirit's eye foresees the black reality. Among the heathen rage shall be rampant. The favored nation shall plot destruction. How base, how vain is this iniquity! It may well be asked, What prompts this hatred? Why does this frenzy madden?

2. "The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the Lord and against his anointed One."

Those who occupy earth's highest seats are fiercest to oppose Jesus. The Herods and Pilates take determined stand. The council of the priests and elders meet in secret assembly. In the beginning it was so. The same hatred has defiled succeeding thrones and courts. Against whom is this rage? Tremble, O earth, turn pale, you heavens. This fury assails the Lord Jehovah and His beloved Son. The Father sends the Son anointed by the Spirit to be the promised Savior, to execute the all-saving offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, to bless the Church with every blessing. And earth's chiefs combine to tread Him beneath insulting feet. Give ear! this is their frantic cry—

3. "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from this slavery."

Self-will rejects restraint. Pride will not yield to rule. Licentiousness surmounts all barriers. Conceited reason lifts up defiant head. The gentle scepter of Christ's kingdom, His sweet, His light, His easy, and His loving yoke, are hated as chains which restrain and cords which fetter. When Jesus came, earth raised the cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It still resounds. When will man learn that widest liberty is true submission to the Gospel sway? He is a free man whom the Son makes free. *He is a slave in whom unbridled lusts and passions rule.* But can proud man prevail? Can he drive back the ocean's might with a feather? Can he lift up his puny hand, and bid the sun conceal its rays? Can he with straws bind the hurricane? Can he lay mountains low, exalt the valleys, and change the laws of nature? Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God? Such, doubtless, is his frantic will. But give ear again;

4. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

Let us lift up our eyes to God. He sits upon His throne on high; while earth is all unsettled, wild in mad menace, He reigns in calm repose. The Spirit here takes images from human feeling to depict His unruffled contempt. God laughs derisively, when puny efforts dash their feebleness against overpowering strength. Thus God shows undisturbed disdain of human fury.

5. "Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure."

God may be silent long; but patience is not impunity. Reprieve brings not release. When the appointed time comes, the floodgates open and wrath overflows. Who can conceive these terrors? What must His displeasure be? Who can endure when His anger issues

forth? What weeping, what wailing, what anguish, what gnashing of teeth, when God arises to execute due judgment on His foes!

6. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

In spite of earth's malignant rage, God manifests His King. He called His Son to be the heir of all things. Upon His shoulder supreme government is laid. His hand receives the scepter of universal reign. He announces, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Who can resist? Who can withstand? Our Jesus is God's King—by choice, by appointment, by will, and by sovereign decree. Now He spiritually sits enthroned on Zion's holy hill. *He reigns supreme in every true believer's heart.* He is invited by rejoicing love. Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, O portals of my soul, and the King of glory shall come in. He enters, and all heaven follows in His train. He enters, and establishes the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This present reign on Zion's holy hill is now open to the eye of faith.

But the day quickly comes when Jesus' throne shall be universally conspicuous. The wicked cannot hinder. Their rage can interpose no barrier. God has spoken. It must be. It must soon be. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously."

7. "I will declare the decree; the Lord has said unto me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You."

Oh, wondrous thought! Before the birth of time, eternal councils willed the well-being of man. A covenant of grace was firmly made. We live in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Jesus, in His love for souls, in tender zeal to fill our hearts with joy, and to cause streams of peace to flow, announces the decree. By His Spirit He unfolds it. In His Word He writes the record. Here He displays important articles.

It was decreed that honor should await Him as God's co-eternal Son. For a brief period His deity was hidden. In outward appearance He differed little from the sons of men. Occasionally heavenly rays broke forth; but the sun's brightness was eclipsed. Thus, as man, He suffered and died. The resurrection-morn arrives. He strides forth the mighty conqueror of death and hell. The glorious rising has a glorious voice. With trumpet-tongue it tells the wondering world, Jesus is God's Son! this day removes all doubt! this day unveils Him! The Father has begotten Him—Another morn will brightly shine. Greater manifestations rapidly come on. Amid all glory Jesus will be shown again as God's co-equal, co-eternal Son. Who then can shake His kingdom's firm supports?

8. "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession."

Another article of the covenant is stated. Christ's kingdom shall exceed all bounds. The outcast heathen shall bend the knee. Earth's uttermost extent shall call Him Lord. But this shall be in answer to His prayer. In heaven the Son shall prosecute His entreaty. With supplication He shall urge His claims. His pleading shall recite His part performed—the ransom paid—the kingdom bought—all hindrances removed. He shall thus ask, and He shall thus obtain. Blessed Jesus, extend Your wounded hands! Let not the Father rest until earth's length and breadth shall own Your rule!

9. "You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

The covenant, moreover, states that all Christ's enemies shall lick the dust. Hate may continue. Opposition may oppose. But oh! how vain! Behold His might. A rod of iron is wielded by His hands. It breaks and cannot be withheld. Opposing strength is brittle as the potter's clay. He strikes, and it lies shattered atoms. Thus shall His kingdom trample down all foes.

10. "Be wise now, therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth."

But wrath yet *lingers*. Space for repentance is given. Let it be duly used. A warning voice arrests earth's great ones in their mad career. It bids wisdom to awake, and sit submissively at Jesus' feet. The truest sage is a meek learner in the school of grace. To know Christ truly is the crown of knowledge.

11. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Knowledge leads surely in the paths of *service*. Gospel-obedience is a blessed walk. It is the happy union of all grace. Strictest submission goes hand in hand with filial reverence. The cup of joy is mixed with tenderest dread of error. Love fears. Fear loves. Joy trembles, and trembling is glad.

12. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

Mercy still warns. It points to Jesus. It exhorts to give Him homage, because it is His due—to worship Him to whom all praise belongs—to love Him who has so loved us as in our stead to die. It forbids delay. Until our hearts be wholly His, we totter on destruction's brink! *One spark* of kindled wrath excludes forever from salvation's way. What, then, will be their doom against whom *wrath in full fury* blazes?

Sweet melody concludes this hymn. It speaks of blessedness. It tells where true happiness now and forever dwells. It is in faith. Faith is the saving and the happy grace. It tightly clings to Christ. It trusts Him at all seasons for all things. Oh! may this blessed state be ours. Truly blessed it is!

PSALM 3

Foes without number press upon the speaker. Prayer is his refuge. Calmly he sleeps. His fears are gone. Speak, Lord, that thus our hearts may ever rest.

1. "O Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!"

The first scene shows the monarch flying from his heartless son. Absalom advances with rebellious hosts. The outcast father looks upon the swelling billows of foul treason. Increasing numbers hunt his life. He sees, and he appeals to God.

Here, also, our Jesus may be heard. The powers of darkness are combined. Hell and its legions terribly assail. Wicked men do their worst wickedly. On all sides troubles multiply. Many voices cry "Crucify." The servant follows in the suffering path. The true believer often will but moan.

2. "Many there are who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."

Affliction has the aspect of *desertion*. Many reason that God's favor surely would disperse these clouds—His voice could quickly scatter all the ills. David thus persecuted seems to be cast off. Here is *the scoff of Calvary*. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him. The thieves also, who were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth."

3. "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of my head."

In darkest days faith shines with brightest glow. In the wild storm it looks to God and sings. No weapon can succeed against it. God, even God Himself, surrounds His children as a shield. The shaft

which touches them must pierce through God! Welcome, also, reproach and ridicule and scorn. No disgrace can soil their name. They are renowned among the sons of men. Their glory is their God. No billows can submerge them. God, even their own God, lifts up their heads. From deepest waters Jesus rose to God's right hand. Where the Head is, there too shall the members be.

4. "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill."

The voice of the insulting foe may loudly cry; but faith outcries. It has direct admission to the courts above. The blood-bought way is ever open. The interceding *Spirit prompts* the appeal. The mediating *Son presents* it. The *Father* on His throne *receives* it. Heaven opens, streams of answering blessings flow down. No case is desperate to him whose call can bring almighty to his aid. Here is our Jesus. In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.

5. "I laid down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me."

The battlefield and the besieged fort present no downy couch. The alarms of war invite not to repose. But GOD is a pillow to the head of faith! David lies down, His sleep is sweet. He arises with renewed strength. But deeper truth sounds in these words. Jesus calmly falls asleep. The new-made grave receives Him to its bed. On the third day He casts off sleep. He appears and testifies, God did not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. So, also, believers fall asleep in Him. Short is the night of death. Soon shall they awake and shout, "O grave! where is your victory? O death! where is your sting?"

6. "I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround
me on every side."

Faith is a fearless grace. It has quick ears to hear the voice of Heaven. It quickly catches the often repeated word, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God." Let man come on, boastful of numbers, and vain-glorious in the arm of flesh; faith meets the hosts, strong in the Lord, making mention only of His name. The victory is sure. Jesus never lost a battle. No follower of His will ever fall.

7. "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for You have smitten all my enemies upon the jaw; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly."

Grace marvelously works. It begets fearless confidence. And confidence begets increasing prayer. Trust knows no fear, and shuns presumptuous indolence. It grows more importunate in prayer. It gives no rest to God. It knows its safety; and therefore it cries, "Save me, O my God." Past experience supplies both arguments and hope. You have brought shame and confusion on all vaunting foes; therefore, now arise and save.

8. "Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessing is upon Your people."

Triumphant is the final chorus. It tells of God rich in salvation. Salvation is His property. He willed it. He provided it. He holds it. He gives it according to His sovereign purpose. It is deliverance from every peril. It is exaltation to the heights of heaven. His blessing ever rests upon His people. It gives them all things and never fails. Lord, save us, and we shall be saved. Bless us, and we shall be blessed! Amen.

PSALM 4

This psalm begins with prayer. Solemn admonition and earnest entreaties follow. Then the believer's chief good appears in contrast to the lot of the ungodly. May that chief good be richly ours!

1. "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness; You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

Acquaintance with God brings mighty help to prayer. Strong arguments flow from experience. "You are my righteousness" is a prevailing motive. The believer stands pardoned through grace, and richly robed in Jesus' merits. One with Christ, he appears as free from guilt as God's own Son. He, also, can boldly point to past deliverances. Many had been his difficulties, but the chains were loosened, and God set him free. He thus gains courage for urgent prayers, and he learns the art of winning mercies. He plies it well.

2. "How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?"

True grace is pitiful of sin's mad ways, and seeks occasion to remonstrate. The service of God is glory. The wicked scorn it as contemptible. What folly can be worse! Their hearts delight in this world's empty bauble. They greedily pursue a mocking shadow. Wisdom expostulates, How long! When will such madness have an end!

3. "But know that the Lord has set apart him who is godly for Himself. The Lord will hear when I call unto Him."

There is a truth which annihilates such folly. God has a chosen seed. Eternal destination marks them as His own. They are godly because the Spirit seeks and calls and works most mightily within them. They are severed from the world as wheat from chaff, as gold from dross, as sheep from goats, as jewels from the quarry's dust. They are distinguished with most precious grace, especially with the gift of prayer. They often call, and never call in vain. Know this, O sons of men, and cease your fruitless opposition.

4. "Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

Wise precepts here instruct. Ponder the greatness, the majesty, the power, the glory of Jehovah. Tremble in awe of His almighty. Let holy dread repress each rebel thought. His arm is raised against all sin. Flee sin, then, as most sure destruction. Search the recesses of your treacherous hearts. Detect their secret whispers. Nip evil in its earliest bud. In still retirement, in night's tranquil hours, become acquainted with yourselves. Thus learn the happy art of checking wicked words. Become expert in silence.

5. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."

In worship let all formality be unknown. Outward service is vain show except the heart and all its powers grow warm. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Do not trust in your holiest acts. Sin soils them all. Your best is worth nothing! No, rather, it is a filthy rag before God's eyes. When all is done, your trust must be in God's tender mercy, in forbearing grace, in pardoning love, in the atoning blood. There is no hope for man but in the work of Christ.

6. "There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us."

The restless worldling is ever craving and is ever void. Conscious of inward emptiness, he seeks contentment which he never finds. The flowers plucked soon wither in the hand. The sigh is frequent, "Ah! that I knew where happiness resides!" Believers know that all delights are in God's smile, in a sense of His reconciled love, in His abiding favor, in the sight of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the joy of joys, the heaven of heavens. For this incessant prayer should be made. Shine, gracious Lord! Cause darkness to flee

far away! Let Your bright beams bring light and floods of peace. May we ever revel in the rich joy of the Gospel's tidings!

7. "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and *their wine increased.*"

Let the world scorn. Believers are the happy men. David's experience is their common lot. Their happiness is inward—the heart is its seat—it is implanted by God. It is real, substantial, and abiding. It laughs to scorn the transient merriment which earth's plenty gives. Excitement may follow the abundant harvest; revelry may exult in the luxuriant vintage; but the flare is momentary, and sinks in gloom. It is from earth, and earthly. The joy of the Lord is like the Giver—pure, perfect, and eternal.

8. "I will both lay down in peace and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety."

How sweet is the peace resulting from God's smile! No rage of earth or hell can ruffle it. In all disquietudes it is unmoved repose. What God bestows, no power can disturb. His gift is safety. Safe then are His people. Such is the Spirit's teaching in this psalm. May our hearts be able to respond, 'Our glad experience attests these truths!'

PSALM 5

Faith prays, knowing that wrath will overwhelm God's foes, and mercies crown the righteous. May prayer be thus stirred up in us!

1, 2. "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation. Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for unto You will I pray."

By varied terms the Spirit shows the varied exercise of prayer. Sometimes words flow in ready utterance. Sometimes deep feeling

finds no vent; the spirit groans but cannot express. Sometimes the voice swells in agonizing cries. But *prayer in every form ascends to heaven*. May prayer in every form be our delight! Prayer, also, lays hold of God by all His gracious names. These names are all revealed to strengthen faith. Faith is well skilled to use them. Give ear, O Lord. Hearken, my King, my God!

3. "My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up."

Surely our earliest thoughts should rise to heaven, our earliest words should speak to God. Happy the life when every day begins with Him! The First should have our first employ. Let not the world intrude until our God has been reverently worshiped. As arrows from the bow, let early prayers fly swift to heaven. Let, also, *watchfulness* follow, waiting to catch the accepting smile, and to acknowledge the returning blessings.

4, 5, 6. "O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the slightest sin. Therefore, the proud will not be allowed to stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil. You will destroy those who tell lies. The Lord detests murderers and deceivers."

Let us remember that in prayer we draw near to the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. The court is holy; the unclean may not enter. Ponder the holiness of Him whom praying lips address. Sin in its every form is hateful in His sight. The very angels have no worthiness before Him. Blessed Jesus! we would draw near, cleansed in Your blood, fair in Your beauty, spotless in Your merits, righteous in Your righteousness.

Here, also, we have sin painted in diverse colors. The monster shows most hideous shapes. Words heaped on words describe its utter vileness. Are the ungodly wicked? Sin is wickedness. Is evil to be abhorred? It is evil. Is foolishness meet for contempt? It is folly.

Is iniquity most base? It is iniquity. Is murder monstrous? It is blood-stained. Is craft a vice? It is deceit. This catalogue appalls. This character is ours by nature. As such we could not rightly pray. Happy if we can add, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

7. "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; and in Your fear I will worship toward Your holy temple."

True worship bends in lowliest humility. It comes crying for mercy to blot out misery, and it sees a multitude of mercies outnumbering the multitude of sins. To count our sins surpasses all our powers. But where sin abounds God's mercy far exceeds.

True worship trembles at the majesty of God, but it is bold. Its eye is fixed on the appointed place where God has promised to come down and meet. This place is our most precious Jesus. We bless You, O our God, for our true mercy-seat, our real throne of grace.

8. "Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness, because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face."

The believer knows that hostile eyes observe his walk, malignant to expose each erring step. His refuge is in prayer. He supplicates almighty guidance. He desires a heaven-high course. Lead me in Your righteousness. Help me to see Your way. He would walk on earth as in the courts above.

9. "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue."

The picture shows the falseness of this hollow world. Intense iniquity pervades the heart. The mouth is opened to destroy. Their

words are deathful darts. They bristle with destruction. The viper's poison lurks beneath their tongues. May we be followers of Him whose lips were grace!

10. "Destroy them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against You."

These words are free from slightest tinge of vengeful malice. Their inmost breathing is divine. The believer sees the coming wrath. He knows God's vengeance will descend. God's honor must be vindicated; God's glory must shine forth in just perdition of rebellious foes. The believer rises into oneness with his God. He exults and triumphs in the final overthrow. Perfect love in heaven will sing, "Just and true are Your ways, O King of saints."

11, 12. "But let all those who put their trust in You rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will compass him as with a shield."

We turn from bitter anguish to joy in overflowing tide. The saints appear in *triple phase*. They trust, they love, they walk in righteousness. *Triple mercy* meets them. God is their defense; He makes them rich in blessing; His favor is their all-surrounding shield. A *triple exhortation* sounds, but all the notes combine in one. Rejoice; forever shout for joy; be joyful in your God. May inward testimony prove our right to rejoice in the Lord always, and again and again to rejoice!

PSALM 6

Here godly sorrow changes into godly joy. May we so mourn that we too may be comforted!

1. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your anger, neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

Seasons recur when sense of sin and bodily distress cast into lowest depths. God's anger threatens to descend in fury. The furnace of displeasure seems to burn terribly. If faith shall fail, despair must overwhelm the soul. But amid terrors faith survives; it knows its refuge and looks above. It doubts not that God still loves. When frowns most darken on His brow it pleads, 'Let not this chastening destroy; let not the flames devour.'

2. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed."

The fainting flesh shows sympathy. The anguish preys upon the total frame. Sickness of soul reduces every power. Prayer is redoubled. Incessant cries besiege the throne of grace. *Misery calls mercy to arise.* Disease implores the heavenly healer's aid. Blessed is the anguish which flees thus to God.

3. "My soul is also sorely vexed; but O Lord, how long?"

Sorrow of soul is sorrow's fullest cup. All other bitterness is light beside it. The mourning days drag heavily; no dawn appears to chase away night's shade. The moan is heard, "How long, O Lord! how long?" He who would read the deepest lessons of these words must go with Jesus to the garden and the cross. By imputation He is made the sin of sin. Mountains on mountains of iniquity meet on Him. Unspeakably tremendous is the load; unspeakably tremendous is the wrath incurred. His own consent received the vicarious guilt. Just anger thickens round Him. He feels the horrors of His place. Prostrate in misery, He cries, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Anguish cries, "My God, my God! why have You forsaken Me?" The curse may not spare Him. Great is the mystery, but it is our salvation.

4. "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; Oh save me for Your mercies' sake."

The sweetest joy is holy fellowship with God. It is heaven's foretaste to see His smile and hear the whispers of His love. To realize this oneness is faith's privilege. But when this presence is withdrawn, when mists obscure this sun, the soul can find no other comfort. There cannot be a substitute for God. There is no rest while sad desertion lasts. It is perdition's wretchedness. The sinking soul craves mercy. It agonizes; "Return, deliver, save!"

5. "For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who shall give You thanks?"

There is fear lest sorrow's weight should snap the thread of life. Then means to tell of God's love, to speak of Christ, to sound His praise, to call poor sinners to His cross, to spread abroad His power to save, forever cease. Let us prize and sedulously use continued health and length of days. They are a precious talent. In bringing others to salvation's road, we rise in heaven ourselves.

6, 7. "I am worn out from sobbing. Every night tears drench my bed; my pillow is wet from weeping. My vision is blurred by grief; my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies."

The picture of the sin-frightened soul becomes more dark. Outward expressions of deep woe abound; sighs rack the heart; tears flow in copious streams; luster no longer sparkles in the eye; this bitter grief writes old age on the brow. We see how terrible an enemy is sin. When viewed apart from Christ, it is intolerable woe. What must it be in hell! Let us bless Christ with every breath. He is the Lamb of God, who takes it all away.

8, 9. "Depart from, me, all you workers of iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer."

The scene is changed. Light brightly shines; the shades of night have vanished. Mercy descends with healing on its wings. The groans are exchanged for songs of joy. We see the all-prevailing power of prayer. In darkest days let it take heaven by storm. It grasps Jehovah's arm. It clings until all blessings are given. Renewed favors strengthen the confidence that foes shall not prevail. Away! depart! you cannot lay me low. No business will I have with you. Answers to prayer stir up resolves to persevere. The suppliants who prosper are encouraged to pray more. Success begets continuance.

10. "Let all my enemies be ashamed and sore vexed; let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

The Spirit here gives comfort to all harassed saints. The language is prophetic. It runs through time; it shadows out the final scene. Shame and vexation are treasured up for the ungodly. They sowed the seeds of evil; they must reap the harvest of confusion. It is hard to kick against the goads. The concluding words delightfully reveal our Lord. We see manifestations of His power and triumphs. Before His eye His enemies quail and fall backwards. In His extremest anguish an angel flies to raise and strengthen. Soon will the universe be witness to the mandate, "Depart, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." May we so suffer with Him, that we may reign together.

PSALM 7

David, stung by unjust reproach, appeals to God. He prays and foresees future judgment. The end is praise. When slanders fly around may we be similarly calm.

1, 2. "O Lord my God, I put my trust in You; save me from all those who persecute me, and deliver me; lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver."

David had felt the persecuting rage of man. In peril of life he often fled. Trembling, he had cried, "There is but a step between me and death." The enemy had pursued, athirst for blood, mad as the wildest beast of prey, with fangs extended to rend his limbs to atoms.

To this day malicious fury raves in sinful hearts. If no restraining barriers had interposed, all people of God would long since have been swept from earth. But when cruelty reviles, they know their stronghold. Their God is their high fortress of defense. They enter and are safe.

3, 4, 5. "O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there is iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil to him who was at peace with me; (yes, I have delivered him who without cause is my enemy;) let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yes, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay my honor in the dust."

Pure conscience gives enlargement at the throne of grace. He can lift up the head who knows that every charge is false. David was pure of guilt towards Saul. He never sought to hurl him from his throne. He planned no traitorous plots; he sowed no seeds of insurrection. Far otherwise. When in the providence of God his cruel foe was helpless in his hands; when one blow would have crushed persecution, he would not strike. He cut off the mantle and bore off the spear to prove his power to slay—his generosity to spare. Thus conscious of innocence, he appeals to God. Here Jesus shows Himself to faith's adoring eye. His walk on earth was perfect purity and perfect love. His one work was to scatter blessings and do good. But enmity could not be softened. Hate causeless was hate furious. He meekly testifies, "They hated Me without a cause; they laid to my charge things that I knew not of." The servant must not expect an easier lot. The more clearly he reflects his Lord, the more bitterly will hatred rage, and viler will be falsehood's accusation. *Innocence does not stop man's mouth, but it gives bold access to the ears of God!*

6, 7. "Arise, O Lord, in Your anger; lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies; and awake for me to the judgment that You have commanded. So shall the congregation of the people compass You about; for their sakes therefore return on high."

Troubles last long that grace may more abound. The greater anguish kindles increased prayer. Importunity becomes more urgent. Heaven is assailed with cries that God would no longer seem indifferent, but awake, arise, and put on anger as a mantle. He is reminded of the known decree that judgment shall avenge His people and destroy rebellious foes. In all desires of execution of just wrath, faith's eye regards God's glory. When the Lord's wrathful arm is seen, His people will encircle Him with shouts of praise. Their sanctified joy will burn more brightly. Therefore, for their sake God is implored to show Himself on His high throne of power.

These words cast light on this world's final scene. Judgment is indeed arranged. Irreversible decree demands it. Our Jesus will appear as Judge. A high tribunal will be His glorious seat. His ransomed flock will all be gathered round Him. He comes to be glorified in His saints and admired in all those who believe. Where, then, will persecutors stand? Oh! that the Spirit would arrest their course and bring them as lowly suppliants to the saving cross; for soon the day of mercy will be fled.

8. "The Lord shall judge the people; judge me, O Lord, according to my *righteousness*, and according to my integrity that is in me."

True religion is strictly personal. It looks inward; it diligently probes the heart. It deals rigidly with motives and with ways; it prays God to observe and judge. So David, conscious of righteous dealing towards Saul, prays that favor may regard him. This plea is quite consistent with deep sense of sin and consciousness of all shortcomings towards God. *Low in deepest guilt before omniscient holiness, we may be free of injury towards man.* May this sweet

consciousness enable us to lift up the head, and boldly seek God's aid!

9. "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just; for the righteous God tries the hearts and reins."

Sights and sounds of evil are anguish to a pious heart. They pain him, because they are abhorrent to his new nature. He turns from them as images of Satan; he loathes them as rebellion against God. Hence he burns with desire that they may be repressed. Hence he wearies heaven with cries that God would drive iniquity into outer darkness. No faithful prayer ascends in vain. Doubtless in answer to such cries much evil is restrained. God's servants are maintained, and grace is kept as a little candle in the world's deep gloom.

But evil will not die until our Lord returns. Then shall the wickedness of the wicked reach its end. Faith waits expectantly for the blissful reign; it visits in anticipating thought the new heavens and the new earth. Throughout heaven there is no form of sin; its hideous features are forever gone; the reign of righteousness has come. Each heart is holy; each look reflects God's image; every sound is pure. All is transcendent happiness, for all is holiness. No evil will pollute the glorious scene. God's discerning eye will then have parted light from darkness. Outside is sin and all sin's slaves; within is the Lamb's bride, all glorious in her robes of white!

10. "My defense is of God, who saves the upright in heart."

How safe are those whom God's shield covers! No weapon wounds them. Satan's darts fall harmless at their feet. They live through all assaults, and they shall live forever. But their own arm brings no defense. They are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Their character is as clear as their protection is secure. Through grace their hearts are wholly changed. Uprightness is their one delight; uprightness is their constant path.

11, 12, 13. "God judges the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready. He has also prepared for him the instruments of death; He ordains His arrows against the persecutors."

Pledges are added to pledges that the righteous have God to vindicate their cause. Faith treasures up these glad assurances, and gains strength and joy. There is no day nor hour in which God's anger against sin does not burn. But there is respite. Forbearance checks the final blow. The wicked yet may turn; he may abjure his vile rebellion. He may break Satan's yoke; he may seek mercy. In penitence and shame he may flee humbly to the Savior's cross. But if he will not turn, there is no hope. Destruction is then most sure. The Spirit gives a faithful picture of God ready to destroy. He stands in all the might of omnipotence. His arm uplifts His glittering sword; the edge is sharpened for resistless work. Other weapons are prepared. He holds His bow bent for execution. All instruments are ready, and all barbed with death. His arrows are prepared for action. The persecutors are the target to be pierced. Who can hear this and fail to flee for shelter to the wounds of Jesus!

14. "Behold, he travails with iniquity, and has conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood."

The faithful Word reveals the evil man. His inner man is all iniquity; it is the offspring which he bears. As deadly waters flow from noxious founts; as poison berries grow on toxic trees; so sin in all shapes flows from him. Plots of mischief are conceived; plans of falsehood are nurtured. They come to birth, they start to life, to fill the world with misery, and to blacken earth with crime. They are of their father the devil, and all their words and works savor of hellish origin.

15, 16. "He made a pit, and dug it, and has 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 head."

The unsaved labor hard to work their own destruction. Their feet are caught in their own net. Into their own pits they fall. They sharpen weapons mainly to wound themselves. Their arrows shot upwards fall back on their own heads. Goliath's sword severs his head. Haman hangs on his own gibbet. Adonibezek laments, "As I have done to others, so God has requited me."

Dogs lick the blood of Jezebel in the place where she had slain Naboth. Eliphaz records a common experience, "I have seen that those who plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same." The man who rends the oak may be destroyed by its fall.

17. "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high."

The end comes on. It is all joy to the redeemed. They sing; they sing aloud; they sing forever. The praises of the Lord are their incessant and unwearied song. They laud Him according to His righteousness.

At present they give praises from their inmost souls; but oh, how dull their hearts! how weak their voice! how poor, how meager, their most lively efforts! Their harps are tuneless; their best melody lacks life. They turn with shame from their best attempts. They do not reach the very outskirts of their theme. But when they reach their home, their songs are commensurate with Jehovah's glorious name. They praise the Lord according to His righteousness. May this delight be ever ours!

PSALM 8

God's name is excellent in all His works, but especially in Christ. O God! reveal Your name to us. The Spirit, who gave these words, gives their interpretation by the lips of Jesus and an Apostle.

1. "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens."

How precious is the right of faith to claim an interest in God! It would be vain to say that the Lord is Lord unless we could annex, "O Lord our Lord." But in His own Son God gives Himself to us. Each true believer may exult, "This God is our God forever and ever."

What thought can grasp God's glory! Its dazzling brightness defies the sight of mortal eye. Its breadth and length, its depth and height, exceed all space. It more than fills the universe and soars above the heaven of heavens. None less than God can grasp this knowledge. But earth is chosen as the favored spot of wondrous revelation. His name is here made manifest in the face of Jesus Christ. Throughout earth's wide expanse His name is gloriously sounded. All other knowledge fades in comparison. We stand amazed at the surpassing excellence!

2. "From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise because of Your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger."

We do not know what circumstance in David's life prompted these words, but our minds revert to a most interesting scene. In Jerusalem young children throng our blessed Lord. Tender voices raise the shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Jesus reminds the angry priests that the cry was prefigured in their Scriptures. "Have you never read, Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have ordained praise?"

We see, also, this word inscribed on the Gospel's mighty course. How poor, how weak, how feeble in themselves are the messengers of grace! They go forth as infants against hosts of giants, as David against Goliath. Against them the wit, the learning of the world combine in strong array. The Gospel's voice seems tiny to compete, but it prevails. The idols of the world succumb. The most clever arguments of vain philosophy, the mightiest efforts of conceited reason, the Dagon's of skill and learning lick the dust. The enemy is stilled. Opposing lips are mute. There is a power in God's own truth, proclaimed by feeblest lips, before which Satan and his legion and all the disputants of earth must ever quail. Let no true minister of Christ complain that he is weak. He is strong in speech whom God instructs. He will prevail by whose mouth the Spirit deigns to utter truth.

3, 4. "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You visit him?"

When we uplift our eyes to the sparkling canopy of a clear night, what wonders excite admiration! The moon revolves in brilliant majesty. Countless orbs, each perhaps the center of its own system, stud the expanse with luster. What must their great Creator be! How far that power must surpass conception which willed them into being!

But, marvel of marvels! that great power looks with tender care on man! Low as he is, and vile and base, and stained with all iniquity, yet God loves him, ever tends him with most watchful eye, and visits him with all the blessings of salvation!

But Jesus is seen here. He is pre-eminently the Son of man. He is born one of our family, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. As such, He condescends to our low level. He is made in all points like us, sin only excepted. As such, He needed heavenly aid. As such, He

was upheld and supported during His earthly course, and borne victorious through all His trials.

5, 6, 7, 8. "For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas."

The decree names Jesus as the heir of all things. When He arose from deepest depths of degradation, He proclaimed, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." And in a little while, His glorious kingdom will be established here, and earth, with all who breathe life's breath, the total universe, with all that it contains, shall own His sway. In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow; every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In this our present tabernacle we groan, being burdened, looking for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior. May we by faith and prayer and every holy grace hasten His coming! Then will the chorus swell with rapturous praise through all the redeemed earth—

9. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth."

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

PSALM 9

Fervent praise acknowledges God's help and righteous judgments. Prayer follows for continued favors. May we thus praise! May we thus pray!

1, 2. "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High."

The Lord is worthy to be praised with all our energies, with all our powers, in every pulse of our affections, in every movement of our minds, in all places, and at all times. Heaven is unwearied praise. Earth would be heaven begun, if our whole hearts were wholly tuned to praise. It is our duty, and it should be our chief joy, to tell aloud God's wondrous works. But ah! how weak are our best efforts! Where shall we find beginning? Where shall we find an end?

Eternal love joyed in us before the worlds were framed. Goodness and mercy have followed us from the cradle to this hour. Christ died for us. Christ lives for us. Christ soon will come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also. Let us praise with our whole hearts. Let us be glad and rejoice in Him!

3, 4, 5. "When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence. For You have maintained my right and my cause; You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever."

Have not believers every cause for joy? They have foes around and they have foes within. Against these foes their own strength is as nothing; but God is their victory. He arises to their help. His presence crushes opposition. He does all for us, and we bless His name. *Present deliverance* is a pledge of the *coming triumph*. A day draws near when on our Lord shall sit on His glorious throne. This throne is based on righteousness. From it all righteous judgment will go forth. On it the rightful cause of believers will be maintained. Their cause is good. It cannot be disputed. They claim their pardon on the plea that all their debt is cancelled in Christ's blood—that all demands of justice are satisfied in Him. They ask for heaven on the

ground that they are clothed in divine righteousness, and fitted in Christ for the marriage supper of the Lamb!

6. "Endless ruin has overtaken the enemy, you have destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them."

The redeemed anticipate the devil's final fall. They are not afraid to confront him. They bid him mark, that as he destroyed, so now he is destroyed. They foresee his hateful work concluded, his destroying power broken, and his scepter forever shattered. Doubtless he wrought terrible destructions in the earth. He laid waste populous cities. He so utterly demolished them that no vestige could be found. As they were swept into oblivion, so the devil's empire shall forever perish.

7, 8. "But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgment to the peoples in uprightness."

What a glorious kingdom now follows! All rule, all authority and power, are now put down. God is enthroned the only Lord. His scepter is uprightness. Thus He shall reign forever and ever. Sin is forever annihilated. It can no longer disturb, or vex, or soil. The righteous God rules over a righteous world. His people shall be all holy. Holiness and love shall be on each brow. Holiness alone is the atmosphere of the new earth.

9. "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."

But until the restoration of all things shall arrive, oppression will not cease, and times of trouble will continue. The irreconcilable enemy will use each opportunity to malign, to vex, and to destroy. The prince of this world will hate the godly. His fiery darts will thickly fall.

But a ready refuge is at hand. That refuge is the Lord, and His shelter is impregnable. All acts of Satan are weak against it. He cannot force its barrier gates; he cannot scale its walls. Salvation is its ramparts; omnipotence is its strength.

10. "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You."

The knowledge of the Lord begets all confidence. It is ignorance which trembles. The name which manifests His glorious perfections annihilates distrust. We may, indeed, trust fully; for the Lord hates divorce.

Those whom He loves He loves to the end. In Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. The mother may forsake her nursing infant; the father may forget his first-born son; friend may abandon friend; but the Word stands forever sure, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Holy Spirit! show us more of this unchanging love!

11. "Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion! Declare His deeds among the *people*."

To the Old Testament church the Lord revealed Himself as seated between the cherubim on the mercy-seat. Christ is this seat to us. In Him we have constant access to our God, and always find a ready welcome. In Him we draw near to God, and He draws near to us. But the fullness of this truth will not be known until the glorious manifestation of the incarnate God; until He shall take His seat on the throne of David, and sit royally on Zion's hill. In knowledge of His present mercy, in forethought of His coming kingdom, let praise be ever on our lips. Let our constant utterance magnify His doings *past*, His doings *present*, and His doings in the *coming age*.

12. "For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless. He does not ignore those who cry to him for help."

This earth has drunk the blood of martyrs. Jesus bled on Calvary's tree. An apostate church is drunk with the blood of the saints. But will such wickedness escape unpunished? A disclosing day draws near. Then murderous hands will find that they were slaughterers of their own souls. Then shall the crown of martyrdom be found to be exceeding glory; then will it be fully seen that every mournful cry and every humble prayer of the afflicted saints made impression on the heart of God—were written there indelibly, fully to be answered in the appointed time. Faithful prayer can never be in vain.

13, 14. "Lord, have mercy on me. See how I suffer at the hands of those who hate me. Snatch me back from the jaws of death. Save me, so I can praise You publicly at Jerusalem's gates, so I can rejoice that You have rescued me."

How sweet it is in the full confidence of faith to place all troubles in the hand of God! Such prayer is very humble. *Mercy is ever sought in deepest consciousness of unworthiness.* There is confession that the gates of death endanger, unless deliverance is marvelously wrought.

Why do believers thus seek aid? Their ruling motive is, that with their renewed lives they may praise Him who thus delivers, and may by lip and life exalt His praise. *Renewed mercies deepen joy.* It is the constant song, "I will rejoice in Your salvation." The theme demands our loudest adoration. Let us go forth in spirit and anticipate the day when we shall join the countless multitude, and cry, "Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb."

15, 16, 17. "The heathen have 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 executes. The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations who forget God."

The final veil is here again withdrawn. The Spirit calls us to behold the wretched sinners' doom. They plotted ruin to the saints—in ruin they are overwhelmed. They craftily spread snares—they now are caught, and all escape is hopeless. Into a pit of deep and endless woe they sink. Their multitude is great—their numbers exceed calculation. But numbers vanish before God's might. They cast God from their minds—they would not think of His authority and power; but now they cannot fail to recognize His hand. The final execution proclaims His work. Over their prison-house there is inscribed, "A God forgotten is a God avenged. A God unknown in time must fearfully be known throughout eternity." Would that poor sinners, before it is too late, cease to kick against the goads! *Sin will recoil on sinful self.*

18. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever."

Times of trouble seem to have long course. Sighs often inquire, "When will this darkness cease—when will these sorrows end?" But a bright morn will surely dawn. The help expected will exceed all thought. No word will fail on which faith hopefully relied.

19, 20. "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men."

The cry is earnest. Fear seems to tremble lest God's cause should sink, and puny man stand conqueror. God tarries that the saints may stir Him up. Their supplications will be heard. The ungodly shall be taught that at their best they are weak flesh and blood. Their strength is nothingness before Jehovah's arm. It is mad folly for potsherds of the earth to strive against their Maker. May we be ever found one with our blessed Lord! May His cause be our cause! His victories our victories! His heaven our heaven! His throne our throne forever!

PSALM 10

The main feature in this psalm is the foul portraiture of evil. Prayer follows in full confidence that God will arise and judge. May the Spirit raise hatred of evil in our hearts!

1. "Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?"

There is much weakness in the strongest faith. It is prone to sink when billows swell and storms descend. Trials assume desertion's form. Darkness seems to imply that God cannot be near. The sun eclipsed seems gone forever. *But faith in weakest hours still prays,* and meekly questions, 'Why is it so?'

2. "The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."

The Spirit proceeds to draw a full-blown portrait of sin. The mask is withdrawn. The monster is dragged forth to light. The hideous features are revealed. The Spirit's pen cannot exaggerate. The dark colors are not too dark. The deep ingredient of the wicked heart is pride. This scorns the humble followers of the Lamb, and seeks to trample them beneath insulting feet. But often do oppressive schemes recoil, and plots involve self-ruin.

3. "For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhors."

In arrogance the wicked boasts that his desires shall prosper. And who can hinder him? He loves the hoarders of ill-gotten gains. In spite of God's abhorrence, they are his delight.

4. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts."

His haughty attitude vaunts independence. He does not stoop to study God's will. He is no suppliant at wisdom's gate. God is not the substance of each thought, but rather rashness says, "There is no God."

5. "Yet they succeed in everything they do. They do not see your punishment awaiting them. They pour scorn on all their enemies."

His every step insults both God and man. His dim eye grovels on the ground. It has no power to pierce the heavens and read God's will. His insolence condemns his foes.

6, 7. "He has 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."

In self-complacency he thinks prosperity must last forever, and evil days can never come. He cannot speak without floods of evil issuing forth. His words are open curses and insidious falsehoods.

8. "They lurk in dark alleys, murdering the innocent who pass by. They are always searching for some helpless victim."

Evil words lead on to evil deeds. He craftily devises murderous acts. He narrowly observes the poor and feeble, thirsting for their blood.

9, 10. "Like lions they crouch silently, waiting to pounce on the helpless. Like hunters they capture their victims and drag them away in nets. The helpless are overwhelmed and collapse; they fall beneath the strength of the wicked."

Sometimes as a beast of prey he crouches for a desperate spring; sometimes as a crafty huntsman he spreads entangling nets. By every art he seeks to execute his hateful plots.

11. "He has said in his heart, God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it."

False thoughts of God deceive him. Impunity persuades him that God disregards. He flatters himself that omniscience does not observe him.

12. "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Your hand; do not forget the humble."

These sights of sin impel believers to the mercy-seat. They turn away. They look above. They seek their God. They tell out their fears. They ask His help. They commit the persecuted to His care. They stir Him up to have them in remembrance.

13, 14, 15. "Why do the wicked condemn God? He has said in his heart, You will not require it. You have seen it; for You behold mischief and spite, to requite it with Your hand; the poor commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man; seek out his wickedness, until You find none."

How vain the atheistic thought that God sits still in unconcern! From His high throne He ponders all the ways of men. In right time He will avenge His honor. The helpless shall indeed be helped; the boastful arm of wickedness shall be shattered. All evil shall be dragged to light; no sin shall go unpunished.

16. "The Lord is King forever and ever; the heathen have perished out of His land."

Glorious light shines forth. The throne of God is set. He rules, He reigns, in majesty supreme forever. His enemies are all destroyed. Throughout the blissful realm no trace of evil can be found. His happy subjects now lift up the head. One shout is heard, Glory, glory to our God!

17, 18. "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear; to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

Good Lord, increase our faith in the power and prevalence of prayer! The eternal world will show that supplication never desired in vain. Grace prompts the desire, inspires the words, prepares the heart, and gives the full reply. When God comes forth to answer and to help, what can feeble flesh avail! It perishes forever. From this view of the wickedness of the wicked, their righteous doom, the glories of the coming kingdom, let us bless Him who has delivered us from the wrath to come, and called us to His kingdom and glory!

PSALM 11

Confidence relies on God when storms of trouble threaten. The terribleness of final judgment is revealed. May perfect shelter be our happy lot!

1. "In the Lord I put my trust; how can you say to my soul, Flee as a bird to your *mountain*?"

Happy the soul which calmly rests on God! He is a rock so firmly based and so exceeding high, that swelling billows dash in vain, and raging storms harmlessly beat. Feet planted on it are as safe as God is safe. His power is omnipotence. Who can upset it? His love can never change. His wisdom knows no bounds. His truth can never fail. Let us then trust Him, at all times, in all places, under all trials. Let us trust Him with our souls and bodies, for time and for eternity. Let us trust Him with all our matters and with all our friends. Safe in His arms we may defy all foes.

But they will taunt with sneering malice. They will exclaim, Make haste to flee. There is no safety but in flight. As the frightened bird

seeks refuge in the high and distant hills, so fly with rapid wing. To tarry is destruction. Tarry not.

2. "For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart."

Peril may be near. The wicked hate and plot—their bow is strong; their arrows ready; their eyes are watchful. If given the opportunity, their venomous shafts will inflict deadly wounds. Thus Jesus walked amid incessant snares. At every turn some ambush was concealed. What crafty questions spread entangling nets! So too it is each day with us. The enemy is ever near. Let us look up. Let our daily cry be heard, "In the Lord I put my trust."

3. "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The foundations of our trust are firm, and never can be moved. We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. What is the strong foundation of our trust? It is Christ. It is His glorious person, His deity and manhood indissolubly joined, His everlasting love, His finished work, His precious blood, His expiating death, His allatonning cross, His resurrection-might, His rule at the right hand, His never-ceasing intercession, His well-ordered providence, His coming kingdom, His eternal reign. How blessed, how encouraging, are these truths! Not one can be opposed, not one can disappoint. We may rest all our weight on them. They cannot sink. If any flaw could be discerned, if any weak part showed insecurity, we might indeed despond. But building on this solid base, we may indeed reject all taunts. We have a strong city. God has appointed Salvation for walls and bulwarks.

4. "The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men."

Ours is no visionary trust. Of old our God was present in the sanctuary. True worshipers might there approach and find that He

drew near to them. Christ is our mercy-seat. In Him we meet our God; in Him our God meets us. What then shall be our fear?

But more; our God sits high enthroned in heaven. He rules arrayed in omnipotent power. How safe are those who are protected by His arm! His eye sees every outward act and searches every inward thought. His people never are unseen. No darkness can conceal His foes. We may then confidently trust.

5. "The Lord tries the righteous; but the wicked, and him who loves violence, His soul hates."

Many are indeed our trials, but all are ordered for our good. Thus faith is tested; leaks in the vessel are discovered; sincerity is discerned; weak parts are strengthened; the walk becomes more close, more vigilant, and more strict. These probings are among our blessings. "Blessed is the man that endures trial, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." But all iniquity is hateful in His sight. His holy nature abhors sin.

6. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup."

They cannot escape just wrath. Their frightful doom is here portrayed. Mercy warns of this destruction, that men forewarned may flee to Christ. Images of agony are here combined. What Sodom and her plains foreshadowed is coming reality. A fiery deluge overwhelms its victim. A flaming lake engulfs. There is a cup which they must drink. The cup is hot to overflowing with all extremity and intensity of torment. Wrath has not yet gone forth. Let all who hear fly speedily to Christ.

7. "For the righteous Lord loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright."

Righteousness will execute what righteousness denounces. Justice maintains forever that rebels are thus punished. But saving smiles beam sweetly over the redeemed flock. God now beholds them in all love. They soon shall see Him in all glory. Holy Spirit! keep us ever in the light of His countenance.

PSALM 12

Fearing that the godly cease and the ungodly vaunt, prayer is made and confidence is professed in God's pure Word. Supported by such comfort, may we never fear!

1. "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

Amid the trials of this sinful world there is sweet solace in the company of holy men. Their counsel strengthens; their example cheers; their fellowship delights; their meek endurance teaches patience; their zeal excites to work. We joy in their joy; we gain grace from their grace. But they are not always near. We often shed tears beside their graves. It may be that adverse circumstances fix our dwellings where evil is most prevalent. Many have mourned this desolation. Lot's heart is vexed in Sodom. Elijah wails his lonely state. Jeremiah weeps in friendless solitude. Paul sadly writes, "Only Luke is with me."

But comfort is not linked to man. Faith can fly straight to heaven. Prayer can bring down the joy of joys, the presence of our God. The fervent cry, "Help, Lord," can turn earth's desert into smiling paradise. The saint feels that he is not alone when God is by his side. The heart is glad when Jesus holds communion.

2. "Everyone speaks vanity with his neighbor; with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak."

Where grace is absent insincerity prevails. Ungodly conversation has taint of unreality. The unconverted heart—the birthplace of all speech—is double. From an insincere source there must flow insincere words. Dissimulation within dissimulates without. Hatred and mischief, injury and wrong, fraud and oppression, are deeply plotted, while the look blandly smiles, and flattery conceals the base intent. Ah, world! ah, treacherous world! you are a truthless cheat!

3, 4. "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things; who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

Sad is the blinding power of sin. *Proud reason* dreams that independence is its heritage. It does not bow to God's sovereign rule. It claims a seat above the throne of God. It acknowledges no power superior to itself.

The true believer widely differs. He feels, I am not my own. I am bought by the precious blood of Christ. I gladly give myself, my all, my every word, my every work, to my Redeemer's cause. My highest honor is to be the servant of my glorious Lord. My noblest work is to act out His will. My happiest life is to serve Him. But these deceivers mainly deceive themselves. Flattering others, they are self-injuring. Their lips prepare their own destruction. The Lord hears, records, and will most surely punish. Wisdom proclaims, "By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

5. "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

The prayer ascends, "Help, Lord." The answer comes, "Now will I arise." *Prayer speedily brings heaven to aid.* God's eye never fails to observe the cruel treatment of His suffering saints. His ear receives each feeble breathing of His persecuted children. It was so when

Israel groaned in the Egyptian furnace. "I have surely *seen* the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have *heard* their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." In every age it has been so. It will be so until the reign of peace is sweetly settled. Until that day the world will see oppression working and deliverance checking.

6. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

While falsehood, deceit, and wrong abound in evil men, the faithful Word is near to comfort. No insincerity pollutes it. It is pure from all alloy, as silver perfectly refined. It has been the staff of many suffering pilgrims, and it never fails. It will sustain when other props are gone.

7. "You shall keep them, O Lord; You shall preserve them from this generation forever."

The Church has lived through every age, and still it lives. There have been times when signs of life were very feeble. The quivering spark has seemed almost extinct. The daughter of Zion has been left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. But God's power has not deserted them. They have been kept by His mighty power through faith unto eternal life. And safely they will be preserved, until they stand together a countless multitude in Emmanuel's land.

8. "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted."

It may be that earth's highest seats are occupied by the most reprobate men. A Pharaoh, a Herod, a Nero, may wield the tyrant's scepter; then vice and villainy will show unblushing front. On all sides wickedness will riot. Let us in such distress pour out the cry,

"Help, Lord," and the Lord will speedily arise. With such assurance, let us not despond!

PSALM 13

The soul long troubled here at last finds peace. Lord, may our faith never fall! Joy is at hand.

1, 2. "How long will You forget me, O Lord? forever? how long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall my enemy be exalted over me?"

Discipline is needed in the school of grace, and therefore it is not withheld. A loving Father orders it—a loving hand applies it. The purpose and the result are increase of grace. Lurking sins are thus detected. Weakness in faith's fabric is repaired. Secret foes are dragged to light and slain. Prayer and dependence and matured experience gain power. Fruits of righteousness are ripened. A shaken tree takes deeper root.

To effect this, tokens of God's presence are withdrawn. The much-loved smile smiles not. The tender whispers are no longer heard. Precious communion fails to cheer. The sighing spirit mourns desertion. It is as a forsaken dwelling. No ray of love illuminates the surrounding darkness. Fears whisper, 'God is forever gone.' Dreary days drag on their dreary length. In the morning there is the wail, "How long?" In the evening it is still, "How long?" The soul is much perplexed. Harassing doubts intrude. Questions arise. What is the purpose? When will be the end?

Thus daily sorrow is the daily bread. Thus grief and heaviness pervade the day. The cry is often repeated, "How long? how long?" Affliction deepens because the enemy appears to triumph. It is his joy when saints are sad. He rears his head when they lie low; his

cause is crowned when adversity fills their cup. This knowledge aggravates their misery. The cry continues, "How long! how long?" David is here. This is a path which his feet often trod. Each child of God is here. In this darkness they often walk. But above all, the Man of Sorrows is here too. There is no cup of anguish which His lips tasted not. These words anticipate the bitter cry, "My God, my God! why have You forsaken Me?"

3. "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

In every state faith has its sure employ. In darkest night, amid the howling storm, in dreariest solitude, in racking pains, from the whale's belly, in the battlefield, when the foes rush with overwhelming might, when hope seems hopeless, when all remedy is fled, when heaven seems closed, in agonies of death, in jaws of hell, it prays. *There is no state which excludes prayer.* There is no place without an access to the mercy-seat. Faith never forgets, The Lord is my God. I have a property in Him. Thus it can ever cry, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God." Relief and comfort are implored. The present gloom seems like an instant death. A ray of love is sought to give reviving light. The smile of God's countenance is desired to keep the eyes from closing in dark death.

4. "Lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved."

There is fear lest the enemy shall triumph, and the tottering cause of truth should fill the wicked with malicious joy. Thus David trembled; but his fears were visionary. Opposing foes could not detain him from the throne. Thus Satan seemed about to triumph when Jesus was dragged to trial and uplifted on the cross. Truth seemed about to fall and victory to crown hell's efforts. But how short the hope! The conquering Savior bursts detaining bonds. He rises omnipotent to vanquish all hell's arts and might. In Him His people live. In Him they will prevail. In Him they soon will sit on

thrones of glory. In Him they soon will place victorious feet on Satan's neck. Therefore we will trust and not be afraid.

5. "But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation."

God's mercy is sure ground of trust. It cannot fail. It is higher than the highest heavens. It extends throughout all space. Its one delight is to alleviate misery. Under its sheltering wings may we delightedly repose! Joy is ever ready to refresh the soul. But true joy does not grow in the field of earthly things. This fruit does not hang on carnal trees. It is not quaffed from goblets of wealth, and luxury, and worldly pleasures. It lives in a heavenly climate. It feeds and feasts on God's salvation. Is it not joy to clasp this boon to the heart, and to know assuredly, By grace am I saved, through faith, and that not of myself; it is the gift of God! By grace am I saved, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and the covering of His glorious righteousness. By grace am I saved, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

6. "I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me."

Joy is not silent. It lifts up the voice. It sends forth the incense of praise. It has a boundless theme. It tells of all God's dealings. They are infinite, even as God Himself. He gives until He can give no more. He spares not His only-begotten Son. He adds His Holy Spirit. Shall He not also freely give us all things? Let us now commence our endless song. Let us now strike the harp which never shall grow tuneless. Let us sing to the Lord, who has dealt bountifully with us. Help us, O God, the Holy Spirit!

PSALM 14

Inhabitants of the world are represented as lying in wickedness. But the year of the redeemed is foreshadowed. May we tremble at this sight of sin, and rejoice in the prospect of deliverance!

1. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is no one who does good."

The heart is the index of the man. Its language reveals the real character. If we could hear the secret whispers of the graceless heart, the sound would be but one. The godless think there is no being greater than themselves. Their conceit rejects divine supremacy. It scorns to yield to any yoke. Such men exist in fearful numbers. The faithful Word declares it, and moreover adds that they are fools. They pride themselves in higher wisdom; but their real place is maddest among the mad. Their light is utter darkness, their boasted wisdom is extremest folly. Atheism in heart is wickedness on the lip. The spring is impure; what can flow from it but poisonous waters! The tree is dead at core; the branches must be rotten. Their works, the offspring of their thoughts, are streams of abomination. They pollute the earth in which they are enacted. Hateful to God, they injure man. Are there not some bright exceptions? Not one by nature. There is no good but what the Spirit prompts. Where He is absent only evil dwells; and He is far from unregenerate men.

2. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who understand, and seek God."

We are directed to Jehovah on His heavenly throne. His piercing eye surveys the universe. It reads the secrets of every heart of every man. No thought escapes omniscient view. What is the concern of the all-pervading search? To ascertain whether all thoughts are turned to God—whether His knowledge is the prime pursuit—whether prayer asks for revelation of His will—whether His mind is

sought in the clear pages of His Word—whether His works are studied as emblems of His character. Thus to seek God is proof of wisdom. Let no man boast of understanding whose mind rejects this wise employment. God looks for this. What is His verdict?

3. "They have all gone aside, they have altogether become filthy; there is no one who does good, no, not one."

We read how things were before the Flood. The heart of graceless man is still the same. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. They wander far from paths of righteousness and truth; their feet are set in error's broad decline; their garments are sin-soiled. In God's sight their words are filth, and pollution in extreme defilement. Let us bless God that the blood of Jesus can cleanse from all such stains, and make us whiter than the whitest snow.

4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up My people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord."

Jehovah sees this universal evil, and now He speaks. The voice is strong admonition. It traces sin to the true source—ignorance. If truth were sought and seen, and loved and followed, how different would be man's walk! Men work iniquity because their minds are blinded. Evil breaks forth in persecution; but who are the persecuted? "My people," says the Lord. We hear the tender voice, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" The issue is the absence of all prayer. They call not upon the Lord. Here four foul marks of unregenerate man are shown—ignorance, iniquity, persecution, prayerlessness.

5. "There they are, overwhelmed with dread, for God is present in the company of the righteous."

But to the wicked there is no calm peace. Their minds are ill at ease. Clear tokens show that God is mighty in His people's midst. His

presence is their sure defense. God must lose His throne before they can be subdued. Nebuchadnezzar saw this and was astonished. He looked into the flaming furnace and exclaimed, "Look, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Well may they fear whose weapons are thus directed against God.

6. "You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge."

The godly make the Lord their refuge. He is the high tower to which they always fly. Beneath the shelter of His wings they seek protection. The persecutors sneer; they ridicule such trust. What! look for help to an unseen arm! Thus Jesus was reproached. But experience shows, in countless instances, that none seek God in vain.

7. "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

This frightful sight brings in a glorious dawn. Israel's long night shall cease. She shall arise and shine. Her light shall come; her tedious years of cruel thraldom shall reach a blessed close; her sons from distant lands shall return; her every promise shall have exact fulfillment. From Jerusalem the blessed tidings of salvation shall go forth. If the casting away of them has been the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead! Then indeed shall joy and gladness be the portion of Israel's sons. Then shall praise and thanksgiving ring throughout earth's length and breadth. Let us trust, and pray, and hope. Bright days shall come. Haste it, O Lord, in Your own time!

PSALM 15

Here is a beautiful picture of the holy man. Holy Spirit, mold us into this blessed form!

1. "Lord, who shall abide in Your tabernacle? who shall dwell in Your holy hill?"

Profession is not always real. Many may cry, "Lord, Lord," who shall at last be outcasts. Hence it is all-momentous to escape deception, and to know assuredly our state. Here is the question put. Here is the answer given. He who alone reads well the heart, He who discerns the wheat from chaff, hears the appeal and gives reply. Who then maintains communion with the Lord, who talks with God upon His mercy-seat, who shall forever dwell with Him in the new heavens and the new earth, who shall receive the welcome, "Come, you blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" Who will be Zion's inhabitants when the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and shall be their God?

The reply forbids mistake. God's people are all righteous. Holiness is written on their brow. Holiness pervades their heart. Holiness directs their steps, supplies their words, and is the very essence of their being. They are newborn by the Spirit's power. The divine nature is implanted. Let not, however, this decisive test mislead. Our holiness presents no title at God's bar; it blots out no sin; it pays no debt; it arrests not condemnation; it weaves no justifying robe; it presents no shadow of a claim. Christ, and Christ only, justifies; His blood alone can cleanse from sin; His death alone appeases wrath. His pure obedience, placed to our account, is the only robe for heaven. Holiness is not our title, but it is assuredly our character. It is the evidence before God and man that we are really Christ's. It is the test of union with the Lord; it is the proof that we are one with

Him. By *faith* we have an interest in Christ and all Christ's work. By *works* we prove that the gift of faith has been received. With earnest prayer that godliness may be our element of life and fitness for the new Jerusalem, let us now ponder the beautiful portrait drawn by the Spirit's hand.

2. "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart."

His walk is upright. His ear drinks in the mighty mandate, "Walk before Me, and be perfect." A constant effort restrains from devious ways. His delight is in the study of God's holy law, and his whole life demonstrates his effort to obey. His heart is sincere, and his lips give proof. Pure is the inward fountain, and pure the flowing stream.

3. "He who back-bites not with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor."

His tongue is strictly bridled. He hates the vile defaming which bespatters his neighbor's name. No injury to person or to credit proceeds from him. If evil whispers are addressed to him, they find a check. He propagates no scandal. His charity will cover sins however many.

4. "In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honors those who fear the Lord. He who swears to his own hurt, and changes not."

His estimate of men rests not on outward show. Where he sees signs of gracelessness he withholds respect, although riches and honor and the world's applause exalt the man. But true respect is given where God is feared. He holds that godliness is honor. His conscience swerves not from a pledge because performance may give trouble. Truthfulness, not self-interest, is his rule.

5. "He who puts not out his money to usury, nor takes reward against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved."

He knows that the love of money is the fruitful source of all evil. Therefore he never strives to gain by others' need. He shuns extortion. No bribe can tempt him to overreaching acts. Such are the principles which sway his heart. Such prove that he is Christ's, ruled by His law, moved by His love, treading in His paths, seeking His glory. And he shall not be moved. Amid the wreck of worlds, he is secure in Christ his Ark. He will stand when the white throne is set. His dwelling will be firm in realms of everlasting day. But who can try himself by this strict rule, and not be conscious of shortcoming? Who will not smite upon the breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Again, we bear in mind this righteousness is not our plea. If it were so we fail. It is our evidence, and though imperfect, it is true. Its imperfection drives us more to cling to Christ. He and He only is the essence of righteousness. All righteousness He fully wrought. He casts His glorious covering over all our failings. In Him we are completely justified. In Him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. O God, we thank You for Christ Jesus.

PSALM 16

To the believer there is much joy in present state. There is, also, bright hope of rising to eternal life. May this joy and hope be our abiding portion!

1. "Preserve me, O God; for I put my trust in You."

The Spirit draws aside the veil, and shows that Jesus is mainly present in this psalm. May we peruse it walking by His side, listening for His voice! He who was emphatically a Man of Sorrows was emphatically a man of faith. As such He was, also, a man of prayer. In all the trials of His low estate, the mind of Jesus rested on

His God. When perils came as a devouring flood, He looked upward for preserving aid. Happy the members who trust and pray in the meek spirit of their Head!

2, 3. I said to the Lord, "You are my Master! All the good things I have are from you. The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!"

Jesus professes that His inmost soul claims God as His God. Happy are our souls when they respond, O God, You are our God. The blessed state of God is perfect; it is infinite; the heaven-high pyramid cannot receive a higher stone. Redemption's work, which manifests His glory, cannot augment His bliss. Let not the foolish thought be ours that we can enlarge infinitude. We read the wondrous word, that from everlasting, Wisdom's delights were with the sons of men. In the days of Christ's flesh, the calm retreat of Bethany, the converse with His chosen followers, reflect this truth. Blessed be God, there still are saints on earth! Blessed are they who hold communion with them.

4. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips."

How prone is man to cast away the true and living God, and with deluded mind to rush to idol-worship! To multiply gods is to multiply sorrows. They are all devils, and their work is to torment. The godly man abhors their offerings, and spurns their very names. There was an offering of blood which Jesus offered; may we delight in it as all salvation.

5, 6. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage."

Our blessed Jesus more than walked patiently in all His path below. There was joy set before Him which gladdened His every step. In Christ God is our God forever. Can we desire more? *How rich is this portion!* How reviving is our cup! How can we bless His grace enough who has called us to this ennobling state? *Angels* are ours to guard us. *Providences* are ours to secure our bliss. The *God-Man's blood* is ours to wash out every sin. A *righteousness* is prepared to robe us for the courts above. *Heaven* is promised as our endless home. We have a goodly heritage.

7. "I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons."

Jesus bears the sweet name of Counselor, and sweetly does He execute His office. He sends His Spirit to admonish and gently to direct. This is His gracious work. To Him be all the praise. He adds instruction in times of silence and of solitude, when the world is far away. He visits the deep recesses of the heart. He communes with the secrets of the soul, and deeply writes His lessons of pure wisdom. Let us again say, "Bless the Lord."

8, 9. "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 rejoices; my flesh also shall rest in hope."

The mind of Jesus ever rested on God's will. He came to earth, He lived, He worked, He died to glorify His Father. He knew that God was ever by His side. He feared not the assaults of men or devils. His cause could never totter. He surely marched to triumph. Therefore in all His trials His heart was tranquil and His lips sang praise. He knew indeed that He must hang a dead man on the Cross; He must exhaust death's bitter cup. But His tomb was bright in prospect that the *dark bed* would soon be left. All His members share this trust. May this faith be largely ours! The eye that ever looks for God may ever see Him. He is ever near, and near to help. Can he be moved on whose right hand God stands?

10. "because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."

The Spirit here foreshows the glorious truth that death could not detain our Lord. Christ breaks the icy shackles; He leaves the short imprisonment. No corruption taints the sacred body. He stands again alive on earth. Infallible proofs demonstrate that He who was dead is now alive. Except the Lord's near coming should prevent it, we too must sleep the sleep of death. We are not screened from corruption. Decay will riot on these frames. But short will be death's triumph. The trumpet will sound. Corruption shall put on incorruption.

11. "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

The heart of Jesus was sustained by joys before Him; joys in His Heavenly Father's throne—joys which should have no end. Shall not we too lift up expectant heads? The voice of truth assures us, "The glory which You gave Me, I have given them." Thought staggers. Minds are narrow to embrace the bliss; but faith entirely believes. Hope bounds toward the fulfillment. Happy the hours which flow in meditation on fullness of joy and pleasures with God forevermore! To gaze on this glorious prospect is heaven begun. What will the reality bestow? Lord grant that we may quickly know!

PSALM 17

Abundant prayers are made. The end is confirmation of confidence. May we thus pray, and thus be comforted!

1, 2. "Hear the right, O Lord, attend to my cry, give ear to my prayer, that goes not out from deceitful lips. Let my sentence come forth from Your presence; let Your eyes behold the things that are equal."

Let us scan narrowly the character of true prayer. It wears no mask of truthless insincerity. It speaks not falsely with hypocritical pretense. It utters deep-felt truth from honest heart. Thus it wrestles like agonizing Jacob, and prevails. This boldness gains much strength from inward consciousness of uprightness.

He who secretly loves evil may pretend to pray, but he fails to pray. In strict exactness, no lips but those of Jesus could adopt these words. On earth He was as pure from sin as God in heaven. Truth was constrained to say, I find in Him no evil. But a great day is coming, when all believers shall thus plead before the judgment-seat. We shall crave justice, because in Jesus we have fulfilled each tittle of the law, because in Him we have endured each penalty. "Hear the right" will be a conquering cry. God will be just, and justify Christ-pleading sinners.

3, 4. "You have proved my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me, and shall find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, by the Word of Your lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer."

No man but the God-man could court omniscient scrutiny. We know this, and we adore Him; for His pure righteousness was wrought for us, and is imputed to us. But though sin is mixed with all we do, our every nerve should strive for righteousness without one flaw. Here the heart, the mainspring of the man, is uncovered before God. In times of darkness, when no mortal eye can see, and interruption cannot distract, close communion is held with God. He is invited to visit and to search. There is resolve that erring words shall not offend. A godly bridle shall restrain the lips. Grace from the *tongue* shall answer grace in the *heart*. The walk, also, shall be far from Satan's devious paths. His broad road is a downward path. He is the fell destroyer. All who are led by him go headlong into destruction's pit. The Spirit has supplied a perfect chart. His Book gives guidance for every word, for every work, at every moment, in all

circumstances. Feet planted on this rock can never fall. The students of Scripture will ever shine as lights. They will reach heaven's haven.

5, 6. "Hold up my goings in Your paths, that my footsteps slip not. I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech."

Purposes may be sincere and strong; but our own strength is utter weakness. The firmest staff of human growth is but a feeble reed. Grace must support us or we fall. The Spirit must enable or we fail. Hence prayer increases in intensity. *The more we grow in grace, the more we feel our need.* The more we climb the heavenward hill, the more we dread backsliding. Each advance makes us more fearful of decline. Hence the ripest saint is most intent in prayer.

7. "Show Your marvelous loving-kindness, O You who save by Your right hand those who put their trust in You, from those who rise up against them." Many rose up against our blessed Lord. From all He was delivered. He trusted and was not confounded. The same foes are ours. But let no fears depress us. We shall laugh all to scorn. But in the conflict, nothing so cheers as the sense of God's love. Moses prayed, "Show me Your glory." The reply was, "I will make all My goodness pass before you." His goodness is His glory. The sun at midday is a wondrous sight. How glittering are the countless rays! But the sun is darkness beside the effulgence of God's love. When it encircles and inspirits us, we are waived to victory's high ground. Let us often pray, "Show Your marvelous lovingkindness."

8, 9. "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked who oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me."

The *pupil* of the eye is the body's tenderest part. The slightest touch—a particle of dust—inflicts keen pain. Therefore skill and care elaborately screen it. Safeguards are multiplied around. Similar

is the care which saints implore. A promise is dispensed which tells that this care is ever near. The Lord in tender mercy cries, "He who touches you touches the apple of My eye."

Nature's most tender proof of *protecting love* is shown in the parent bird. When the storm threatens, or danger from some enemy appears, the little brood is quickly gathered, and extending wings are spread around them. They are so covered that no eye can see them; they nestle in warm shelter and are safe. This is fit emblem of God's guardian care. Hear the sweet voice of Jesus, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not." This prayer involves a promise of all help. Let faith often shoot these darts to heaven. Full answers will come down.

10. "They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance."

The faithful often plead the character of their foes. They are sensuous and carnal; they trench themselves in pleasures, indulgences, and vain-glory. Pride dwells within, and arrogance makes boast.

11, 12. "They track me down, surround me, and throw me to the ground. They are like hungry lions, eager to tear me apart—like young lions in hiding, waiting for their chance."

Intent to catch, they spread their nets around. Their stratagems and snares beset. With look demure, they seem to be harmless; but they are cruel as the ravenous lion, and crafty as the lion's whelp which springs from secret ambush. Such are the features of the persecutor.

13, 14. "Arise, O Lord! Stand against them and bring them to their knees! Rescue me from the wicked with your sword! Save me by your mighty hand, O Lord, from those whose only concern is earthly gain. May they have their punishment in full. May their children

inherit more of the same, and may the judgment continue to their children's children."

"Arise, O Lord; disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Your sword; from the men which are Your hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes."

Adopting this version, our minds receive a weighty lesson. We are taught that *the wicked are God's sword*; that the men of the world are His hand. The Spirit in other Scriptures has revealed the same. Of the *Assyrian* it is said that he is *the rod of God's anger and the staff of His indignation*. It is the Lord's voice, "You are my battle-ax and weapons of war; for with you will I break in pieces the nations, and with you will I destroy kingdoms." Thus evil passions are employed to chasten, to reprove, to keep us low, to do us good.

Thus Satan raging in man's heart is only instrumental to subserve God's ends. Man's violence and spite are overruled. They will accomplish the predetermined work; they little know their true design; they are real blessings, though disguised to God's own people.

But while they are employed to harass, the saints must pray; they must be suppliants for speedy help. "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him and cast him down." And we may plead the vile condition of our foes. They are of the earth and earthly; they seek no portion beyond this sin-soiled world; they glean abundance of its worthless husks; they feast on its unsubstantial pleasures; they amass its gilded baubles, and transmit their hoarded treasures to their babies.

15. "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness."

Contrast the true believer's lot. He loves to gaze on God's unclouded face. Clothed in pure righteousness, enrobed in beauty, compared with which the sun is pale, decked in perfection fit for the palace of the King, he will be welcomed to the heaven of heavens. Though for a little time his flesh may slumber in the grave, yet he will surely wake. The hour is coming when all who are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth. Then He will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Then indeed we shall be satisfied. What more could be desired? What more could be conceived? What more could Heaven bestow? The glorified spirit re-inhabits a glorious frame; the resurrection robes are now put on, and they must shine forever. No lapse of age can change their hue. This wedding garment is ever new. Gazing on this glorious prospect, we may care little for those short-lived troubles. *They need not fear the face of man who soon will see the face of God.*

PSALM 18

Mighty deliverance is realized, and utter ruin of every foe. May we intelligently swell the note of praise!

1, 2. "I love you, Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold."

These fervent words show David's glowing heart. When seated on the throne of victory he saw his foes all low in dust, and felt that God had done it. He exhausts all warlike terms to show that God was his stronghold, God his armor, and God his power. God kept him safe; God gave him conquest. What can he render in return? He gives his heart. He gratefully exclaims, "I love You, O Lord."

David soon disappears. *Jesus* Himself strides forth. David's typical career suggests this noble song; but in its fullness it is Messianic. Faith hears it flowing fresh from Jesus' heart. It reads here redemption's conflict, redemption's triumphs, and it is exceeding glad. How feelingly would Jesus' lips exclaim, O my Father, I love You. You have been my fortress!

3. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies."

It is a precious gift to know that *faithful prayer is sure deliverance*, and that our God is worthy of all praise. He is more worthy than thought can think or words express.

4, 5, 6. "The sorrows of death surrounded me, and the floods of the ungodly made me afraid. The sorrows of hell surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears."

The Man of sorrows is before us. When bearing the penalty of our sins to the uttermost, His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. In prayer He sought relief; by prayer He gained support.

7 - 15. "Then the earth quaked and trembled; the foundations of the mountains shook; they quaked because of his anger. Smoke poured from his nostrils; fierce flames leaped from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He opened the heavens and came down; dark storm clouds were beneath his feet. Mounted on a mighty angel, he flew, soaring on the wings of the wind. He shrouded himself in darkness, veiling his approach with dense rain clouds. The brilliance of his presence broke through the clouds, raining down hail and burning coals. The Lord thundered from heaven; the Most High gave a mighty shout. He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies; his lightning flashed, and they were greatly confused. Then at your command, O Lord, at the blast of your

breath, the bottom of the sea could be seen, and the foundations of the earth were laid bare."

We may not pause to marvel at the dazzling splendor of this brilliant picture. It is a poetic fervor in full blaze. Image succeeds image, revealing almighty vengeance arrayed in terror, and flying in dreadful majesty to sustain His chosen. David, thus speaking, felt that miracles had helped his cause; that God Himself had fought in his behalf. If all the hidden wonders of his wondrous career were open to our view, if we had witnessed all the marvels which amazingly delivered him, we would not wonder that such fervent language burst from his lips.

But in the Antitype the picture's colors are not overlaid. During the garden agony, during the horrors of the Cross, we conclude that a dreadful conflict was enacted unseen by mortal eye. We read indeed of nature's throes. In spirit we see darkness unparalleled; we feel the trembling of the quaking earth; but we do not see the hidden battle; we do not see all hell in fury to secure the victory; we do not see Jehovah arising in His strength, and rousing His instruments of wrath to crush the desperate foe and to sustain His suffering Son. We follow the guidance of this picture, and we ponder a deep mystery.

16 - 18. "He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew me out of deep waters. He delivered me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me. They attacked me at a moment when I was weakest, but the Lord upheld me."

We learn how real, how agonizing, was the anguish of our Lord. To pay sin's penalty was to endure hell. But He prevailed, for God was with Him. His trials were thus foreseen, but He encountered them. He waded conqueror through the many waters, for God was by His side. Let us thank and bless Him who suffered, and by suffering saved us; let grateful love adore Him.

19. "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me."

The conflict ended in most glorious life. Our Jesus was exalted to supremest glory, and received all power in heaven and earth, because God loved Him as His Son, who had fulfilled His total will.

20 - 24. "The Lord rewarded me for doing right; he compensated me because of my innocence. For I have kept the ways of the Lord; I have not turned from my God to follow evil. For all his laws are constantly before me; I have never abandoned his principles. I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin. The Lord rewarded me for doing right, because of the innocence of my hands in his sight."

One zeal burned steadily in Jesus' heart. He came to earth to do His Father's will. To this polestar His course was always pointed. He came to do redemption-work, to save lost sinners, to atone for sin, to bring in perfect righteousness, to satisfy the law's demand, to keep its beautiful code, to honor all God's attributes, to bring glory to His name. He ceased not until He cried, "It is finished," and received the welcome, "Sit on My right hand."

25, 26, 27. "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. For You will save the afflicted people; but will bring down high looks."

God's dealings with His incarnate Son all flowed in the channel of truth and justice. Pure godliness had claims. These claims were duly satisfied. So, also, no grace in the believer's heart is overlooked. God meets and cheers with blessings all those who by the Spirit's help strive to walk closely with Him. Each grace sows seeds of favor. Especial pity marks the sufferers in oppression's furnace. Bruised Israelites are comforted. Haughty Pharaohs are cast down.

28, 29. "For You will light my candle; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God I have leaped over a wall."

In darkest moments of desertion Jesus well knew that a bright dawn was near. The sun eclipsed is not the sun extinguished. The shadow will soon pass, and the returning rays will be more joyous. Thick troops may seem to choke the way, strong batteries may impede. But when God helps, no obstacles can check. A way is opened through opposing ranks. *Strength is supplied to overleap all hindrances.*

30, 31. "As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all those who trust in Him. For who is God except the Lord? or who is a rock except our God?"

Knowledge of God is comfort in all times. It was so to our Head on earth. It has been so to every saint. It will be so until Jesus shall return. His dealings with His Church are perfection. No flaw therein was ever found. There is one testimony, "He has done all things well." His truth is often tested; but each trial proves that it is firm and pure. Who ever stood behind His armor and received a wound? He is well shielded whose shield is the Lord. Vain is all other help. Besides Jehovah there is no God. All other confidences mock and deceive. He only stands as an immovable rock. All earthly props and supports are shifting sand; when the storm comes they shake and fall.

32 - 36. "God arms me with strength; he has made my way safe. He makes me as surefooted as a deer, leading me safely along the mountain heights. He prepares me for battle; he strengthens me to draw a bow of bronze. You have given me the shield of your salvation. Your right hand supports me; your gentleness has made me great. You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping."

Christ waged a ceaseless warfare. Cruel assaults gave Him no rest. But He could sing that no help was withheld, and that God's arm wrought glorious triumphs for Him.

We now advance to a terrific fight. But let no fears unnerve. Our foes are doubtless many, strong, untiring, raging, infuriate; but armor and ability are prepared. The armor is spiritual and wrought by God, because the enemy is bitter and satanic. Let us gird ourselves with every weapon. It will be found sufficient.

Let us look upwards to our great Captain. He will infuse courage and might; He will gird up our weak loins; He will teach us to use well our weapons. All His dealings will be tenderness and love. Sweet whispers will encourage; gentle smiles will animate. Happy experience will at last clap the hand, and sing, "Your gentleness has made me great." Harshness is not in Him whom our souls love and our feet follow.

37 - 40. "I chased my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until they were conquered. I struck them down so they could not get up; they fell beneath my feet. You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet. You made them turn and run; I have destroyed all who hated me."

David's experience here speaks. When calm in peace, high in supreme dominion, undisturbed by wars and hostile menace, he looked back on his eventful course. Many indeed had been his fights; perils frequently had been extreme; but conquest followed conquest, until he rested on a peaceful throne. But he knew well that conquering strength was not his own; he saw the source of his supremacy; he trampled on the necks of foes *because God laid them low before him.*

Here is a picture of the aged pilgrim pondering his bygone trials. He has passed through outward troubles leaning on his God. The deep waters did not overwhelm him because the heavenly hand sustained

him. The lusts, the passions, the corruptions of the inner man failed to destroy the inner life, because grace was infused to fan the threatened embers. Faith testifies, I live because Christ lived within me. Mine is the joy; the victory is the Lord's. But here the prominent figure is the blessed Jesus. The day fast comes when He shall reign supreme. Satan and hell's legion must lick the dust. The wretched multitude who have joined his ranks and fought against the Gospel-truth must gnash the teeth, all crushed beneath His chariot-wheels. A kingdom shall be set up in which pure righteousness shall reign. No foe shall interrupt the universal peace. No jarring note shall mar the melody of Hallelujah.

41 - 45. "They called for help, but no one came to rescue them. They cried to the Lord, but he refused to answer them. I ground them as fine as dust carried by the wind. I swept them into the gutter like dirt. You gave me victory over my accusers. You appointed me as the ruler over nations; people I don't even know now serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they submit; foreigners cringe before me. They all lose their courage and come trembling from their strongholds."

It seems the Spirit's joy to lengthen out the note of triumph. We see the enemies of Christ at last convinced of their lost state. They call, they seek, they bow the knee. But all submission is in vain. The Word is fulfilled, "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes." How terrible is that word, "Too late!" Here, also, the Gospel's triumphs in the heathen world are shadowed forth. The heathen are His inheritance. The chosen seed will hear the good Shepherd's voice, and gladly hurry to salvation's fold.

46, 47, 48. "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. It is God who avenges me, and subdues the nations under me. He delivers me from my enemies; yes, You lift me up above those that rise up against me; You have delivered me from the violent man."

Praise should never cease. It is a joyful exercise; it is the due acknowledgment of countless mercies. Throughout eternity remembrance will record God's marvelous aid in days of trouble, and at each remembrance harps will again be struck. The song will swell again, "Blessed be our rock; let the God of our salvation be exalted."

49. "Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises to Your name."

Again we are told of the triumphant song. Let it be no new song to us; let its sweet notes be now familiar to our lips; let us pray for grace to realize the wonderful mercies which surround us; let our thoughts seldom wander from the Cross. Oh! what a sight of wonder! How precious is that expiating blood! Let us ponder its worth, and the marvels it has wrought, until our hearts become one blaze of love, our lips one note of praise.

50. "He gives Great deliverance to His King, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David, and to his descendants forevermore."

Faith gladly answers, Yes, how true! how true! Jesus was greatly delivered from all the hate of hell, from all the bands of death, from every opposing foe. The *typical David* lived a long life of constant deliverances. It shall be so to all the promised descendants. Great deliverances are their portion; constant mercy is their attendant. May the thought deepen in each believing heart that they are on the conquering side—that no weapon formed against them shall succeed—that soon the warfare will be all accomplished, and that they shall magnify the conquering Lamb with conquering song! May we sing with them!

PSALM 19

Two witnesses proclaim God's glory. His Works and Word harmoniously respond. May the joint testimony teach us!

1, 2. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge."

Debased and senseless is the mind which creation's wonders fail to touch. Survey the canopy above our heads. It is magnificent in all which constitutes beauty and splendor in perfection. From morn to night light strides along its azure path, illuminating the world. When evening's shades prevail, the stars hang out their countless lamps, and stud with spangles the brilliant skies. We marvel; we admire. We trace the great Creator's skill and reverently adore. It must be a mighty mind who planned this exquisite machinery. It must be mighty power which framed these glowing orbs, and gave them their appointed courses. They could not will their own formation. They could not array themselves with brightness. It must, also, be gracious benevolence which arranged such lovely helps and solace for us. On all the heavens God's glory is inscribed. The skies in all their parts show what His hands have wrought. The record never ceases. Day follows day, repeating the instruction. Night succeeds to night, telling the great Creator's praise.

3, 4, 5, 6. "They speak without a sound or a word; their voice is silent in the skies; yet their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to all the world. The sun lives in the heavens where God placed it. It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race. The sun rises at one end of the heavens and follows its course to the other end. Nothing can hide from its heat."

The lessons of the skies are universal. Wherever man breathes, in torrid or in frigid zones, the canopy of day and night speaks the same voice. Throughout earth's length and breadth the heavens teach plainly the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead. Let the sun's voice especially be heard. The heavens are His splendid tent. In the dawn he breaks forth arrayed in gladness, as a joyous bridegroom. He strides along stately in giant-strength. He girds all heaven in his path, and with his all-penetrating rays searches earth in all its parts. In all his course, in all his might, one is his witness. God is my Maker. Worship Him. So then they are without excuse who do not read God in creation's volume. The Spirit by the mouth of Paul declares their guilt, and passes just sentence, and seals their reprobation. The Spirit, also, adopts these terms to show the Gospel's progress through all lands. Let this inspirit missionary zeal!

7 - 11. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight to life. Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. They are a warning to those who hear them; there is great reward for those who obey them."

From the witness of God's WORKS there is an easy transit to the witness of His WORD. Both spring from the same source; both spread abroad the same truth—God's glory. Six distinct titles here designate the Word. Each bears a separate character, and each describes a separate effect. How worthy is this glorious Word of constant study! Let it be read on bended knee until all its efficacy molds our hearts. None are so wise and happy as the Bible-taught. This study is the richest feast. It regales the soul far more than sweetest dainties can please the palate. It gives wise warning for our every hour. Obedience is wise blessedness.

12, 13. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from great transgression."

Every step which strays from the strict path of perfect love is error. Who can count up these countless deviations! They far exceed the ocean's sands. They may be hidden from man's eye, but all are patent to omniscient scrutiny. Let the thought drive us to the all-atonning blood, and prompt the earnest prayer, Cleanse me, O Jesus, cleanse. Especially let us seek grace to keep us from bold sins of mad presumption against God's rule. Indulged, they soon establish habits which rule with tyrant's force; and may lead to sin against the Spirit, for which no pardon can be found.

14. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."

Precious, indeed, will be this psalm if it thus leads to wrestling hold of Christ, who is all strength and all redemption to us.

PSALM 20

Intercession is our duty and our privilege. Trust in God secures success. May we be encouraged to pray and not to faint!

1, 2. "May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you. May He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion."

David desires entreaties for himself, and suggests petitions for his praying people. He was tossed on the waves of ever-swelling trouble. At home and abroad, there was the incessant noise of war. He knew the only source of true success. He excites others to besiege heaven for him.

In his kingly office he was a clear type of Christ. In this type David's great Lord and Son stoops to solicit prayer. He stands before us as one in need; troubles grow thick around Him; the whole artillery of hell assails; He looked to heaven, and asks others to desire audience for Him. We can look back and see how answers came. All the perfections of God which constitute His name came forth in His behalf. The God of Jacob was His shield. The heavens opened. A ministering angel hastened to uphold the prostrate God-man.

3. "Remember all Your offerings, and accept Your burnt sacrifice."

In this petition faith looks onward to the great redeemer. Jesus indeed made offering to God. He offered Himself the victim upon the altar. He laid down His life a whole burnt-sacrifice. He fulfilled all which every blazing altar and every bleeding victim had prefigured; He was not spared. Avenging wrath descended, and fullest penalty was inflicted. Justice presented scales, and they received their whole demands.

It is our joy to know that the shed blood prevailed. Each faithful suppliant can remind our God that full atonement has been made for every sin; that all due wrath has been expended on our surety; that His death is our death; His sufferings are our sufferings; His payment is our payment; the curse inflicted upon Him is our redemption. We may kneel joyfully before the throne, and with assurance cry, "remember the offering of the dying Jesus; accept the burnt-sacrifice of the atoning Lamb."

4. "Grant according to Your own heart, and fulfill all Your counsel."

The heart of Christ is fixed on God's glory. He cries, "Your law is within My heart." His burning desire was that all God's attributes should receive honor from His work. This glory is secured when mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. All His desire shall be accomplished. He shall see of the

travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Success shall gloriously crown His work. The Gospel-scheme shall triumph.

5. "We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners; the Lord fulfill all your petitions."

The Church beholds salvation won and all desires of Christ fulfilled. It is a wondrous, precious, glorious sight. God is honored; Christ is magnified; sinners are saved. What is the feeling which breaks forth? It is joy—joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let every heart be glad, let every lip sing praise.

In knowledge of this manifested glory let us unfold the banner; let us press to the ranks of the redeemed; let us march in happy fellowship to Immanuel's land.

6. "Now know I that the Lord saves His anointed; He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand."

The life in the believer's soul, his clear perception of redemption's truth, his realizing views of deep interest in Christ, leave no doubt that Christ was heard in all His prayers, and that God put forth all the strength of His right hand to bring Him through His work. Oh! blessed knowledge of all precious truth!

7, 8. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They were brought down and fell; but we have risen, and stand upright."

The folly of carnal confidence is next portrayed. Except the Lord be on our side, the multitude of warlike equipment are as the chaff before the wind. The Lord speaks, and Pharaoh and his hosts fall an easy prey to the unsparing sea, while Israel, relying on their God, stand conquerors on the shore, and sing the song of triumph.

Holy Spirit! open our eyes to see our nothingness in ourselves! Our best is worthless. May we shun all fancied righteousness, and fix adoring thoughts on the great name and saving work of Jesus!

9. "Save, Lord! let the King hear us when we call."

Salvation should be the first and foremost, the sum and substance, of our every desire. What will all earth, and all earth's treasures, and all earth's pleasures profit, except our souls be saved! For salvation let our cry besiege heaven's gates. Happy the thought that on the throne a King is seated who never casts out prayer! Let us come boldly, and pray diligently. Calling in Christ's name, we cannot fail. We have a motto for this day and evermore— "Save, Lord! let the King hear us when we call."

PSALM 21

This ode of triumph celebrates our exalted Head. May we thus sing on earth by faith, and lengthen out the strain through endless days!

1, 2. "The king shall rejoice in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips."

We fall far short of this psalm's precious teaching if we restrict our musings to the type. Let David first be seen rejoicing in his royal crown, but let him soon fade before the rising of the King of kings. Here we may bathe our souls in the deep waters of Christ's truth. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. But the joy then in prospect is joy now fully realized. He sits rejoicing on the Father's right hand. The conflict is past; the battle is fought; the victory is won; every peril is escaped; every foe is vanquished. He has been strong to conquer, and He ascribes the strength to God's empowering hand. Salvation is achieved; it is salvation through the will and help of God, and in it greatly He

exults. The utmost desires of His heart are granted. He could not wish nor ask for more. The cup of gladness overflows.

3. "For You welcomed him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold on his head."

During the struggle and the deep abasement, God ever went before Him, strewing blessings in His path; God's goodness ever paved His way. And now He is crowned—crowned as Conqueror, crowned as King. High is the throne on which He sits; omnipotent is the scepter which He wields. The government is placed upon His shoulders. All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. Happy the subjects of this triumphant Lord!

4. "He asked life from You, and You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever."

In deepest agony He cried to God, who was able to save Him from death, and His prayer was heard. The word is fulfilled, "With long life will I satisfy Him, and show Him my salvation." Our High Priest appears, and His happy testimony is, "I am He who lives and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death." He is the resurrection and the life. He is our life. All who are one with Him have for their portion the everlasting life of glory.

5, 6, 7. "His glory is great in Your salvation; You have laid honor and majesty upon him. For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceeding glad with Your countenance. For the king trusts in the Lord; and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved."

The Spirit multiplies to show Christ's present blessedness. Great is His glory through God's saving hand. He is heir of all the majesty which heaven can give. He is God over all, blessed forevermore. Blessed Himself, He holds all blessings for His people. We, also, are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. But what is His all-surpassing joy? It is to bask forever in His heavenly Father's smile. If He has sympathy with us, should not we, also, have sympathy with Him? If our sorrows are His sorrows, should not His joy be ours? It is added that His joy is the fruit of faith. He trusted and is thus exalted. Let us believe and we shall similarly triumph.

8 - 12. "You will capture all your enemies. Your strong right hand will seize all those who hate you. You will destroy them as in a flaming furnace when you appear. The Lord will consume them in his anger; fire will devour them. You will wipe their children from the face of the earth; they will never have descendants. Although they plot against you, their evil schemes will never succeed. For they will turn and run when they see your arrows aimed at them."

Jesus arises from His throne to consummate His final victory. Then obstructing refuges shall fail. They shall call upon rocks and mountains to conceal. They shall flee into every hiding-place which terror can devise. But wrath shall drag them forth. Fearful images portray their hopeless ruin. They shall agonize as in the flames of burning ovens. Fire shall seize them as its prey. Unceasing anguish shall devour them. How vain will be their flight when the arrows of the Most High pursue them! When that day shall come, may we be on the Conqueror's side!

13. "Be exalted, Lord, in Your own strength; so will we sing and praise Your power."

Such is the fitting chorus to this song of triumph. Let every believer's voice call Jesus to His final exaltation. When that great day shall come, may we lift up the voice and celebrate His glorious power! Let us exalt Him now in heart, by life, in lip, by every faculty, and at each moment. Let the eternal song be no new song to us!

PSALM 22

The deepest anguish of our suffering Lord is here portrayed. The story of the Cross is told in minute detail. Light breaks forth at last. May we gaze and adore!

1, 2. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night-season, and am not silent."

We take our stand at Calvary. The Cross is erected. Jesus, the God-man, our substitute, our Redeemer, hangs there. We look, and we receive assurance that truly He is bearing our curse, and drinking to the dregs our cup of wrath, and receiving into His inmost soul the sword of justice, and suffering the extremities of anguish as the penalty for our sins. For three hours ebony *darkness* veils the world. We may not pierce the mystery. What mind could bear to realize the tremendous transaction? We learn all that we need to know from the shrill cry which burst from the sufferer's heart. He testifies that God, His God, was no more present. His countenance was wholly hidden. Utter desertion overwhelmed Him. He cried for help, but no help came. He groaned through extremest anguish, and was not silent; but no answer came. It was the hour and power of darkness. Hell could not do more to terrify and excruciate. He was abandoned to its fury. He was surrendered to its worst.

Here we have fullest proof that our Lord's sufferings were *real*; but they were not for Himself. They were all really substitutional. We have a real curse-bearer, and we really suffer in Him. But against all feeling, when all things were most adverse, faith still survived and retained hold of God. From desertion's lowest depth faith cried, "My God, my God."

3, 4, 5. "But You are holy, O You who inhabit the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not disappointed."

It is faith's happy province, when outward comforts utterly depart, still to justify God. Faith cannot blame, disparage, or cast doubt on Him. Against all outward sense it knows and witnesses that God is holy; it knows that God is entitled to all praise. Praise is His due desert. His people's praises are His home. In darkest times faith gathers strength from ages of experience; it looks to the elders of God's house; they all were partakers of confiding grace. It is thrice repeated that they trusted. To trust they added prayer. The end was sure. Deliverance came, and they were not ashamed. Though He slays us, yet let us trust Him. Light is sown for the righteous. We read a wonderful word as falling from the lips of Jesus—"Our fathers." He states that He is thoroughly one with us. He is born very man, a member of our family; our fathers are His fathers, and His Father is our Father.

6. "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people."

Jesus foresaw His deep humiliation. He takes the place of a scorned reptile. He is considered scarcely worthy to be ranked on a level with the human race. In after days the prophet sounded a similar note of degradation. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. Let us gratefully remember that His low estate is our exaltation. He thus sinks that we may be uplifted.

7, 8. "All those who 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, since He delighted in Him."

We return to Calvary. The whole scene here appears in predictive light. As the prophet wrote, so literally it was transacted. Hear the inspired historian; "Those who passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." The sight of extremest misery did not move their cruel hearts. They reveled in their victim's pain; their sneers and taunts wound deeper than the nails. His grief surpassed all grief, even as His love exceeded love. By these His stripes we are healed.

9, 10. "But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; You are my God from My mother's womb."

Faith draws support from recollection of the earliest mercies. The goodness which watched over infancy and childhood are too often overlooked as common dealings. But the enlightened eye in all this watchful care discerns God's gracious hand. It is our wisdom to trace each providence to special love. They dwell in regions of delight who see God everywhere, and in all concerns. In all things Christ is our bright example! May He who is the giver of all faith give to us faith strong as His own! As He trusted, so may we trust!

11. "Do not be far from me, for trouble is near; for there is no one to help."

Faith quickly flies to God. Its feet frequent the well-known path of prayer. In nearness of trouble it finds nearness to the mercy-seat. Absence of human help is not a loss if it secures the help of heaven. Welcome all earthly destitution, if God supplies the void.

12, 13. "Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

We return in spirit to the cross. The dying Jesus looks around; multitudes encircle Him; with open mouth ferociously they assault Him. Throughout the mass there is no sign of pity; all hearts seem dead to common feelings of humanity; they show the properties of the wildest beasts; they are savage as the untamed bull; they thirst for blood as the devouring lion. This is the saddest picture of man's malignity. What frightful fury raged against Jesus, the perfect model of holiness and love! His only offense was that He walked this earth as God. We see what man is when no grace restrains. If we love Jesus, whom the world thus hated, let us give praise to grace, which causes us to differ.

14, 15. "My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me. My strength has dried up like sun-baked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead."

The suffering Jesus thus described His miserable state. In graphic terms He tells of His extremity of agony and His extremity of weakness. The pain of the cross was bitterest pain; the weight of the body, suspended by the nailed hands and feet, violently strained the whole frame. It was almost dislocation of each bone; every joint was wrenched. But still no bone may suffer fracture. A clear type announced their soundness, and wondrously was the type fulfilled. The picture shows the whole frame dissolving; it retains no firmness, no consistency; it utterly yields and flows away in weakness, as resistless water yields to touch. Strength of spirit, also, collapses. As wax melts, softens, and offers no resistance to subduing heat, so the heart lay prostrate beneath subduing misery. What is so weak and brittle as the clay of the potter baked and dried up by fire? So the fire of God's wrath brought down to nothingness the Sufferer's strength. The parched mouth showed that the vital fluids were dried up, and death usurped undisturbed dominion.

In all this anguish Jesus realizes His heavenly Father's hand. This is Your doing. I sink into the dust of death. But Your hand thus lays

Me low. Jesus thus dies, because His people were thus sentenced; and He thus mounts the cross to die their death, that He might bear to the uttermost their curse. He mercifully selects a term to show how exactly He bore their penalty. The sentence said, "Unto dust you shall return." Jesus calls God to witness, "You have brought Me into the dust of death."

16, 17, 18. "My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count every bone in my body. My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments."

This wonderful passage establishes beyond all controversy that none but Jesus is the subject of this Psalm. To no one else can these terms apply. In Him they receive entire and exact fulfillment. Another prophet writes, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." The history relates the very fact. No ground is left on which unbelief can place its foot. Let us give thanks, knowing that by these wounds we are saved, by these stripes we are healed. The very garments of our suffering Lord are here foretold; the seamless texture of His upper vest; the mode in which they are distributed; the Roman soldiers utterly without knowledge of this Scripture, devoid of all intention to accomplish, worked them out to the very letter. It is a wondrous word, "These things also the soldiers did."

19, 20, 21.

"O Lord, do not stay away! You are my strength; come quickly to my aid! Rescue me from a violent death; spare my precious life from these dogs. Snatch me from the lions' jaws, and from the horns of these wild oxen."

Here new images appear to show the bloodthirsty rage of the unrelenting murderers. We have seen their fury as bulls and lions; we now see their fierceness as dogs and wild oxen. Fierce fury could

not be more fierce. Again, we see that no trials can quench the flame of faith, or check its rapid flight to God. It ever realizes, When I am weak in myself, I have God for my strength.

In the lowest depths of misery, it clings to deliverance as a sure anchor. Jesus testifies on the cross, "You have heard Me." He was not saved from dying; but He was saved from death. He died, for He must endure our death. But death could not detain. He lives again; He was fully heard. Glorious victory! He dies for us, and by His death, He has abolished death.

22. "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You."

The horrors of the cross give place to joy. From this deepest misery we hear a jubilant note. Jesus now speaks as risen from the dust of death, as going forth arrayed in power, and crowned with majesty and honor. He states His mission to reveal to the Church all the perfections of His heavenly Father, and ever present by His Spirit in the assemblies of His people, to fill their mouths with Jehovah's praise. He will make their hearts a flood of gratitude, and cause the streams of thanksgiving to overflow. How great is His mercy and condescension in thus uniting us to Himself as brethren! He who is Jehovah's fellow, one in essence with the Father, God over all, blessed forevermore,

looks with intensest love on us poor miserable worms and vilest sinners, and is not ashamed to call us brethren. In the days of His abode on earth we hear His voice, "Go to My brethren;" again, "Go, tell My brethren." We adore Him as Firstborn among many brethren. Let us with all boldness ever draw near, and tell Him our every sorrow and our every need. He has a loving brother's loving heart towards us.

23, 24. "You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you descendants of Israel. For

He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard."

From the cross the voice of Jesus stirs up His people to laud and glorify His Father's name. They are described as those who fear. Their filial love is ever tremulous of giving offense. Their love is mingled with revering awe. Mercy to Jesus on the cross is a rich topic of thanksgiving. He was, indeed, the despised and rejected of men. He drank the bitterest dregs of affliction's cup. But though for a while forsaken by the Father, He was ever His dearly beloved, and His every prayer was heard and answered. Warmed by this thought, let us obey our Lord, and sing God's praises, ardent with love, lowly in fear.

25. "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay My vows *before those who fear Him.*"

The heart of Jesus is ever intent to bring glory to the Father. It is His joy to awaken the notes of praise wherever His congregations meet. He remembers, also, the work which He is pledged to execute. Never will He cease, never will He remit His efforts, until the whole company, given by the Father's love, are sought and found, are melted and renewed, and brought by faith to welcome His complete salvation.

26, 27, 28. "The meek will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the Lord will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. People from every nation will bow down before him. For the Lord is king! He rules all the nations."

Another distinctive mark of Christ's little flock is meekness. They are true followers of Him who sweetly said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Abundance of refreshing feast is provided for them. Christ is their bread of life. Christ is their daily manna. Christ is their feast

of fat things. They hear His welcome, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." They are fully satisfied, and they return abundant praise. Jesus, though dying, knew that He would live forever, and living would be the life of all who trusted in Him. Surely their life is far from harm who know that "their life is hidden with Christ in God." At present the world is full of all turmoil and evil. But this confusion and iniquity will soon give place to the reign of righteousness. Christ is heir of all things, His righteous throne will soon be set, and then from the rising of the sun to its decline pure worship will be given to Him.

29, 30, 31. "Let the rich of the earth feast and worship. Let all mortals—those born to die—bow down in his presence. Future generations will also serve him. Our children will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those yet unborn. They will hear about everything he has done."

The sorrows of the cross end in glorious triumph. What marvels of extensive blessedness spring from these seeds of agony and blood! The Word shall receive full accomplishment, "Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Until the bright day of His return, a constant succession called by His grace, quickened by His Spirit, adopted into His family, shall spring up to call Him Lord, and render devout service. They shall flow on in uninterrupted streams, proclaiming from age to age His glorious righteousness, as their robe to justify, as their ornament for heaven. Rejoicing in full salvation, they shall ascribe all to His finished work. Deep in self-abasement, they shall magnify His grace. One shall be their song. This glory is all His work. He has done this. May we thus sing!

PSALM 23

Jesus leads His flock like a shepherd. May we rejoice in the delights of His fold!

1. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in need."

Happy the soul that, looking to Jesus as the great, the good, the one Shepherd, can add in truth, "And He is mine. I have heard His calling voice; I have seen His inviting smile; I have fled to Him; I have entered into His fold; I have committed myself to His guardian care; He has received me; He has given me most gracious welcome; I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." With what joyous rapture may the inhabitant of the fold continue, "I shall not be in need!" How can need be mine? He who is pledged to my support has all resources in His hand; He has all power in heaven and earth. He who has promised to give me eternal life will not allow me to perish by the way. The end secured is security along the road.

We sometimes err in our desires. In blindness we crave injurious pastures. It is our wisdom to leave all to Him. He is all wisdom and all love. He will tend wisely and most kindly. All good things will assuredly abound. Perhaps we err if we claim this psalm as our exclusive portion. Jesus Himself once knew the need of the poor sheep; but He found a Shepherd in His heavenly Father, and He lacked nothing.

2. "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters."

A picture of rural beauty expands before us. We see a happy flock resting in calm quietness in fields rich in luxuriant plenty; we see them guided to meadows through which refreshing streams glide tranquilly. The scene is perfect. Here is repose amid abundance. Nothing disturbs the calm enjoyment.

The antitype is the believer's soul secure from all alarms, peaceful in knowledge of the Lord's protection, feasting on the rich provision of His Word, regaled with sustaining promises, nurtured by the Spirit's rich supplies, reposing under the shadow of the cross, drinking the cooling streams of scriptural teaching, delighting in the sacramental feast. How ample is this sweet provision! Who will not thankfully exclaim, "I have all, and abound?"

This picture also exhibits Jesus. Amid His many troubles His soul could calmly rest on the assurance of His Father's love, and feed rejoicingly on covenant engagement.

3. "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

There are times when grace appears to fade, when trials trouble and depress, when lively vigor faints and deadness chills the soul. Sad indeed would be the outcome unless the watchful Shepherd rendered help; but He assists the downcast; He shows reviving smiles; He brings the cordial of some precious promise. The withering leaf renews its freshness; the tottering limbs again are strong; the heavenward path in ways of righteousness is again stoutly trod.

Jesus often drank depression's weakening cup. His soul was troubled; but help from above restored unwavering strength.

4. "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

Our sorest trial is when, with feeble step, we traverse the cheerless valley of death. The climate is chilly. Nature fails. We shrink from the icy hand; but still there is no fear. The tender Shepherd is by our side; His gentle guidance removes apprehension. The waters fail to overwhelm. Sweet texts bring light, and the Spirit applies comfort. Your rod, Your staff, the emblems of the Shepherd's care, drive back

the threatening foes, and give sustaining strength. To lean on Jesus in the darkest hour is light and joy and peace. The Good Shepherd knows the chilly hand of death. He has passed this dark valley; but His God was with Him. Ministering angels brought support. He found no evil, and no evil shall destroy His sheep.

5. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over."

Our enemies stand round in vast array, but they cannot destroy enjoyments. In their sight God spread a banquet of delights. His inward unction causes the heart to show all kinds of radiant joy, as the countenance refreshed with ointments. We hold a cup; God's hand supplies it; He pours in pleasures to the extent of capacity to receive. The overjoyed believer feels, "Stop, stop; it is enough;" but still the goblet overflows. Who can measure the delights of God's presence, smile, and word?

6. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Such is faith's sweet assurance. While days below continue, goodness and mercy, close as closest shadow, shall bring up the rear. What good thing can be absent if the Lord is present, and Jesus confirms the pledge, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world?" Failure there can never be. No sheep will perish or be left behind. All will be safely gathered in the manymansioned house. There will the Great Shepherd ever dwell amid His ransomed flock. Great Shepherd, You are our all; we lovingly adore You!

PSALM 24

Jesus ascends in triumph to His throne in heaven. May we in spirit ascend there, and with Him continually dwell!

1, 2. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and those who dwell there; for He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."

A noble chorus ushers in this ode of triumph. Loud acclamations tell that God is the great Creator, the sovereign owner of the universe. Language contains not a grander sentence than the words first seen upon the Bible-page, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He commanded the dry land to appear, and to rest on subsiding waters as its supporting column. All nations who throng its surface, all animal and vegetable life, all its rich treasures, all its lovely beauty, receive their being from His word. He spoke and they were made. His rightful lordship is indisputable. We are His, and He made us. With what lowly reverence should we bow before Him! How meekly should we yield to His supremacy! How constant should our efforts be to glorify Him with body, soul, and spirit, which are His!

3. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?"

He who pervades all space, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, is represented to our minds as reigning in an especial palace. An earthly city was the type of this heavenly abode. The hill of Zion which received the Ark was symbol of His presence. Therefore the inquiry, Who shall live and reign forever with the Lord? is aptly symbolized by asking, Who shall mount the hill of Zion, and have firm footing in the holy place? How studiously should we examine our claim to such felicity.

4, 5, 6. "He who has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to 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 those who seek Him, who seek Your face, O Jacob."

It is a grand and everlasting truth, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." His dwelling is essential purity. No speck of sin can enter where He dwells. Therefore no one who ever breathed life's breath or trod this earth, except Jesus, can enter by His own right and in His own name. His hands alone were never stained by sin. His heart alone was one home of unsullied purity. No vain things had attraction for His mind. No deceit defiled His spirit. He had full claims to all the blessings of the New Jerusalem. Justly He receives His due.

But this blessedness belongs not only to the Head; His members share with Him. All who by faith are one with Him, all who constitute His body, are clean, and pure, and righteous, even as He is. His all-cleansing blood forever washes out their many sins. His glorious righteousness is reckoned as their very own. His indwelling Spirit wholly sanctifies their inner man. Therefore through grace they shall ascend the holy hill; hence they shall stand within the holy place. This is the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people. The Spirit helping, they seek the Lord with all the heart, even the face of the great God of Jacob.

7. "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and *the King of glory shall come in.*"

The Spirit here exhibits a wonderful picture of our Lord's triumphal ascent. We are taught to see Him drawing near attended by multitudes of the heavenly host. He reaches the gates of the eternal citadel. Admittance is demanded; the portals are summoned to fly open. The gates so barred against rebellious man are now commanded to lift their heads. It is announced that the King of glory stands outside.

8. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

The guardians of the portals are represented as responding. They must be certified of the claim of Him who thus draws near. They ask, Proclaim His name, His purpose, and His right. Why is He free to enter? A ready answer cries, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Jesus has returned; He went forth strong in the might of His omnipotence to do battle against Satan and hell, and death and the grave. The fight is fought, the victory is won. All enemies are dashed to pieces. He is here, dragging the captives fast bound to His victorious wheels; He comes crowned with all conquest. Admit Him. The crown is His by right of Satan's empire demolished. The exulting challenge is repeated.

9. "Lift up your heads, O you gates; even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

The inquiry, the response, are still the same.

10. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Look, He is enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high. May our poor hearts lift up their heads! May He there sit and rule, and reign forever!

PSALM 25

Repentance and contrition find vent in confession and prayer. May these holy exercises be the home of our souls!

1. "Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."

Sweet are the hours of communion with God. At every moment we may draw near. The way stands widely open through the rent veil. Christ's body broken and His streaming blood procure immediate access. But true prayer is not formality. It is soul-work. In it the

world and all its cares and vanities are left behind. Faith spreads rejoicing wings and soars above the heaven of heavens. The man of prayer lifts up his soul.

2, 3. "O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Yes, let none that wait on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who transgress without cause."

It is faith's holy privilege to deal unreservedly with God; to open out its real condition; to call Him to witness that all vain confidences are renounced, and that all trust rests on Him. Such may fearlessly supplicate that no disappointments may cause shame; and that no foes may humble them. Those who lift up the soul to God will lift up the head above all the fears of men.

Faith, also, is an expansive grace. Its arms embrace all true believers. It strives that others should share its blessedness. But it well knows that shame must be the sinner's doom. *There can be no excuse for sin. No cause provokes it. The sinner sins because it is his nature and his will.*

4, 5, 6. "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth, and teach me; for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old."

Faith is emboldened to ask great things from knowledge of the character and works of God. It can appeal, 'You are the God who willed and wrought salvation for me; it is Your purpose and decree to save me to the uttermost. Hence You have given Jesus for me, and me to Jesus.' It can look back to a long train of tender mercies from the earliest days. It rejoices to count them out before the Lord. It plies the argument, 'You have been very gracious. You are the same. Oh! be gracious now'; and on these cogent grounds it bases the prayer, "Show me Your ways; lead me, teach me." I am blind,

and prone to err. Open my eyes clearly at each moment to discern Your will. Take my outstretched hand and guide me safely in salvation's path. All the day I need Your help, and seek it; all the day be my ready guide.

7. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to *Your mercy remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord.*"

In the case of the ungodly, sins forgotten by him are not sins forgiven. In the case of the believer, sins forgiven by God are not obliterated from his memory. The believer often reviews his course from earliest years; he reads and re-reads the annals of the past. They are dark, and stained with countless sins and countless aggravations. He is humbled to the dust. But he remembers Jesus, and God's boundless love in Him. He flees from the court of justice to the throne of grace. He pleads, nor pleads in vain, that God would deal with him in accordance with the covenant of grace.

8, 9. "The Lord is good and upright; therefore He will teach sinners in the way. He will guide the meek in judgment; and He will teach the meek His way."

When prayer pauses, faith gathers strength in meditation. It reflects that God is love, and faithfulness, and truth. It refreshes itself at this deep well of consolation. God's goodness calls; His promises assure. Therefore no sinner, coming in penitence and faith, may fear rejection. A ready welcome will be granted. The teaching Spirit will guide wisely. All who are truly humbled and thus wear the livery of the chosen flock will tread assuredly salvation's road.

10. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies."

May grace be ever ours to adhere closely to the everlasting covenant; to base all our hopes on Christ, its surety, in whom all its

terms are fully satisfied, and who, by His Spirit, reveals its message to us. May the like grace enable us to study diligently His holy precepts, and to keep our feet most steadily in their path. Then how blessed will be our earthly course! All God's dealings with us, though sometimes dark to sense, will issue from unfailing love, and prove that His Word is immovable as the everlasting hills.

11. "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great."

Prayer cannot long be silent. The burden of sin will press again. It will again appear in aggravated colors. Its magnitude deepens the sense of need of pardon. It proves that there is no remedy but in free grace. It clearly sees that God's glory is His forgiveness of all sin through the blood and righteousness of Christ. It therefore descends more lowly in contrition's valley, and importunes more loudly that God would gain glory in the way of pardon. Great, indeed, is our iniquity. May we confess our miserable state, and not remit our cries, that God's glory may be great in blotting all out!

12, 13. "Who is he that fears 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."

We do not err when we discern Christ Jesus as the high and full response. In Him each grace was perfect. In His earthly course His holy reverence was supreme. He ever knew by heavenly light His appointed path. His calm serenity was never ruffled. And He looked onward to the blissful time when His seed in countless multitudes should reign undoubted heirs of earth. All His children are conformed to His image. With lowly awe they reverence their God. His fear restrains the movement of their minds. His Spirit guides their steps. Their souls are kept in perfect peace. And in a little while the full delights of the millennial reign shall cause their cup to overflow.

14. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him; and He will show them His covenant."

There are heights and depths of truth in the everlasting covenant which unaided man can neither reach nor fathom. The Gospel-scheme is a wondrous volume. No eye without God's light can rightly read its pages. But to all who tremble at the Word, the enlightening Spirit comes. He opens out the hidden mysteries. He draws aside the veil and shows the secret transactions in the courts of heaven; and all the wondrous achievements of Christ's life and death. The enraptured soul sees truths which angels ponder with amazement. Who can describe the ecstasies of this knowledge? But all the pupils in this school of light have one mark; they fear the Lord.

15, 16. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted."

When we can realize possession of the true principles of faith, we may claim all its privileges. Faith's eye is fixed on God. It swerves not from its polar star, therefore it reaps the rich abundance of the promises. Deliverance from every snare is pledged. Therefore with eye never turning from God, the believer walks securely through a path beset with snares. As it moves onward it is constant in petition. It often feels that loneliness and trouble depress, that friends are few, and sorrows many; but it faints not. It has firm trust that God will tenderly regard; that mercy will never fail; that no billows will overwhelm true faith.

17, 18. "The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O, bring me out of my distresses. Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins."

The believer's day varies, as the surface of the sea. There are periods of lulling calm, then the billows swell and raise gigantic breakers.

There is insight that SELF can give no help. There is the immediate cry to GOD, who alone can rescue. But while attention is implored to pains of mind and body, the *deepest misery* is especially remembered. There is no anguish like the sense of sin. Therefore the constant prayer, 'Forgive all my sin.' We may urge this with all boldness and all hope, for the precious blood cleanses from all sin.

19, 20. "Consider my enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. O keep my soul, and deliver me; for I put my trust in You."

The believer might indeed tremble, if he went forth alone to his daily conflict; for many are his foes, and bitter their cruel hate. Nothing can soothe their vengeful hostility. No pity melts within their breasts. But the believer has omnipotent aid beside him. If foes are many, the help is infinite. The humble plea, "I trust in You," will bring all heaven to the rescue. The trusting soul will indeed be kept. "O Lord, increase our faith."

21. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on You."

No grace was ever perfect but in the holy, harmless Son of God. Integrity was indeed the belt of His loins, and uprightness the sandals of His feet. But hatred of sin, and honesty of purpose, must be the inhabitants of our hearts. These graces prompt and strengthen prayer; but they are no valid grounds, claiming acceptance. For faith instantly looks from them to God, and adds, "I wait on You, from You only comes my help."

22. "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

We may boldly ply this heaven-taught prayer with our eyes fixed on Jesus. He is made unto us redemption from every trouble and from every sin. He has bought us as His own, with His most precious blood. He will keep us, He will bless us, as His purchased flock. Soon shall we know the full blessedness of this redemption. He will

claim the purchased kingdom for His purchased flock, and they shall live and reign forever on redeemed ground, beneath the banners of redemption. Blessed Lord, hasten the time! Fully redeem Your Israel!

PSALM 26

Prayers, professions, and resolves are here interlinked. May the Holy Spirit draw holy lessons for us!

1. "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in my integrity; I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I shall not slide."

The voice of Jesus should be here first heard. He appeals from all injustice of the courts of men to Heaven's tribunal. He could claim vindication of His cause on the firm ground that all His ways were perfect holiness. Every one that is born of Him will strive to be pure and holy, even as He is pure and holy. May our faith be strengthened by ceaseless effort and ceaseless prayer; for when our trust is firm, we shall move firmly along the slippery paths of life.

2, 3. "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For your loving-kindness is before my eyes; and I have walked in Your truth."

The heart is deceitful above all things. Who can know it? Who can have full acquaintance with its intricate and devious windings? Therefore the sincere man will often pray God to come with the light of His Spirit, and the torch of His Word, to search each deep and hidden corner, that no Achan may lurk undetected. Happy the prayer which is supported by the plea, 'My eyes are ever gazing on Your wondrous love, and all my steps are set in the holy way of Your revealed truth.'

4, 5. "I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites. I hate the gatherings of those who do evil, and I refuse to join in with the wicked."

There is no communion of light with darkness. There is no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness. The believer must come out and be separate. He must not touch the unclean thing. How rich his gain! The Lord will receive all who thus withdraw, and He will dwell in them, and walk in them. He will be their God; they shall be His people.

6. "I will wash my hands in innocence; so will I compass Your altar, O Lord."

The Temple and all its rites and all its furniture was one clear Gospel-lesson. The laver was the cleansing blood of Jesus. Constant ablutions typified the washing out of guilt. The altar, with its dying victims, streaming blood, and curling smoke, proclaimed the all-atoning sacrifice. Jesus often tarried in these courts. His eyes would rest on symbols significant of His work.

The believer, in spirit, will frequent this holy ground. Abhorring sin he seeks the laver that no stain may soil him. His happy walk is round the altar; gazing on it at each step, delighting by faith to see his dying Lord, clasping to his heart the truth, for me He died, for me His blood was shed, in Him I am completely saved.

7. "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works."

Views of redemption lead to grateful love, and prompt the voice of praise. They warm the heart; they cause the lips to sing; they fill the inner cistern; and the waters overflow. There is no theme so joyful as the Lord's wonderful works. Faith strives to speak, but due utterance fails. *It is far easier to count ocean's drops, than to portray the Savior's love, His worth, His righteousness, and the glories*

which He has purchased. But still, the more we speak, the more we feel; the more we feel, the more we speak.

8, 9, 10. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells. 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."

The sanctuary displayed God's glory. Bright rays shone forth from many symbols. The blessed Jesus loved to frequent this mystic spot. The ordinances of God were His delight. It became Him to fulfill all righteousness. This mark distinguishes His children. In public worship they joy to lift up the voice of praise. They hasten with happy step to join the assemblies in which united prayer is made.

There is an dreadful contrast. There is a bundle of tares that shall be burned. There is an assembly in which every form is sin, and every sight is unmasked ungodliness. Hell is no fiction. The very thought is horror. What must be the dreadful reality! Let the thought give power to the prayer—Oh, gather not my soul with such!

11. "But as for me, I will walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be merciful to me."

The thought of the second death gives energy to the resolve to walk with God now, that we may dwell with Him forever. The resolve is scarcely formed, but life returns. The truth appears that *our best is only evil*. The frightened believer flies to redeeming blood; he cries for mercy; he avows that his only hope is in the cleansing blood. His constant prayer must be, God be merciful to me a sinner!

12. "My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the Lord."

Hope revives. Faith realizes that it firmly rests on immovable ground. It receives a kingdom which cannot be shaken. It looks

beyond the earthly courts and congresses of pious men to the innumerable throng. It forgets the present praise in forethought of the never ending song. Their one ecstatic chorus will forever swell—Blessings to our God, and to the Lamb. Lord, fit us to bear our part!

PSALM 27

Faith makes strong professions, and utters earnest prayers. May such be the exercise of our hearts unto life eternal!

1. "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?"

This ode begins with a noble outbreak of triumphant confidence. Faith is in loftiest exercise. Foes indeed surround; they are distinctly seen. Their presence and their might is not ignored. But no fear troubles; no dismay appalls. Why? The believer knows that he is united to his Lord, and one with Him in the closest bonds; and that he has full interest in all the Lord's perfections. No darkness can bewilder, for the Lord is his light. No destruction can overtake, for the Lord is his salvation. His life can never perish, for the Lord is its strength. May we never rest until our lips can sing thus happily!

2. "When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell."

Here is the character of the adversaries of the Lord. They are the wicked. They are Cain-like, who was of that wicked one, and killed his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. We see striking fulfillment in the garden of Gethsemane. The traitor enters with his evil band. Jesus meets them calm in the majesty of deity. His eye, His voice shatter their boldness. They cannot stand before Him. They go backward

and fall to the ground. Such is the sure downfall of all the foes of Jesus.

3. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Hosts of men are less than nothing compared with heavenly guards. When the trembling servant cried, "Alas! my master, what shall we do?" the prophet answered, "Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes that he may see." He saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Even so, let us only believe and we are safe.

4. "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 enquire in His temple."

One supreme desire occupies the believing heart. He longs for close communion with the Lord. He diligently uses all appointed means. He seeks the ordinances which God's presence sanctifies. Such is the constant habit of his soul. It is no passing impulse. He pursues this hallowed communion all the days of his life. His eyes would see the beauty of the Lord, the lovely charm of His transcendent grace, displayed in redemption's wondrous work. His soul thirsts after fuller knowledge. His ardent cry is, "Show me Your glory."

5. "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."

The result of faithful obedience is assurance of security. When troubles come like a flood, they cannot reach the tranquil worshiper. He is calm in the recesses of his Lord's presence. The curtains of His pavilion are spread around him. He stands high upon a rock. That rock is Christ. Those who are thus uplifted are far above the reach of

hostile shafts. From his high stronghold he can look down and smile on all the rage of those who would destroy him. This rock is near. We are invited to its refuge. Let our steps hasten; then we are safe indeed.

6. "And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

Assurance should be ever sought, and it may be scripturally won. The head no longer will hang down. It will put on the helmet of salvation. It will look down in triumph on foes now impotent to hurt. This assurance brings offerings to the Lord's altar. They are the sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Assurance has, also, a joyful voice. It ever sings, and the song is praises to the Lord. Here is a test to prove our state. We, surely, are loiterers in the plain, and have not reached the height of scriptural delight, unless our hearts continually send up the incense of abounding thanks.

7. "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me."

Assurance is far from presumption. While earth is the home, necessities will be present. Grace must be sought, and, therefore, with all praise, petition will be intermixed. The sinner, with all knowledge of salvation, still has knowledge of his sinful state. Therefore he never ceases to seek mercy. Knowing that God will hear and answer, he still will importune, Let answers come—give sweet tokens that my prayers prevail.

8. "When you said, Seek My face; my heart said to you, Your face, Lord, will I seek."

Faith hears the voice of God sweetly speaking in the Scripture page. It calls, it invites, it allures. It warns to arise and flee the vanities of earth. It tells of their emptiness. It promises peace and delight in the reconciled smile of God. The enlightened soul simply obeys. It flies away, and basks beneath the rays of heaven.

9, 10. "Do not hide Your face far from me; Do not turn Your servant away in anger; you have 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."

The brightest sun may soon be overcast. Clouds may arise, and storms threaten, and darkness and chilliness interpose. Thus sense of sin, and consciousness of deep corruption, may stir up misgivings. Prayer wrestingly beseeches that the smile so gladly sought may not become averted, and that no just wrath may close the door of conscious acceptance. Former supports are urged in plea. God is addressed as pledged by covenant to save, and bound by strongest ties never to desert or fail.

Earthly relationships are easily dissolved. Affection may decay. Fickleness begets estrangement. Distance may part. Death comes, and desolation sits where happy fellowship once reigned. But God's love in Christ is strong, immutable, eternal. He has the Father's heart, which beats with tenderness, incapable of diminution or of change. O Father, ever be a Father unto us!

11. "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies."

We again see how warily assurance walks. The firm belief that God cannot forsake, increases diligence to desire for constant guidance. The holy fears awaken lest ignorance should lead into unrighteous ways, and cause the watchful enemy to exult. Teach me, lead me, are wise prayers. They bring the Spirit's light to shine upon the path, the Spirit's hand to give sustaining aid.

12. "Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

We tread no path of trial or of suffering which is not hallowed by our Lord's preceding step. We taste no bitter cup which His lips have not drained. No misery afflicts us which He has not previously endured. The stings of slander are keen. It is anguish when false tongues persist in charging falsely. Jesus felt this. No scrutiny could find fault in Him; but still His judges must have a facade of evidence; therefore, false witnesses were bribed to fabricate malicious tales.

There is great mercy in these foreshadowing views of Jesus. They imprint the stamp of inspiration on the blessed Word. David not only stands a conspicuous type, but words are placed upon his lips which find fulfillment in the varied trials of our Lord. We thankfully adore the mercy. We feel in our grateful hearts, The Scriptures are eternal truth; we may firmly trust them. They cannot be broken.

13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

The original sentence is strikingly incomplete. The words, "I had fainted", are adapted as implying the soul's forlorn and sinking state, if faith and hope had not sustained it. But amid all sorrows and fears a joyful expectation cheered our Lord. He looked onward to the final display of God's goodness in the land of the living. He knew that death could not detain Him. He foresaw the glorious land, where He would reign the living head of a living family. Let our hearts confidently look onward. Soon the shadows will have passed away—the day will dawn, goodness will be the one atmosphere, and living souls will ever live.

14. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

The 'wonderful Counselor' exhorts His followers to be strong in Him. He asks them to trust as He had trusted, and they will find as He had found. May the Spirit help us to act out this precious lesson! May He so nerve our spirits that no despondency may ever weaken! And may our eyes be ever raised to heaven, waiting until mercies issue forth. If they tarry, still let us wait. In due time surely they will come.

PSALM 28

Earnest prayer is followed by exulting praise. May prayer lead us to glad thanksgivings!

1. "Unto You will I cry, O Lord my rock; Do not be silent to me; lest, if you are silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit."

Strong resolves are the belt of the faithful man. Among these none is more prominent than fixed intention that prayer shall never cease. *Prayer usually singles out some gracious revelation of our God, and earnestly pleads it.* Here God is reminded that He is His people's Rock. As such He is immovable, and they who rest on Him cannot be shaken. Billows of trouble may lash. Storms of persecution may arise. But they remain secure.

Sure replies flow as a gladdening stream. Sometimes they may seem to be delayed. These times are chilling. If they continue long, life would grow faint, and death would hasten to extend its hand.

2. "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward your holy oracle."

The mercy-seat was a sweet symbol of the blessed Jesus. To Him the eye should look, the voice be raised, the hands be uplifted in each exercise of prayer. His merits perfume each address; His worth

gives value, and His intercession gains acceptance. *Prayer without Christ is empty sound.* It is vain sound. The lips may mutter, but no blessings are obtained.

3, 4. "Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert."

The most exalted believer is still a miserable sinner. Sin is a malady under which he daily groans. It is a foe with which he daily struggles. He hates it in its every form. Especially he loathes deceit, and deviousness, and fraud. Therefore he earnestly cries that he may be severed from its contact now, and from its doom forever. He knows that justice will erect its throne; that rigid scrutiny will weigh each word and work; that final reckoning will assign true judgment. He looks onward to the great white throne and its award. He humbly acquiesces in the sentence which will there be given. Even so, Lord. The Judge of all the earth is righteousness and truth.

5. "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up."

Our God does not hide Himself. Man's ignorance of God is willful and self-chosen. His power and Godhead are written in letters of light throughout creation's page. His constant interposition in the world's course, in favor of His people and His truth, always speaks loudly. This witness disregarded seals the sad doom. If eyes and ears refuse to learn, sentence is most just.

6. "Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications."

The answer comes. Promises to prayer are all fulfilled. Then what joy abounds! The voice is still upraised, but now the note is changed. Clouds of grateful incense rise to the courts above.

7. "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices; and with my song will I praise Him."

A season of rapturous joy succeeds. God is gratefully acknowledged as supplying inward power to resist evil and to exhibit faith. *How strong is he who has Jehovah for his strength!* But the Lord is more. He wards off all foes, and presents Himself as His people's shield. We see, also, the power of faith. It brings sure help. He who can say, I trust, will surely add, All support is supplied. Then joy overflows—joy of heart joy to unlimited extent. The lips sing sweetly, and God is the happy theme.

8. "The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed."

The believer is one of a large company. Each one is feeble without God; but each partakes of heavenly strength in Him. Each as one with Christ is anointed with unction from above; and each rejoices in that strength which brings salvation.

9. "Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; feed them also and lift them up forever."

The gift of prayer is for the common prosperity of God's chosen. They are dear to Him; and it is joy to Him to hear petitions in their behalf. They are dear as His people, heirs of His kingdom, sheep of His fold. Lord, hear our cry. Save them to the uttermost with Your salvation. Bless them with all Your blessings; feed them in Your wholesome pastures; lift them up above the reach of harm; and from the dust of death, to the highest glories of Your kingdom.

PSALM 29

Jehovah's voice is mighty. It sounds in the storms of nature, in the outgoings of grace, in the terrors of the dissolving world. May our listening ears be ever open!

1, 2. "Give unto the Lord, O you 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 high ones of the earth are called to wisdom. They are counseled to estimate rightly their real state; to lie in lowness before Jehovah's majesty; to acknowledge His high supremacy; to see in Him the source of all their earthly greatness; to ascribe due glory to His all-glorious name. Especially they are called to Gospel-worship, adoring Christ in the sanctuary, where all is beauty, and all the beauty is pure holiness. Would that each crown were placed at Jesus' feet!

3. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon many waters."

The rising of a storm is vividly portrayed. The eye of the spectator rests upon the sea. From its waters a distant rumbling is heard. The sound becomes exceeding loud. The thunder roars. The God of glory speaks in dreadful tone. The God of glory still speaks terribly when the roar of thunder proclaims the Gospel truth. The terrified conscience hears and quakes. It was so on the day of Pentecost. It is so still in the recesses of many hearts. The full consummation draws near. Then, in the Prophet's words, "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake."

4. "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

As the storm thickens, the majestic power of the Lord is more appalling. When the Gospel-voice goes forth to subdue the heart, the might is irresistible. It rides forth terrible in majesty. They who now yield will calmly smile when this voice shakes terribly the earth.

5, 6. "The voice of the Lord splits the mighty cedars; the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like a calf and Mount Hermon to leap like a young bull."

The storm moves onward towards the north. It thickens over the vast forests of Lebanon. It shatters the strong cedars of those hills. The mountains seem to tremble in frightened agitation. The nimble boundings of the calf and bull are figures of their trembling motion. Thus the Gospel, working with power, lays low all lofty thoughts. Then the heart trembles, and the conscience quakes. These emblems are weak to show the terrors of the great day, when the earth shall reel to and fro, and its deep foundations tremble in affright.

7. "The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire."

The forked lightning now flares. Divided flashes dart fire on the earth. It is the voice of the Lord which sends them forth. Let Jehovah's power be adored. Here the wonders of the day of Pentecost are clearly seen. The Spirit comes in tongues of fire, and rests on the Apostles' heads. Thus His rays penetrate the heart, give light, and purify. May the Spirit enlighten all our darkness! May we be kept watching, for the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works in it shall be burned up.

8. "The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh."

The storm envelops the whole heavens from north to south. It rages through the wilderness below Judea. There are no limits to its fury.

The voice of the Gospel has no boundaries. It goes forth into all the earth. By the Spirit's power it will gather in converts from all lands. Universal, also, will be the wonders of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

9. "The voice of the Lord makes the hinds to calve, and discovers the forests; and in His temple everyone speaks of His glory."

The effects of the storm are mighty. The frightened hinds produce their young. The leaves fall thick, and show the stripped branches. These, indeed, are glorious works. The storm proclaims God's glory. But the Church is God's glory in the highest. All who are thus called, with one loud voice, speak of the glories of His grace, His love, His righteousness, His truth. Oh, may the Lord be ever glorified in us!

10. "The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever."

After the storm, torrents descend. The waters of Noah seem to drown the earth. As in the deluge, the Lord sat in calm majesty upon His throne in serenity surveying the scene; so now He reigns forever King of kings and Lord of lords.

11. "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."

Amid all storms of nature now, and troubles within, and in the final crash of worlds, God's people are undismayed. Strength for all trials is their portion. His blessing, which conveys all joy, is on them. Christ's legacy is peace. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you."

PSALM 30

Sorrows are transient. Joys are forever. May we so mourn, that we may be comforted!

1. "I will extol You, O Lord; for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me."

A train of mercies fills the Psalmist with thanksgivings. He had been brought low. His foes were ready to exult, but he was rescued. A saving arm had raised him. He who thus uplifts should be uplifted. Praise should magnify deliverance. In this praise there is the echo of the voice of Jesus. In His experience, also, His saints concur. They should sing as He sang.

2, 3. "O Lord my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me. O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit."

These bodies are exposed to countless maladies. Our souls, also, suffer from disease and weakness. Prayer brings the Good Physician to our aid. He comes, and from His wings drop health and freshness. Sometimes the body totters over the grave. Sometimes spiritual life is almost extinct. But the Lord can grant revival. To all appearance the life of Jesus had expired. He was lain, as a dead man, in the grave; but He arose to live forevermore. In spirit we here see the glorious resurrection. Let all the members who revived in Him adopt these notes of praise.

4, 5. "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For His anger endures but a moment; in His favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

The believer feels that a universal chorus should rise as incense to the skies. Every heart should swell the hymn. All share the mercies, all should return thanksgivings. Memory suggests abundant themes. In all His dealings God is a God of holiness and truth. May we delight to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." There are times when lovingkindness is obscured by signs of displeasure. His seeming anger is as the chill of death; but soon the cloud withdraws,

and favor, which is life, returns. The darkness passes, fears vanish. The joyful morning dawns, and all is bright.

Here we see the resurrection-morn of Christ. There had been darkness, but it soon vanished. There is now the brightness of eternal day. We too have now a night of trouble, but the trouble is light; it lasts but for a moment. It works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we weep still let us sing, "Joy comes in the morning."

6, 7. "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled."

David was raised from deep troubles to great prosperity. Zion's stronghold seemed to be impregnable. Sleeping in the lap of ease, he forgot his true support. The Lord in mercy shook the pillow of carnal security, and trouble brought him to a right mind. *Seasons of prosperity are full of peril.* They induce forgetfulness of Him by whom alone we stand. But God remembers us when we turn from Him. He looks away. Troubles instantly rush in. *The shining of His face is the true joy.* His look averted makes the prospect dark.

8, 9, 10. "I cried to You, 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 You? shall it declare Your truth? Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; Lord, be my helper."

Trouble is sent in mercy. It subserves a blessed end. It rouses the sleepy soul from dangerous lethargy. It is a scourge which drives the careless to the mercy-seat. Here, when God's smile ceases, importunate petitions are in full activity. The gate of mercy opens to the returning knock. *Faith is an inventive grace. From every trouble it can draw a plea.* It here reasons, My destruction brings no glory to the courts of heaven; if my lips are silent in the grave, no longer can my praise be heard; my grateful tribute can no more set forth Your

truth. Then the prayer renews its strength, and cries for audience, mercy, help. Therefore may our faith gather strong arguments to supplicate for joyful resurrection. Let our deep longings ever be to join the eternal hallelujahs, which are God's glory in the highest.

11, 12. "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever."

Images of exuberant joy conclude this ode. Mourning is gone. The sackcloth of woe is put aside. Every movement testifies exhilaration. The girdle of the loins is gladness. For what purpose is this glad exchange? The design is that God may be loudly praised by every utterance of the lips. This scene will soon be realized. The day of Christ draws near. Then will be fullness of joy. Then, O Lord our God, we will give thanks to You forever.

PSALM 31

The believer's security is in God in every trial, through life, and in death. May we be kept by His mighty power through faith unto eternal life!

1. "In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness."

The voice from the cross decides that we have here the thoughts and feelings of our blessed Lord. In the exercise of faith He leads the way. In prayer for favors He is our example. It is good to tell our God how fully we rely on Him. We may be bold to ask deliverance on the plea of righteous covenant and holy promises.

2, 3. "Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily; be my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me. For You are my rock and

my fortress; therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me, and guide me."

The grace to be importunate in prayer is very precious, and should be diligently cultivated. Faith deals familiarly, and supplicates that God would take the attitude of an earnest listener, and drink in every cry, and speedily arise to help. Faith rightfully expects that God would be true to the character which He has revealed. It argues, God's glorious perfections will be tarnished if the believer strays unguided.

4. "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me; for You are my strength."

The blessed Jesus was exposed to many crafty wiles, but never were His feet entangled. Snares on all sides beset us. Conscious of inability to extricate ourselves, let us look to the strong to put forth a mighty hand, most mightily to extricate us.

5. "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Let us bless Jesus that His dying lips have given special sanctity to these words. How many since have thus breathed their last breath? May they be our constant utterance, for we know not what word may be our last. When we assuredly believe that God has redeemed us by His Son's precious blood, and are persuaded that His holy Word is truth, we may, without one fear, commit our spirits to His care. The custody is safe. He must be greater than God, who plucks our souls from His protecting hands.

6, 7, 8. "I have hated those who regard lying vanities; but I trust in the Lord. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy; for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities; and have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large room."

Many vain cheats are impudent to deceive us. Riches, honor, titles, reason, intellect, invite us to rely on their aid. But they are empty bubbles. Their promises are fraud. The believer flees with abhorrence from those who walk in these deceits. He has a large volume of experience. In trouble he has found that God's thoughts were on him. All his adverse circumstances have been lovingly regarded. In all his ways of sorrow God has been by his side. Deliverance and enlargement have been near. Great mercy has been shown; great gladness will acknowledge it.

9, 10. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with grief, yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed."

Our first thoughts here are thoughts of Jesus. He bore our sins; on Him our every iniquity was laid. He stood before God, laden with all our sins. By imputation, He was a mass of guilt. This would be acute anguish to His soul. Grief would be His constant comrade. Sorrow would plough furrows on His brow. Declining strength would show the increased woe. He would often sigh, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble."

Here, also, is the anguish of the conscience-stricken. When sin is once seen in all its hideous sinfulness, when guilt before God is once discovered, the misery would drive reason from its seat, unless the grief found vent in cries for mercy.

11, 12, 13. "I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance; those who saw me outside 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."

The Spirit vividly foreshows the sufferings of Jesus when He was despised and rejected of men. His chosen followers forsook Him and fled. He was carried as a dead man to the tomb. He was regarded as a broken piece of pottery worthless for further use. The Jews conspired to destroy Him. Nothing could allay their malice. Their cry was urgent, 'Let Him be crucified.'

Much of this cruel usage was experienced by the *type*. David fled as an outcast. Conspirators laid plots. Evil counselors took evil counsel. Similar enmity burns against every true disciple. Outward restraints may bind, but the inward hatred is the same.

14. "But I trusted in you, O Lord; I said, You are my God."

God is the refuge of His people in all ages. To Him they fly. In Him they are secure.

15. "My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me."

There is a flood of comfort in the thought that God's unfailing providence orders all our matters. Each event is surely ordered. If without Him no sparrow falls, surely without Him no evil prevails against us. His hand is over

all. He can deliver from each foe's malice, and each persecutor's rage. Knowing this, let us direct our prayer to Him, the only source of help. 16, 17, 18. "*Make Your face shine upon Your servant; save me for Your mercies' sake. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon You; 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.*"

The misery of the godly is the absence of the smile of heaven. The soul cannot be still while such darkness and such chill continues. It knows that the Lord can instantly cause brightness to return. Hence

the strong petition, "Make Your face shine." This light is full salvation. Therefore faith adds, "Save me for Your mercies' sake." God's mercy is the only plea, but it is mighty and prevails. *Mercy implored is mercy won.* Grace ceases to be grace if it rejects the suppliant's cry. *Prayer will never hang down its head abashed.*

But a day of confusion quickly comes. Wicked lips spoke with proud contempt against the blessed Jesus. *Excuse will fail before the great white throne.* Shame will then close their lips. When slander assails us, let us reflect, How short is this day of evil! We shall sing loudly, while the lips of lies are only opened to bewail.

19. "Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who do not fear; which You have wrought for those who trust in You before the sons of men!"

Grateful experience cannot be silent. Exclamation will break forth. In the midst of trials, comforts more than abound. God's treasure-house is full of joys. The believer finds that the store exceeds all thought, and baffles praise. He can only shout, 'How great is Your goodness!' Truly, it is great as God is great. To measure the infinitudes of grace is to measure God Himself. His precious dealings towards His favored children are often so conspicuously displayed, that enmity itself cannot deny that God is truly with them.

20. "You shall hide them in the secret of Your presence from the pride of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

When haughty man insults, and tongues send forth poison darts, the child of God has a sure hiding place. His God is present. He screens himself behind His sheltering wings. He enters the inmost curtains of a secreting tent. He is hidden in light. It is a great mystery. None can explain but those who feel it.

21. "Blessed be the Lord; for He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city."

Such, doubtless, would be David's feeling when he reigned in Zion; and, doubtless, such would be His praise. But this is especially the believer's song. He has a strong city. God has appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks. He enters into Christ. He sits secure in an impregnable fort. No foe can pass the gates. No might can make impression on the walls. The foundations are exceedingly strong. The towers over-top the skies. Serene in His fortress he learns many lessons, and feasts on precious truths. They all speak of mercy, grace, love; and all these sweet displays are wonderful. Wondrous indeed the kindness which looked on miserable rebels, and sent Jesus to seek and save! Wondrous the scheme! Wondrous the effects! Wonder of wonders that we should have interest in it! We can only cry, "Blessed God."

22. "For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes; nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You."

The movements of the believer's mind are quite a paradox. Gleams of sunshine follow the cloudy gloom. He fears amid all confidence; he trusts amid all misgivings. He speaks in haste; but still his soul is tranquil steadfastness. He thinks that he is utterly rejected; but still he prays. He believes that all hope is gone; but answers come to every cry.

23. "O love the Lord, all you His saints; for the Lord preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer."

Abundant motives call to the love of God; not least His constant care of His true children, and His sure vengeance on proud foes. Let us trust, and we are safe. They who transgress shall surely be requited.

24. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."

Trust must rely only on our God. All other confidences are empty vanity. They who thus trust may cast away all fear. Let them meet every trial bold as the lion. Courage will become more courageous. Strength from above will make the heart more strong.

PSALM 32

We are taught the blessedness of sin's pardon through the faith of Christ. O Lord, give us this blessing, and we shall be blessed!

1, 2. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

If he alone was blessed whom no sin had ever stained, this world would have a wretched doom! If he alone was blessed, whose feet had never strayed from godly ways, where could we hide our heads? But blessedness belongs to the transgressor PARDONED—to the sinner, whose sins are no more seen by God—to the guilty, to whose account the guilt is no more reckoned. We are transgressors, we are sinners, *we are deep-steeped in guilt*. Is this blessedness given to us?

Yes, truly, if through grace we have received Christ. There is redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins. His cross redeems from transgression, iniquity, and sin. His beautiful righteousness so hides all guilt, that God's omniscient eye no more discerns it. His blood wipes out all record of iniquity. For the believer's sins may be searched for, but they shall not be found. Such blessedness is the fruit of faith. Oh, precious grace! Blessed are those to whom it is freely given! From faith's deep roots all virtuous blossoms spring. The honest mind, the truthful heart, the honest purpose, are preeminently its fruits.

3, 4. "When I kept silence, my bones grew old, through my groaning all the day long; for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer."

Great is the anguish of the soul, when first the Spirit reveals sin. Day brings no joy, and night supplies no ease. An intolerable burden oppresses the mind. This is the Lord's hand. Thus He shakes from security's delusive pillow. Thus He directs the footsteps to the cross. But until Christ is seen, what misery is undergone! Feverish heat dries up the pores. The frame is parched, as plains beneath the sultry sun. The body weakens; the bones are tottering as in extreme old age; the howls of grief betray the tortured mind.

5. "I acknowledge my sin to You, and I have not hidden my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

At length relief is found. God is revealed as pardoning all sin in Christ. The glories of the saving cross are shown. The contrite sinner flies in haste. He lies in deep humility. He pours out every secret of his melted heart. He recounts the train of life-long iniquity; He confesses, "Thus and thus have I done." The mass is mountain-high. The stain is deeper than the scarlet-dye. The language of the cross is heard—all is forgiven! all is blotted out!

6. "For this shall every one that is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near him."

Because God is a God ready to forgive, His people throng the mercy-seat. If no mercy could be found, no prayers would plead. But no delays may check. Now God extends the scepter of His grace. But the morrow may proclaim, 'Too late.' Prayer brings security. Floods of trouble may rush in from all sides, but the godly are borne above all in a peaceful ark. A fiery deluge soon will drown

the world; but the fierce billows will not reach the ransomed of the Lord.

7. "You are my hiding-place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance."

No trouble can touch those who are securely hidden in God. The preserved shall dwell amid incessant songs. And every song shall testify, "You have delivered us from the wrath to come!"

8, 9. "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be 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 you."

At each moment we lack wisdom. At each moment God waits to guide. We have large promises. Let us largely plead them. If our eyes are turned to Him, in His eye we shall read His will. Let us with all docility obey. The beasts give warning. Sharp discipline restrains the senseless and the stubborn.

10, 11. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."

Many sorrows now—many sorrows forever, must be the sinner's doom. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Justice demands it.

In contrast view the faithful. Mercy precedes them. Mercy follows them. Mercy gleams on their right hand. Mercy smiles on their left. They dwell in mercy, and God's mercy is salvation.

We cannot ponder too much the character of God's people. They are righteous. They are sincere. As such they have a right to joy. But all their joy has Jesus as its source. SELF only awakens grief and

contempt. But they rejoice in the Lord, and in His finished work. May this delight be ever ours.

PSALM 33

All praise is due to God, for all He is—for all that He has done. May we begin the praise which shall not end!

1, 2, 3. "Let the godly sing with joy to the Lord, for it is fitting to praise him. Praise the Lord with melodies on the lyre; make music for him on the ten-stringed harp. Sing new songs of praise to him; play skillfully on the harp and sing with joy."

When we realize the blessings of salvation, we must feel that every breath should praise the Lord; and our whole life should be thanksgiving. We should awaken every power, and enlist all art to magnify His name. This service is God's due, and should be duly rendered.

4, 5. "For the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth. He loves righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

His Word, His works call loudly for this tribute. They dazzle with the luster of perfection. It must be so, for they spring from a fountain which is pure holiness. Survey the earth in all its marvelous variety. Each object, seen by faith's enlightened eye, shows the impress of benevolence.

6, 7, 8, 9. "The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. He gave the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. Let everyone in the world fear the Lord, and let everyone stand in awe of him. For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command."

We adore the glory of the eternal Trinity. We adore the Word, co-eternal and co-efficient with the Father. By Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. We adore the Spirit moving upon the face of the waters. We adore triune omnipotence. Without effort or tedious process the word is spoken, and all creation bolts into life, confirmed in perfect beauty. Who will not reverence such glorious power? Throughout earth's length and breadth, man's posture should be reverence and awe.

10, 11. "The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing; He makes the devices of the people of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

But man in proud madness plots against Almightiness. The result has ever been the same. God's glory shines more gloriously. Opponents perish in shame and merited confusion. So it must ever be. The glories of eternity, the hallelujahs of the ransomed, will proclaim that all His purposes have triumphed; that all His plans have prospered; that all His people are forever saved; that all His foes are brought to nothing.

12. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance."

Among the multitudes of earth, happy are those who reject all idols and all vain confidence, and choose the Lord to be their God. They are blessed beyond what word can speak, or thought conceive. They are the loved from eternity. They are the called of the Spirit. They choose Him because He first chose them. They fly to Him, because He bends their will, and gives them power.

13, 14, 15. "The Lord looks from heaven; He beholds all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike; He considers all their works."

An eye from heaven pervades the world. It penetrates all space and looks internally into every breast. There is no heart which His hand framed not. And every step is exposed to His omniscience.

16, 17. "The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you."

Real strength is not in earthly things. Those who seek help below the heavens seek it from a source too low. God only is real power. Much more will they find disappointment who trust to self in matters of salvation. Christ wrought it out. Christ only gives.

18, 19. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."

God's children have most beautiful lineaments (or features). They reverently fear; they confidently trust. They are well known in heaven. He who gave grace, discerns it. They may be brought into distress, but they come forth uninjured. At last they reach the haven of eternal life.

20, 21, 22. "Our soul waits 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 Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You."

Faith is a happy grace. Indeed, no true joy lives except as springing from this root. Is it not joy to feel equipped against every foe? What can injure those who have God for their shield? What can effectually resist those who have God for their help?

But in all joy faith is most humble. In its most lofty song, it bows the knee. In its most happy hope it cries for mercy. Let Your mercy, O

Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You. Such is our prayer.
Let speedy answers come!

PSALM 34

God's never-failing care demands unfailing praise. Sheltered beneath the refuge of His wings, may we sing gratefully!

1, 2. "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 of it and be glad."

We hear the voice of Jesus. On earth He dwelt in prayer and praise. Shall the Head thus speak, and shall not each member lengthen out the strain? No moment comes which bears not blessings on its wings. Let each moment carry back thanksgivings. We should be ceaseless in telling out our mercies, that the lowly sons of God may be witnesses of our joys.

3, 4, 5, 6. "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 to 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."

This precious record of experience is common to the whole family of faith. They have the common portion of fear and trouble; but in all distress their course is the same. They seek the Lord. They turn their eyes to Him. To Him they raise the suppliant cry. They all are gladdened by the like result. They are all heard—relieved, delivered, saved. They never hang their heads depressed in shame. Oh! happy people! happy lot! One, also, is their grateful task. They call on all around to swell their praise.

7. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them."

If eyes were opened to behold surrounding scenes, what companies of heavenly guards would brightly shine around! Their ministering aid averts innumerable evils. They were sent in support to our glorious Head. Unseen, as truly their camp defends us.

8, 9, 10. "O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man who trusts in Him. O fear the Lord, you His saints; for there is no lack to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

Heavenly counsels call us to know by glad experience the goodness of the Lord. The cup is brought to our very lips. We are invited to exhaust these waters of delight. The strongest in their strength may suffer famine; but all abundance of real food is the rich table of the humble saint.

11. "Come, you children, listen to Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

The heart of Jesus calls us children. He bids us to sit as children at His feet.

Blessed are the lessons of His lips! The foremost is the fear of God. Oh, may we truly learn that fear!

12, 13, 14. "What man is he who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

The love of earthly life is natural to man; but life eternal is to see the goodness and the glory of the Lord. This is the result of grace. Where grace is freely given, the evidence is surely seen. It is no

barren tree. The lips are guarded. The tongue is free from deceit. The ways of the Lord are diligently sought. The peaceable fruits of righteousness abound.

15, 16, 17, 18. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit."

Delight in prayer is evidence of grace. The righteous cannot be silent. The watchful Lord hears every movement of their humble spirits. He quickly comes to bind up the mourning heart, and to deliver from the grasp of sorrow.

How sad is the reverse of this sweet picture! There is a multitude who throng the paths of evil. The Lord's averted look to them is misery and death.

19, 20. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken."

Jesus at once appears. We learn from this particular, to *seek Him throughout these hymns*. He never is far distant from the eye of faith. When He was lifted up on the cross, the soldiers drew near to break His legs; but He was marvelously dead, and so they touched Him not. He drank to the dregs the cup of sorrow; but sorrow issued in eternal joy.

Believers tread, also, the path of countless sorrows, but they lead to everlasting rest. No vital injury ensues. The Lord restrains the malice of the foe. There may be many wounds, but they are not to death.

21 ,22. "Evil shall slay the wicked; and those who hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeems the soul of His servants; and none of those who trust in Him shall be desolate."

The wicked embrace evil. It is a viper which will suck their blood. They greedily drink the cup, but it is deadly poison. Oh! seek the Lord. He gives His Son to be complete redemption. He gives the joy of His presence now. There is now no lonely day, and soon there will be union to the vast company of the countless saved. May we be there!

PSALM 35

Appeal is made to God for help. Many are our times of need. At all times we have access to our God.

1, 2, 3. "Plead my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against those who persecute me; say to my soul, I am your salvation."

Jesus would thus oftentimes cry. None ever felt as He did the bitterness of man's malignity. He earnestly implored that God would maintain His cause. We thus are taught the way of help; and not of help only, but of perfect peace. For no one can disturb the soul, to which God whispers, "I am your salvation."

4, 5, 6, 7, 8. "Humiliate and disgrace those trying to kill me; turn them back in confusion. Blow them away like chaff in the wind—a wind sent by the angel of the Lord. Make their path dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them. Although I did them no wrong, they laid a trap for me. Although I did them no wrong, they dug a pit for me. So let sudden ruin overtake them! Let

them be caught in the snare they set for me! Let them fall to destruction in the pit they dug for me."

Thus Jesus prayed. In such prayer we have the clear prediction. Those who plot against Him plot against themselves. Into their own net they rush. Into their own pit they fall. The day draws near when this destruction will be witnessed. Perfect justice will endorse the doom.

9, 10. Then I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be glad because he rescues me. I will praise him from the bottom of my heart; "Lord, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the weak and helpless from the strong? Who else protects the poor and needy from those who want to rob them?"

Present deliverance awakens present praise; but full joy waits for the future. Then joy will not so much regard the overthrow of foes, as the Lord's glory. The lips and every faculty shall sing to Him, who alone rescued from overpowering might. Without God we are weak to stand.

11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. "Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of things I don't even know about. They repay me with evil for the good I do. I am sick with despair. Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I even fasted and prayed for them, but my prayers returned unanswered. I was sad, as though they were my friends or family, as if I were grieving for my own mother. But they are glad now that I am in trouble; they gleefully join together against me. I am attacked by people I don't even know; they hurl slander at me continually. They mock me with the worst kind of profanity, and they snarl at me."

David's experience foreshadows Jesus. The judgment-hall presents itself to view. We have another proof that Jesus mainly speaks in these inspired hymns. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of

prophecy." Grace ever seeks to melt by kindness the hardened heart, and to return all evil with abundant good.

17, 18. "How long, O Lord, will you look on and do nothing? Rescue me from their fierce attacks. Protect my life from these lions! Then I will thank you in front of the entire congregation. I will praise you before all the people."

The cross again appears. We hear the earnest cry of the uplifted Jesus; but faith still sees that rescue is at hand. Promises are made that praise shall speak of mercy. When congregations of the faithful meet, and the Spirit works, there is fulfillment.

19, 20, 21. "Let not those who are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause. For they do not speak peace; but they devise deceitful matters against those who are quiet in the land. Yes, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, Aha! our eye has seen it."

These plaintive sounds are from the cross. It was deep aggravation that the sufferings came from those whom He by dying sought to save. How sad that the requital of such love should be such hate! If such be the treatment of the holy Head, what must the guilty members expect?

22, 23, 24, 25, 26. "This You have seen, O Lord; keep not silence; O Lord, do not be far from me. Stir up Yourself, and awake to my judgment, even to my cause, my God and my Lord. Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Your 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, who rejoice at my hurt; let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me."

In these petitions we have assurance of the coming judgment. Jesus is always heard. God will arise. Confusion shall destroy them. *Let us feel true compassion when the ungodly rage. Their gnashing of teeth comes on quickly.*

27, 28. "Let those shout for joy, and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; yes, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness, and of Your praise, all the day long."

Faith gathers joy and peace from pondering the glorious outcome. The conflict may be long and fierce, but victory is near. The song of triumph soon will be heard. Due glory will be given to God. His righteousness shall be exalted. His praises shall be very high. May our glad voices swell the Conqueror's song!

PSALM 36

Two very diverse views appear. The wickedness of the wicked is very vile. The glory of God shines brightly. May our thoughts rise from earth and rest in heaven!

1. "Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain them."

There is obscurity in these words; but the truth they seem to teach is, that sin has a voice. It loudly speaks in the vile sinner's course, and the godly have intelligence to hear. Within their heart the echo sounds, that the transgressor does not fear God. Dreadful is this state. The Lord of all power and might is ignored and is defied.

2, 3, 4. "For he flatters himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity is found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he has left off to be wise, and to do good. He devises mischief upon

his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he abhors not evil."

Dark colors are here laid. Conscience is steeped in deadness. The wicked clings to self-deception until discovery reveals his guilt. He shuns the path of holy wisdom. In secret hours he plots iniquity. He devises schemes of evil. No holy dread restrains him from commission. The evil thoughts bear fruits of evil life.

5. "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds."

The eye of faith turns quickly from the hateful scene. It seeks relief in God. It looks above, and rejoices in sights of glory. Mercy is seen. It sits enthroned in heaven. It reigns supreme to bless God's happy children. By its side is God's unfailing truth. It pierces the clouds. It is co-inhabitant of the heaven of heavens. Let us delight to lift our gaze, and see mercy and truth pouring down blessings on us!

6. "Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O Lord, You preserve man and beast."

Eternal righteousness rules all God's dealings. Ofttimes we are perplexed. We cannot understand the purpose. But nothing can cause God's righteousness to waver. It is fairly rooted as the everlasting hills. It is far easier to uproot their base than to subvert His equity. The orderings of His rule are far beyond our power to fathom. The lines of reason cannot descend into the deep abyss. But all is well. It is our wisdom to trust His heart, when we are too weak to trace His dealings. We see a gracious hand preserves all living beings. The least of His creatures receive food. His care will not fail us.

7. "How excellent is Your lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings."

No tongue can adequately praise God's loving mercies. They exceed all praise. They are inscribed on providential dealings. They are written in letters of gold throughout the Gospel-page. Who in the Spirit's light can see the Cross, and not exclaim, Our God is Love! Attractive power goes forth, and allures to Him for shelter from every enemy; for comfort at every moment. May our chosen home be shelter by His side!

8. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Your house; and You shall make them drink of the river of Your pleasures."

What precious joys await true faith! A feast is spread, super-abounding in spiritual delight. The Word, the promises, the ordinances present enriching food. A *river* never dry, ever full and ever flowing, invites to constant draughts of pleasure. Let us scorn the broken cistern of this world's vanity, and dwell beside these heavenly streams until we reach the land, in which the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and shall lead us to living fountains of water.

9. "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light shall we see light."

In the world is barren emptiness. It holds nothing; therefore, nothing can it yield. But God in Christ is an unfathomable spring of life. Life spiritual and eternal flow in deep streams from Him. Oh! let us drink; let us drink freely and abundantly, and thus live in joy, and live forever.

10, 11, 12. "O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You; and Your 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."

Assurance restrains not, but rather quickens, prayer. Continuance of love is sought while it is known that love can never fail. But let it never be forgotten that these prospects belong only to the happy seed, who receive God as reconciled in Christ; who know Him as their Father, and walk before Him in pure truth. While we pray constantly for deliverance from the assaults of wicked men, we may look onward to the time when all their evil shall have ended. They shall fall and never more rise. *If we are made to differ, let us sing praises to God's free grace!*

PSALM 37

The temporal prosperity of wicked men soon vanishes. True happiness is the portion of the godly. May such be our lot!

1, 2. "Do not fret because of evil-doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity; For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

Wisdom here speaks from the high throne. Prosperity may smile at the bright circumstances of the wicked. But let not our eyes view grudgingly. How long will it continue? Their mirthful day is as the life of the frail grass. Its greenness is for a little moment; it soon dies.

3, 4, 5, 6. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day."

We see here the path in which true blessedness abounds. It is here depicted as unwavering faith—the exercise of every Christian grace, the choice of God as all delight, and total surrender of our ways to

Him. Then no good thing will be withheld. Every holy desire will be gratified. God will maintain our cause. No clouds of calumny shall obscure our righteous dealings. Our integrity shall brightly shine as the sun at midday.

7, 8. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not yourself in anyway to do evil."

The happiest posture of the soul is calm repose in God—a patient trust in His all-ruling hand. The natural heart may feel the stir of irritation, when evil plans obtain success. Let grace prevail to deaden such motions, and to guide far from outbreaks of vexation.

9, 10, 11. "For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those who wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yes, you shall 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."

Envy will die, if the true end of evil be remembered. Their transient joy leads to uttermost woe. Their little flare subsides in blackness of darkness forever. But what sweet prospects shine before the meek servants of the Lord! What precious promises allure them! We look for the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness dwells. We know that yet a little while and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever!

12, 13, 14, 15. "The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; for He sees 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 are

of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken."

We are tempted to repine when all is bright around the wicked. We are more tempted to despond when their malignity is rampant. But how different will be our feeling when we discern that all their malice is their own injury! The Lord's hand so rules their violence, that their blows fall on themselves; their swords are sheathed in their own hearts; they fight against themselves; they shall fall self-slain. When faith sees things in true light, it will be no more sad. No fears will trouble. Security will be realized.

16, 17. "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the Lord upholds the righteous."

The blessing of the Lord gives worth to riches, and dignifies the poorest lot. With the Lord's smile the humble table is rich; without it the tables of the wealthy contain no comfort. Soon the wicked will be crushed, while the righteous rise to glory!

18, 19, 20. "The Lord knows the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be forever. 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."

All good is pledged to the sons of God in time and through eternity. The plenty granted to the wicked only fattens them for the day of slaughter. As curling smoke soon vanishes, so shall they disappear. May these warnings not be lost! May the Spirit bring the promises with power to our hearts!

21, 22. "The wicked borrows and does not repay; but the righteous shows mercy and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and those who are cursed of Him shall be cut off."

If abundance flows into the coffers of the wicked, it soon flows out; destitution then comes in. Help from others must be sought; and dishonesty holds back repayment. The righteous, from his humble store, is able to be kind and generous. The blessing of the Lord is on them, and shall place them as heirs of that world where all things are new. But the curse devotes the wicked to eternal woe.

23, 24. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and He delights in His way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand."

What precious truths here offer comfort! Our path seems sometimes to be dark; but let us seek the Spirit's guidance, and plead this promise, which ensures right direction, and God's smile upon our path. Our weak steps too often totter, and Satan seems ready to cast us down; but help from heaven is near. We are not left to lie in mire of sin. We are not finally cast off. God's hand uplifts us, and gives sure support until life's journey ends.

25, 26. "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 lends; and his seed is blessed."

The Psalmist states the experience of a long life. Kindness and liberality are signs of grace. The good man leaves a legacy of blessing to his children. The smile of the Lord shines upon children's children.

27, 28, 29. "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever; but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell there forever."

The Spirit multiplies grand promises to enrich the followers of Christ. What a cluster here sparkles! The love of God will always beam upon their path. No real desertion shall ever leave them

helpless. Security is the realm in which they dwell. The full inheritance of faith is theirs. Eternity is the measure of their happiness. May the Spirit fix these truths upon our hearts, and help us mightily to depart from evil, and to do good! May our holiness be sure evidence that we have received grace!

30, 31. "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

Here is the portrait of the blessed Jesus. Grace was ever poured upon His lips. His words were perfect wisdom. His heart was love without alloy. His feet were ever steadfast in untainted holiness. Such is our bright example. May our distinction ever be the mouth of wisdom, the innocent tongue, the heart of love, the upright walk!

32, 33. "The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged."

The words are primarily predictive of our ever-blessed *Head*. Spies marked His words and ways. The cry was, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! A mock trial preceded condemnation. But iniquity could not prevail. He rose the Conqueror of death. He mounted to the right hand of God.

The *servants* must not expect to find more kindness. But let not the righteous fear persecutions. They strengthen faith; they ripen grace; they give occasion for faithful testimony. They prove reality of grace. They lead to sure deliverance and final glory.

34, 35, 36. "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall 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; yes, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Line upon line, precept upon precept, forbid impatience. They call to the patience of hope and the obedient course. The promise is again and again repeated that we shall dwell eternally blessed in a new scene.

A vivid picture shows how short-lived is ungodly prosperity. We see a tree of verdant beauty. Deep are its roots. Wide spreading are its branches. We admire it today. Tomorrow we seek it, and it is gone. Thus while we gaze, the wicked pass away.

37, 38. "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."

Can we claim interest in these descriptions of God's children? If so, let us cast off all fear. Many may be our troubles on the stormy billows of time; but we shall in perfect peace enter the eternal haven. The ungodly have their voyage of restlessness, and their end is misery.

39, 40. "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."

Salvation is a free-grace gift. God wills it. God achieves it. God bestows it. The gift is without repentance. It is never recalled. The saved are forever saved. No enemy shall prevail. God, by His Spirit, works faith in their hearts. They trust in Him. He strengthens. He upholds. He calls to heaven. And heaven they attain.

PSALM 38

The Psalmist, in deep sense of sin, and writhing under just chastisement, spreads his sad condition before God.

1. "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath; neither chaste me in Your hot displeasure."

What anguish follows subsequent to sin! Sin is the prolific source of every woe. It sows vile seed, and crops of suffering spring up. It is so in the case of God's own children. Through lack of vigilance, through restraint of prayer, through deafness to the Spirit's voice, through stiflings of conscience, through yielding to the craving of the flesh, and neglect of the sacred Word, they often stumble and fall grievously. God sees. His displeasure is justly kindled. Indignation puts forth angry hand. The scourge is not withheld, and miserable is the offender's case.

But he well knows that his afflictions spring not from the dust. He knows the hand which chastises is the hand of paternal love. He feels that his sufferings call him to the mercy-seat. He cries not for entire removal of what is so fully merited, but for alleviation and relief. He pleads, Let not anger wholly crush me. Let not hot displeasure be too fierce a furnace. "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath; neither chaste me in Your hot displeasure."

2, 3, 4, 5. "For Your arrows stick fast in me, and Your hand presses me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stench, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness."

As piercing arrows inflict rankling pain, as heavy burdens overwhelm and crush, thus sense of sin, and realized displeasure of God, bring agony of soul, and lay it low in sorrow. A wounded and bruised spirit, who can bear? There is close sympathy between the mind and body. The wasted flesh reflects the pining spirit, and the whole frame shows ravages of malady. Iniquities, which seemed at first but tiny drops, soon swell into the billows of the overwhelming deep, and threaten to engulf the struggling sufferer. When the

floodgates open, descending torrents come, as a drowning deluge. No images can exhaust the anguish. The putrid sores but faintly show the miseries of the sin-stricken soul.

6, 7, 8. "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 groaned by reason of the anguish of my heart."

The Spirit still draws back the veil and shows in fearful colors the deep afflictions of the awakened conscience. Trouble occupies the heart. The head hangs down. The stooping gait is evidence of failing strength. Let those who seek to find delight in sin ponder this portrait. Through the whole day, from rising to declining sun, mourning is the constant comrade. The falling tears, the sighing heart, proclaim that misery presents no respite. The ruined health adds woe to woe. Loud lamentations prove that deep anxiety prevails within. Who can contemplate these results, and not detest the cruel monster!

9. "Lord, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hidden from You."

Out of these fearful depths there is a ready access to the throne of grace. The afflicted soul looks upward and appeals to God. No direct application is expressed, but attention is humbly craved to the desires which have a language in the ears of God. "The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit."

10, 11, 12. "My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off. Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; and those who seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long."

The Psalmist, in the bitterness of his sorrow, enlarges on the aggravations of his misery. When sorrows multiply, how sweet is the solace of sympathizing friends! The complaint is heard that not only such relief was denied, but that enemies endeavored to ensnare him, and ceased not to propagate injurious deceptions.

Faith sees that a greater than David is here. The "Man of Sorrows" thus shows the writhings of His heart, when He appeared as by imputation, the bearer of His people's sins. While in spirit we hear His moans, let us bless Him from our inmost souls for all *His substitutional anguish*. He was bruised for our iniquities. He was wounded for our sins.

13, 14. "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Affliction's school is not a joyous place. Lessons of mirth and merriment are not learned there. Sorrow sits pensive on the pupil's brow; but it is a sorrow which leads to abiding fruits of peace. Tribulation works patience. Proud petulance receives a death-blow. Reproof upbraids not. Meek submission bows its humble head.

Surely here the blessed Jesus is conspicuous. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." No cruel taunts drew from His lips an angry reply. Majestic silence was His rebuke to Pilate. To keep our mouths as it were with a bridle is divine art. This is the blessed fruit of discipline under sorrow's scourge.

15. "For in You, O Lord, do I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God."

The true believer looks not to himself for power of defense or triumph over foes. His hope is fixed on Heaven. He knows that aid is at hand, even the aid which God alone can give. His prayers will

stir up God to help, even the God who promises to hear. Thus patience works experience, and experience hope.

16. "For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me; when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me."

Faith is permitted humbly to expostulate with God. Come, let us reason together. Audience with God is craved on the plea that if no answer comes, and no upholding grace supported, ungodly triumph would rejoice, and God's great name would be blasphemed. *God's children are always watched with spiteful malice.* The slightest tottering in the upward path causes the foe to raise insulting head, and boast of his happy and superior lot.

17, 18. "For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

The believer is always conscious that in himself no strength resides. Unless upheld, he will surely fall. He knows his weakness; and he deeply mourns. He knows how often he has sadly fallen. He tells out his iniquity into the ears of God, and spreads out his sorrowing case.

19, 20. "But my enemies are lively, and they are strong; and those who hate me wrongfully are multiplied. Those also who render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow the thing that is good."

If outward circumstances proved internal state, the ungodly would often seem to have the favorite's lot. Lively mirth is frequently in their dwelling. Their bow remains in strength; their ranks expand in numbers. The Psalmist witnessed this superficial prosperity. In every age the enemies of God are thus allowed to have their short-lived triumph. The godly are not thereby provoked either to distrust God, or to retaliate on their foes. They know that their godliness is the cause of all their persecution, and that the path of righteousness leads through the land of hate and cruelty. But their constant effort is

to overcome evil with good; and to be meek followers of the patient Lamb of God, the holy Jesus, who could testify, "Many good works have I shown you from My Father, for which of those works do you stone Me?"

21, 22. "Forsake me not, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation."

Prayer is *the believer's constant refuge*. Blessed are the trials which impel to the mercy-seat. Here triple supplications call down the presence of the Lord.

Forsake me not—do not be far from me, or be very near me—make haste to help me. The prayer is intensified by the invocation, O Lord, O my God, O Lord, my salvation. It is a grand privilege to be permitted to use such wrestling earnestness. It will assuredly prevail. Answers will richly come; and God will show Himself a very present help in time of trouble.

PSALM 39

The Psalmist resolves to be guarded in his speech. He reflects on the brevity of human life, and the vanity of earthly show. He prays in prospect of his near departure.

1, 2, 3. "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 I spoke with my tongue."

A grievous picture meets our eyes. Sad it is, and sadly common. The children of God are surrounded by the children of the evil one. Provocations press them to utter strong reproof; but holy wisdom restrains impatient utterance. The bridled tongue avails more than

indignant remonstrance. But the inward agitation, like smoldering embers, will break forth in flames.

Again we see the meek and lowly Jesus. Amid the frantic fury and cruel mockings of His unjust judges and the raging crowd, no railing word breaks from His holy lips.

4. "Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

Troubles find mitigation in the thought that they are linked to fleeting time, and soon must reach their end. Sense of brief tenure and near dissolution check all outbreaks of impatience. Therefore it is good to pray, 'Lord, teach us our frailty.'

5, 6. "Behold, You have made my days as a handbreadth, and my age is as nothing before You; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain; he heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them."

The tiniest time is a fitting emblem of an earthly course. Its measure is as nothing when compared with eternal things. The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal.

Look at the state which worldlings prize as the pinnacle of bliss. Let riches abound, and honors crown the brow, and power raise to loftiest station; let health bloom brightly, and strength nerve the limbs, let no worldly wish be ungratified—the whole is but a shadow, an empty husk, an unsubstantial facade. It is as the flower of the grass—green in the morning, in the evening dry and withered. The riches piled with toil, anxiety, and ceaseless effort, must be left. To whom? Uncertainty conceals the heir. No mind can tell who shall get them.

7. "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? my hope is in You."

The believer waits in full assurance that aid will come from heaven in God's good time. Let all trials be welcomed which brighten the rays of godly hope.

8, 9, 10, 11. "Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because you did it. Remove Your stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When You with rebukes correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth; surely every man is vanity."

Consciousness of sin as the indwelling root of suffering will always abide, and should always prompt the prayer for deliverance by the mighty power of grace; and this prayer should be quickened by the fear lest the ungodly should gain advantage, and impiously exult. The resolve should be renewed to endure patiently, from persuasion that the hand of God thus chastens, that the fruits of righteousness should spring up. Reiterated prayer calls for withdrawal of the heavy hand. The feeble and the withered look soon shows the anguish of the afflicted heart. Behold the moth-eaten garment, unsound and rotten—it is the emblem of the countenance of the sin-stricken.

12, 13. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more."

When troubles increase, prayers should grow more earnest. It is good to realize that this present world is not our rest. Our abiding city is not on earth. Where are our fathers? Are we better than they? But they are gone; and as they went, we follow. But it should be our deep desire that our last days should be our best, and that as life fades our faith should more exalt the praises of our God. For this we need increase of grace. May we be so strengthened that our departing steps may show the upward path, and allure beholders to follow our example!

PSALM 40

Marvelous deliverance follows continued patience. Others are thereby quickened to act faith. God's goodness is unspeakable. Christ is the end of the law. Earnest supplication is awakened by a sense of surrounding evil. Strong desire follows that confusion may overwhelm the cruel mockers, while gladness and praise cheer the godly.

1, 2, 3. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God; many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

Patience is a precious grace. O Lord, increase it in us. Like love, it suffers long, and suffers not in vain. The tree shaken by winds, the vine well-pruned, becomes abundant in rich fruits. The Lord arises at the earnest cry, and brings a rescue. Tribulation is as a horrible pit, beset with terribleness, and presenting no escape. It is as the miry clay in which the shackled feet move heavily. How sweet the change when the Lord's rescuing hand brings help! Then a firm pavement courts advance, and forbids all halting and backsliding. Unencumbered climbers nimbly tread the upward path. The path, also, resounds with joy. The song of praise which had been silent again breaks forth; and the Lord's name is duly magnified. The happy result is not confined to the emancipated pilgrim. Many observe not only the believer's fall, but also the evidences of God's goodness towards him. They see that God's blessing truly rests upon His people—awe fills their minds, and they are led to make the Lord their trust.

4. "Blessed is that man who makes the Lord his trust, and respects not the proud, *nor such as turn aside to lies.*"

The observers see where true blessedness resides. It is discovered to be far from the haughty, whose confidence is in self, and whose devious wanderings are amid falsehoods and deceits.

5. "Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us; they cannot be reckoned up in order to You; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

An obvious reflection cannot be restrained. God's mercies in providence and grace exceed all powers to number, all eloquence to unfold. His thoughts are ever devising wondrous works in our behalf. His mighty hand is ever outstretched to accomplish His gracious plans. Where is a God like our God? Our praises cannot reach His goodness. Let us love and adore Him more and more.

6, 7, 8. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering You have not required. Then I said, lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O my God; yes, Your law is within my heart."

As illustration that God's gracious thoughts exceed all limits, the work of redeeming love, the everlasting covenant decreed in the councils of heaven, the coming of the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, His abrogation of all typical shadows, are particularized. Christ, by His Holy Spirit speaks; no doubt obscures this truth. The Apostle to the Hebrews declares it.

In the sacrifices of the Jewish Church there was no finality. They pointed to the Gospel-fulfillment. Every dying victim bleeding on every altar pointed to Jesus hanging on the accursed tree. The blood streaming from each sacrifice foreshadowed the all-cleansing blood of Calvary. But in the shadow there was no genuine atonement. By Christ alone is full atonement made, and everlasting expiation rendered. To accomplish this redeeming work, the Savior must

assume our nature. A body must be prepared for Him. As in the law, the willing servant testified by boring of the ear his devotedness to his master's service; so in the volume of eternal decrees, and in the pages of Scripture, Christ's willing work is testified. Redemption was the Father's will. To do this will was Christ's intense delight. Father, we bless You for Your love, the cause of all salvation. Precious Jesus, we bless You for Your love which undertook and finished the glorious work!

9, 10. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation."

As Jesus fulfilled the *priestly* office by the sacrifice of Himself, so He fulfills His work as *prophet*. By His lips, by the announcement of His servants, taught and aided by His Spirit, the righteousness of God is proclaimed from age to age. No veil conceals the glorious mysteries of salvation. The whole scheme is traced to its grand source. The lovingkindness and truth of God is duly set forth. Happy are those who are privileged to hear from faithful lips the words of life! Happy those who gladly embrace them, and *ascribe salvation to the sovereign will and gracious purpose of the divine Jehovah!*

11. "Withhold not Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; let Your loving-kindness and Your truth continually preserve me."

There is no sweeter encouragement in prayer than the knowledge that the whole work of redemption has been fully accomplished by our mystical Head; and that all the mercies of the covenant of grace are a purchased possession. The believer may draw near with boldness and claim the guardian care, not only of lovingkindness but also of truth. Believers are in peril at every moment; but at every moment the mercies for which Christ has paid the price of His most

precious death are near; and lovingkindness and truth are continually ready to uphold.

12. "For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me."

To the eye of faith the blessed Jesus here conspicuously appears. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquities of us all." "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Thus He stands before God, *by imputation* as the greatest sinner ever seen on earth. He denies not His sin-laden position. He accepts all the iniquities of all His people, as truly His own. He acknowledges their grievous weight. They so depress Him that He cannot raise His eyes. In numbers they exceed all power to count. In devout consciousness of the immensity of relief, with what fervor will the believer bless His burden-bearer—His sin sustainer—the Lamb of God, who takes away his sin!

13. "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me."

Emboldened by the plea that all guilt is transferred to Christ, the believer urgently implores deliverance, and craves immediate aid from his God. May the Lord increase our faith, that we may wrestle in full assurance that all the provisions of the covenant of grace are truly ours!

14, 15. "Let them be ashamed and confounded together who seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward, and put to shame, who wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame who say to me, Aha, aha!"

This petition is prophetic. It foresees the final overthrow of Antichrist, and all the opposing hosts of darkness. The seed of the

woman shall surely bruise the serpent's head. The Gospel has gone forth conquering and to conquer. Voices in heaven shall assuredly proclaim, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." *His enemies shall lick the dust.* The dreadful cry will be heard, "Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Blessed are those who have fled for refuge to the wounded side of Jesus! They are delivered from the wrath to come. When weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, are the one sound of woe, they will commence the everlasting hymn of praise!

16. "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let those who love Your salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified."

The character of the rejoicing company is distinctly drawn. They seek the Lord; they love His salvation. It is their grand desire to know more of Christ; they forsake all to follow Him; they strive to grow in grace, and in His knowledge; and their whole hearts delight in the salvation which He so dearly purchased, and so freely gives. Their joy is to exalt the Lord, and lift high His praise.

17. "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me; You are my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."

Deep consciousness of poverty continually abides. In us, that is in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. Yet we are rich and have all things in the gracious care of our God. His thoughts of love are ever on His people. He is their help and their deliverer, and their cry gives Him no rest, "Make no tarrying, O my God."

PSALM 41

The happy state of the compassionate is depicted. The vindictive malevolence of the ungodly is also shown. Prayer to God and

profession of faith follow with warm ascription of praise. 1, 2, 3.
"Blessed is he who considers 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 You will not deliver him to the will of His enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; You will make all his bed in his sickness."

Tender compassion for the poor and suffering is the fruit of the Spirit in the minds of believers. It is a sweet feature in the family of faith. The Lord regards such with especial love. But they are not exempt from trouble. Their heavenward march is through much tribulation; sickness often assails their frames, languor depresses them, and weakness detains them to a bed of suffering. But they are not deserted—no, they now are compassed with peculiar mercies. When heart and flesh appear to fail, the inner man is renewed with especial strength. Welcome all sickness which brings Jesus to the bedside!

4. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against You."

The suffering saint draws nearer to his God. He does not hide his sin; he sees in it the cause of soul-disease, and he supplicates for mercy to bring relief.

5, 6, 7, 8. "My enemies speak evil of me; when shall he die, and his name perish? And if he comes to see me, he speaks vanity; his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes abroad, he tells it. All that hate me whisper together against me; against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaves fast to him and now that he lies, he shall rise up no more."

Sad is this picture of the treachery and deep malice of false friends. It is a grief to those who the godly live. They long for the day when the grave shall cover them, and their fame no more be heard. This is the very treatment which assailed the holy Jesus. Grievous sins were

laid to His charge. Watchful spies marked His words and steps; and base accusations were continually propagated, and when the grave received Him, vigilance guarded the tomb lest His predicted reappearance should be verified.

9. "Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

Doubtless, in the first instance, Absalom is here portrayed. But in his heartless and unnatural rebellion he is the type of the vile traitor, whose wickedness can find no parallel in the history of crime. We see in him to what a depth of sin the graceless heart can sink. He walked the familiar friend of Jesus, he was constantly by His side, he witnessed His heavenly walk, and with all knowledge of His truth, he took a paltry bribe to sell Him to His foes. We learn from this foreshadowing of the treason, that our blessed Lord approached redemption's work with full knowledge of the anguish and the sufferings before Him. O blessed Jesus! we adore You that, foreknowing all, You endured all to raise us from sin and sin's punishments to the heights of heavenly glory!

10, 11. "O Lord, be merciful to me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that You favor me, because my enemy does not triumph over me."

Predictions still speak. From the dead Jesus was raised. All power in heaven and earth was surrendered to Him. All the enemies who fought against Him were crushed beneath the wheels of His chariot of triumph. Happy are those who meekly bow before Him, and accept His blessed sway!

12, 13. "And as for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

Jesus was upheld until He returned in triumph to the heaven of heavens, and took His seat as King of Glory on the right hand of the Majesty on High. So each believer may plead with confidence the promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Constant smiles will gild the passage to the realms of everlasting light. Let, then, the shout begin on earth, which shall continue through eternity's bright day, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen!"

PSALM 42

Rejection is the pervading note of this hymn. The joys of the sanctuary are forbidden. Insulting foes augment distress. In conclusion, the soul is chided for yielding to despondency.

1, 2. "As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

A tender and expressive image meets us. The deer, exhausted by long flight beneath the scorching sun, or in the dusty plain, pants for the cooling stream in which to quench the pangs of thirst. How eagerly relief is sought! Here is the believer banished from the sweet refreshments of the sanctuary. It is not so much the outward form which is the object of desire, but the intimate communion with God, to which the services, when duly used, would surely raise. In true worship God's presence is sought and found, and thoroughly enjoyed.

3, 4. Day and night, I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?" My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks—it was the sound of a great celebration!

Fast flowing tears testified the deep sorrows of the Redeemer's heart, when He heard the revilings of His foes. They taunted Him with the sneer, that surely His banishment from holy service was proof that God had forsaken Him. He remembered the happy seasons when, in happy company, He sought the sanctuary, and joined His praises to those of the multitude of fellow-worshippers. It is the very foretaste of heaven, with one mind, and one mouth, to unite in public adoration.

5. "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed in me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

Too much depression is a sign of weak faith—anxiety should never occupy a godly heart. It is well to chide the soul, and rouse it from its downcast state. Hope should go forth in lively exercise. In darkest days it should look to Jesus, and take courage. Nothing should weaken the assurance that the outcome of the most grievous trials will be increased thanksgiving to our God.

6. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

Its consolation is not easily eradicated. Like the noxious weed again and again it reappears. But thoughts of God will still revive in the faithful breast. Though God may be apparently far distant, the eye of faith will turn towards Him. Though driven beyond Jordan, the Psalmist still remembers Zion, and the tabernacles of his God.

7, 8. "I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. Through each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life."

As wave upon wave, distress will sometimes follow distress. As descending rain swells the streams, and floods overwhelm the plains, so torrents of sorrow will oppress the heart. Yet the believer is sustained by undoubting trust. He knows that lovingkindness has received a mandate to visit him throughout the day, and to cheer him with songs in the night season, and to strengthen him to wrestle with God in prayer, as the God who maintains his life.

9, 10. "I will say to God my rock, Why have You forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily to me, Where is your God?"

When the believer can realize that God is his rock, he is bold to expostulate, and thinks it no presumption to implore attention to his suffering case. He states as the extremity of his anguish, that he is pierced to the quick by the impious insolence of cruel mockers, who reiterate the taunt, that God has forsaken him, and is indifferent to his woe. He appeals to God, Why am I thus afflicted?

11. "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, *and my God.*"

Admonition with the soul is repeated. Trials will return; and they must be met with renewal of spiritual reasoning. The covenant is forever settled in heaven. Hope, therefore, should never fail. Deliverance will surely come. The voice of praise will again shout, "He is the health of my countenance, and my God."

PSALM 43

The pensive note of the preceding hymn is here prolonged. The circumstances are the same; the same, also, are the exercises and the expressions of the mind.

1. "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."

Happy is the man who is conscious of his own integrity. He can lift up his eyes in holy confidence to his God, and ask Him to vindicate his cause against iniquitous oppression. If God is for us, who can be against us? There were many occasions in the checkered life of David in which this cry would be appropriate. The aged monarch, the heart-broken parent, would thus most fitly pray, when his own child rose up to hurl him from his throne, and the ungodly nation joined in the impious attempt. Here is the experience of many followers of Christ. Because they are not of the world, but Christ has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hates them. In all these troubles they may appeal to God, and never will they cry in vain.

2. "For You are the God of my strength; why do You cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

It is the province of faith to realize that in all apparent weakness there is really strength. But where is the treasure-house of strength? It is not in SELF. For man unaided is a broken reed—light as the chaff before the wind—powerless as an infant in a giant's grasp.

But his strength is firm as the everlasting hills. It is Jehovah in His might. While he trembles, he can still cry, You are the God of my strength. But still he is perplexed. Outward troubles seem to indicate desertion and rejection. The enemy oppresses; he cannot but mourn. Many thoughts arise, that these trials are to recall from devious paths, and are the chastenings of just displeasure. He draws near with bold familiarity, and supplicates revealing grace. It should be a frequent prayer, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; prove me, and know my ways; and see if there be any wicked way in me."

1. "*O send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles.*"

Left to ourselves, we are in darkness, and we surely stray. Conscious of need and guidance, the disconsolate Psalmist prays for heavenly aid, and that light from above would clearly shine upon his path; and that all events in providence would be in accordance with the provisions of the everlasting covenant. Those who truly follow the Lamb shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. They know that the conditions of the covenant secure their everlasting happiness, and they confidently plead that God would do to them in accordance with its terms. He prays especially that he may be restored to the joys of holy worship. He thinks not so much of the comforts and splendor of his palace, of his costly provisions, and luxurious delights—his heart is fixed on the hill of Zion and the house of God. There he had sought spiritual communion—in comparison with this, he counted other things as less than dross.

2. *"Then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; yes, upon the harp will I praise You, O God, my God."*

The essence of delight in public ordinances is the knowledge that sin is pardoned through atoning blood, and that there is free access to God through the expiating sacrifice of the dying Lamb. Then the heart swells with all the ecstasy of joy, happiness rolls in fullest tide, delight ascends to its highest pinnacle. God thus realized as reconciled, is exceeding bliss. The cup overflows. The bliss exceeds all bounds. Every faculty and every power is awakened to sing praise. Rapturous is the theme, when the soul intelligently sings, O God, You are my God!

5. "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

To him who can call God his own God, no cause of anxiety remains. He can trample all fears and doubts beneath his feet. He can see clearly by the eye of hope the blissful prospect of deliverance.

PSALM 44

The Church is here exhibited as in the depths of grievous trouble. But faith reviews the mercies of past days before it bewails present sufferings. Confidence in God is then professed, and prayer pleads with fervent zeal.

1, 2, 3. "O God, we have heard it with our own ears—our ancestors have told us of all you did in other days, in days long ago: You drove out the pagan nations and gave all the land to our ancestors; you crushed their enemies, setting our ancestors free. They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strength that gave them victory. It was by your mighty power that they succeeded; it was because you favored them and smiled on them."

The study of God's dealings with His people sweetly quickens faith. What strength is gained by pondering the subjugation of the heathen tribes, the victorious march of Israel's hosts, and their grand triumphs over all foes! But, did this conquest arise from their own might? Their own sword was weak to conquer, their own arm was powerless to save. The might of Jehovah was their prowess, the favor of the Lord was their prevalence. The Lord fought for them, and they were invincible.

Individual believers should constantly review their Ebenezers. A marvelous work has been transacted in their souls. Mighty foes have fought against them. Weak has been their own strength; yet they have prevailed. It is the Lord who has upheld and strengthened them, and caused their enemies to flee. *Grace begins; grace carries on; grace will complete the work of deliverance and salvation.*

4. "You are my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob."

The believer claims aid as a subject of the Lord of Hosts. You are my King; Your scepter is omnipotence. Your word goes forth with

absolute power. Resistance is vain. Speak, then, one word, and victory ensues.

5. "Through You will we push down our enemies; through Your name will we tread them under who rise up against us."

Who can resist when God comes forth to help? He is a horn of salvation. Creatures thus armed are terrible in fight; so the believer advances to sure conquest. Striding onward in the name of the Lord, he tramples down opposing enemies. Thus aided he will bruise Satan under his feet shortly.

6, 7, 8. "I do not trust my bow; I do not count on my sword to save me. It is you who gives us victory over our enemies; it is you who humbles those who hate us. O God, we give glory to you all day long and constantly praise your name.

Interlude"

When the Holy Spirit reveals to us our own weakness, and nothingness, and sinfulness, all self-confidence is utterly destroyed; our best strength is feebleness. To trust in SELF is to lean on a rotten plank.

But still we are invincible, and utter confusion must overwhelm all adversaries. Let, then, every moment of each day testify our unwavering confidence, and our happy assurance that heavenly protection will never fail. Let praise on earth begin, even the praise which shall never end.

9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. "But You have cast off, and put us to shame; and go not forth with our armies. You make us to turn back from the enemy; and those who hate us spoil for themselves. You have given us like sheep appointed for food; and have scattered us among the heathen. You sell Your people for nothing, and do not increase Your wealth by their price. You make us a reproach to our neighbors, a

scorn and a derision to those who are round about us. You make us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people."

In varied and most graphic terms the sufferings of the godly are here depicted. Trouble is a needful path. The discipline corrects many budding evils, lops off the growths of pride, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, leads to the healthy valley of humiliation, and fits for the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In the furnace of these trials the mourner is prone to write bitter things against himself, and to draw fears of God's desertion. But let patience have its perfect work; our fathers in the faith have trodden this path before us. Observe the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Good Lord, purge us, and we shall be clean; wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow.

15, 16. "My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face has covered me, for the voice of him that reproaches and blasphemers; by reason of the enemy and avenger."

Enmity is placed between the diverse children of light and darkness. The ungodly vent their hate in torrents of reproach. These shafts inflict most grievous wounds. The downcast look, the heaving breast, bear testimony to the inward pain.

17, 18, 19. "All this has happened despite our loyalty to you. We have not violated your covenant. Our hearts have not deserted you. We have not strayed from your path. Yet you have crushed us in the desert. You have covered us with darkness and death."

Faith may be sorely tried, but still its constancy remains. The tree yet lives, though wintry blasts disrobe it. In all distress the mind adheres to God. The pledged allegiance is not broken; and the vows of love and service are most diligently kept. The heart continues its covenanted affections, and the feet turn not from the narrow way of life. There is no faltering even in the extremity of misery. The seed of the old serpent will not relax in cruelty and venom, and death in many shapes may threaten, yet Christian principles will triumph. Prison-cells have sounded with the voice of trust, and martyrs at the stake have smiled amid their agonies.

20, 21. "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 knows the secrets of the heart."

The heart is kept steadfast, when persecution is most hot, by the reflection that God's eye watches each movement. "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" is a sure check when tempted to seek help from other than our God. "You, God, see me" is a thought which braces the loins and brings needful strength.

22. "Yes, for Your sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter."

Persecution and oppression are the heritage of the Lord's followers in every age. Those who hate the Lord will not have kindlier feelings towards His devoted flock. Since the day when righteous Abel fell by his brother's hand, the same persecuting spirit has not ceased its cruel work. Alas! what scenes of malignant enmity has this earth witnessed; what cries of misery have ascended from the tortured in gloomy dungeons and in open martyrdom! If the same opportunities were given today, the same cruelties would be reenacted.

Paul, writing by the Spirit's guidance, warns that the portrait which this verse exhibits will represent the persecuted flock until the end of

time. But encouragement is added. Vain the sword, the stake, the prison, and all the train of multitudinous barbarities. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." The inward joy exceeds all outward pain. While the flesh quivers, the spirit sings, None but Jesus." A chariot of agony conveys the happy sufferers to fullness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand forevermore.

23, 24, 25, 26. "Awake, why do You sleep, O Lord? arise, cast us not off forever. Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaves to the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us, for Your mercies' sake."

The reality of the misery is not denied. Appearances seem to justify the apprehension that God's eye no longer rests on the oppressed. But still faith lives, and grows bolder in wrestling importunity. It will not let God go. Its cries are redoubled for early support. No merit is pleaded—no, all unworthiness is allowed. Deliverance is implored, but only on the ground that God is rich in mercy. In the lowest depths faith looks up to God, as the Father of all mercies, as delighting in mercy, whose mercy endures forever, and the cry ascends, "Send help according to the multitude of Your tender mercies." Happy are those who boldly urge the prevailing plea, "Redeem us for Your mercies' sake."

PSALM 45

This hymn is fitly termed a song of loves. It is a prelude to the Song of songs. The spiritual Bridegroom is rapturously commended. The Spouse is shown in lovely features. The extension of Christ's kingdom, and due praise is promised.

1. "My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made concerning the king; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

One object ever sits supreme in the believer's heart. Christ is the noble theme which claims his fervent commendation. Praises break forth as water bubbling from a heated caldron. They cannot be repressed. When Jesus is thus the subject in all the majesty and glory of His kingly office, the fluency cannot be checked. As a skilled writer quickly moves his pen, so the believer's tongue is prompt and ready to express due praise. Boundless is the subject, commensurate is the utterance.

2. "You are the most handsome of all. Gracious words stream from your lips. God himself has blessed you forever."

The Church, taught by the Spirit, warmly cries, "Behold you are beautiful, my love; behold you are beautiful." Christ is indeed the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One. What eloquence can show His beauty? He is the brightness of His Father's glory, the express image of His person. Every charm which wins admiring gaze dwelt resplendently in Him. Wisdom in the highest flowed from His lips, and such power attended His words that the blessing of enlightening grace and saving impression touched His hearers.

3, 4. "Put on your sword, O mighty warrior! You are so glorious, so majestic! In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds!"

Faith in prophetic terms calls on the Lord to equip Himself for glorious triumphs, and to ascend the chariot of His majestic course. He is most mighty. Who can withstand Him? His weapons secure prosperous result. His truth lays error low in the dust of shame. His meekness sweetly allures sinners to receive Him. His righteousness conceals all guilt, and is a glorious robe for all who surrender to His

sway. Who can contemplate without awe the exploits of His matchless might? Let our souls mark and tremble and adore.

5. "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You."

Sharp indeed are the arrows of conviction, when directed by the Spirit. The contrite sinner feels the grievous wound, and humbly mourns his miserable state. He who inflicts the wound alone can cure. The blood alone can ease the rankling misery.

6, 7. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows."

The glorious truth that Jesus is eternal God is here proclaimed. The Spirit speaks from heaven, and His voice addresses Him as God. His essential Deity is the foundation of salvation. This gives infinite efficacy to His atoning blood, indisputable perfection to His justifying righteousness, and enables Him to satisfy the claims of every attribute of Jehovah. Let the true believer constantly address Him, my Lord and my God. His throne is forever established, and His scepter rules over all, on principles most just and equitable. Righteousness is the government of His subjects. Holiness is happiness. Therefore happiness is the atmosphere of His happy kingdom. God gives the spirit of joy without measure unto the King, and His blessed subjects are joint-heirs with Him of all the gifts of righteousness and grace.

8, 9. "All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. Kings' daughters were among Your honorable women; upon Your right hand stood the queen in gold of Ophir."

The image of royal pre-eminence is still continued. The King is pictured as coming forth from his beautiful palace arrayed in all the splendor of regal attire. The perfumes of his robes spread fragrance around. Upon his right hand is the Queen, the type of His believing people, arrayed in the splendor of the purest gold, the figure of that glorious righteousness which He bestows. The allegoric picture adds a circle of attendants to complete the group. No special lesson is conveyed by this company. But ardent feeling cannot be restrained that we may have a place in this gathering, and pay homage to the King in His beauty.

10, 11. "Listen, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty; for He is your Lord; and worship Him."

The Holy Spirit, speaking from heaven, invites attention to His words. It is sad that such exhortation should be needed. It is more sad that it should ever issue forth in vain. Not only should the ears be open, but the heart should diligently ponder. Words from above should be a perpetual feast. The Spirit here exhorts the bride to cast away remembrance of her first estate, the home of her birth and her native companions. By nature we are born in sin—the children of wrath, the inheritors of corrupt affections, the companions of aliens and outcasts. When the Spirit reveals Jesus, all tenderness and love, a marvelous change ensues, all things are counted less than dross in comparison of Him. In His loveliness we become lovely. Our cry is, You are our Lord—we love, we worship, and adore.

12. "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor."

It sometimes happens that those who receive honor from the Lord receive honor from men also. There is an inward recognition that respect is due to them and outward reverence is duly paid.

13. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold."

This is a lovely picture of the true believer. His inward state is glorious. He is adorned with every grace, and grace is the seed of glory. The Spirit, by His power, rules throughout the inward man, and implants faith, and hope, and love, and every holy principle, affection, and desire. All that is vile, corrupt, base, and earthly, is cast out; that which is sown is glory in the bud, and soon will be glory in full flower.

But, though thus glorious, the believer cannot inherit glory, unless every sinful spot is hidden. Christ works for His people a righteousness which He imputes. It is His perfect obedience with which He invests His every member. It is pure, and perfect, and without one stain of blemish. Wrought gold depicts it. Brightly they shine on whom it is bestowed. 14, 15. *"She shall be brought to the King in clothing of needlework; the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace."*

The bridal allegory is continued. The bride is seen in clothing beautified by art's elaborate skill. Attendant maidens swell the procession. All sounds of joy give notice of the glad approach. The royal residence is reached, and gates are opened to give welcome.

The happy emblems aptly picture the triumphant scene, when the marriage of

the Lamb shall have come, and His wife shall have made herself ready. Let all who love the Lord, and have in faith and truth devoted themselves to Him, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The day is coming when they shall be publicly recognized, and, clad in the perfect robe of righteousness, they shall enter heaven with all manifestations of joy and pure delight. With such bright prospects

who will not sing, We bless You, we praise You, we adore You, O Lord, our God?

16. "Your sons will become kings like their father. You will make them rulers over many lands."

Scripture is the exceeding joy of faith, because of the enchanting pictures which in ever-varying form it presents. We have seen the widespread family of the redeemed. In every climate, in every age, they live and flourish. High, also, is their dignity. Wherever they appear they excel as princes. They rule over sin and all the poor attractions of the world, while others yield, and toil as slaves beneath the lash of Satan.

17. "I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever."

It is the duty of the Church—it is, also, her most happy work—to celebrate the praises of the Lord, and to tell aloud of His love and goodness, of His majesty and glory. Thus, from age to age, and in earth's utmost range, the name of Jesus is magnified and glorified. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all saints prolong the song of thankful praise!

PSALM 46

God's near protection is a stronghold against all fear. The wonders of His mighty hand should excite terror in His foes, and confidence in His people.

1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Such is the boast of all the sons of faith. Their path is through a land of trouble. Their bark is tossed by raging billows. Their foes are many from within and from without. They flee to God, and are

secure to God who is forever near. How safe are they who in this refuge dwell; how strong are they, whose strength is God

2, 3. "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."

Tremendous images here show all nature in commotion. Ocean roars, and is agitated from its lowest depths. Mountains tremble from the lashing of the waves; their heads submerged no longer show their peaks. The scene is earth in the extremity of confusion. We are here taught to view the *heart* tossed and disturbed by all the violence of troubles—they break like mighty billows, threatening to destroy; but no fears prevail. Amid convulsing elements there is the calmness of serene repose.

4. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

As a river flowing through a city spreads gladness all around, as the refreshing streams bring plenty, and cause health to smile, so the presence of God is constant joy and peace to the believing heart. This heart is the abode of God—the place where He holds dwelling, and manifests His presence. So fears cannot approach, and gladness holds its constant reign.

5. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

How blessed is the state, when God will not withdraw. No trouble can give real alarm. No apprehensions agitate. God will give early help, and His help is perfect peace.

6, 7. "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."

What though mighty powers, with mighty rage, muster their armies; what though extensive kingdoms are in commotion, and all appearances threaten destruction—it gives the Lord no trouble to defeat the adversaries. He only speaks the word, and they sink low in ruin. His voice annihilates, and they disappear as snow when melted by the sun.

The believer gives no place to fear. If armies are all arrayed against him, the Lord of hosts is on his side. He who upheld the fathers of the Church still lives. His covenant of old is verity and truth. He will perform the oath to Abraham, and the promise to Jacob. If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

8, 9. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; he burns the chariot in the fire."

Our minds are prone to disregard the mighty workings of the Lord. His hand is ever doing wonders, which we fail to notice. But it is our wisdom to observe how He manifests His interposing power to make desolate the regions of His foes. Whatever be the hostile preparations and the stores of ammunition, He can bring all to nothing.

10, 11. "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."

Let, then, all disturbing thoughts be banished. Let tranquil patience exert calm sway. God will be manifest as supreme sovereign,

curbing the heathen's rage, and exercising unlimited control throughout the earth. Let all His people rejoice evermore, and loudly sing, from realizing hearts, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge!"

PSALM 47

A view is presented of the kingdom of Christ most gloriously established, and universal praises are evoked.

1, 2. "O clap your hands, all you people; shout to God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth."

A note of rapturous prediction pervades this hymn. The day of glory is anticipated, when angels' voices shall proclaim that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. The word is now verified, "In You shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Jewish Church shall expand her arms to embrace the called of the Gentiles—and they are received as fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ. The Lord is magnified in all His power and majesty—the terribleness of His vengeance over all who yielded not obedience to His sway is dreadfully displayed—and on His head are crowns of supremacy over all the earth. Oh! day of gladness, and unspeakable delight! The happy subjects of these joyful realms are stirred up to show their ecstasy by every sign. We, also, in prospect of such happiness, should shout our praises and proclaim our triumph.

3, 4. "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."

Many and mighty were the enemies of Christ's kingdom—long and fierce was the conflict. At times the ungodly seemed to prevail, and the palm of victory seemed to be in their hands. But now Christ is gloriously triumphant. His foes all lick the dust; the feet of His people trample upon the subjugated hosts.

The division of Canaan among the tribes was proof of His providential care. The same care still guards all temporal matters for us. As Jacob excelled Esau in his inherited blessings, so Christ's people inherit all good things—things present and things to come. Christ loves them with an everlasting love; He loves them and rejoices over them to do them good.

5, 6, 7. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding."

Christ is now exhibited in another aspect of His glory, that thanksgiving may be more fervently awakened. He is presented to the eye of faith as ascending to the heaven of heavens, to take His seat on the right hand of the Majesty of high. Attending angels shout, and welcoming hosts re-echo the glad sound. Are conquerors thus welcomed when they return in triumph—and shall not all tokens of joy sound the praises of Jesus returning from His glorious victory?

Let us, for whom the victory is achieved, sing praises; yes, sing praises with understanding. Let us thoroughly discern the causes of our joy. It is because Jesus has vanquished our every foe; has gloriously accomplished our full redemption—has finished the undertaken work, and has saved us with an everlasting salvation. Let us ponder the work until its length and breadth be fully grasped; and let every discovery stir us up to sing praises with understanding.

8, 9. "God reigns over the heathen; God sits upon the throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham; for the kings of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted."

Joy would ever brighten in the dwellings of the righteous, if the truth were always before their eyes, that God sits supreme upon the throne of His holiness. The kings of the earth are mighty, but all their power is derived from Him. As shields they give protection, but His hand is over all. Greatly He is exalted. Let Him be greatly extolled. Let us sing praises, sing praises, with understanding.

PSALM 48

The beauty of Jerusalem is a picture of the beauty of the Church. God's favor to it foreshadows His favor to His people in all ages.

1, 2, 3. "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."

Great indeed is the Lord. In His power, His love, His dealings, His every attribute, His greatness is unspeakable. In every faculty of mind and body, at every period of our time, His praise should be our glad employ. As Jerusalem stands preeminent above all the abodes of earth in charms of climate and loveliness of local beauty—as admiration proclaims Mount Zion to be the joy of the whole earth, so God's people surpass in every excellency.

The Spirit, in a preceding hymn, had depicted the Church as all-glorious within, and as arrayed in clothing of wrought gold. Her inward beauty is the grace so plentifully bestowed by His hand. Her outward glory is the robe of righteousness with which she is invested by her Lord. Zion's royal residents dwelt in security. If any

foe frightened them, they fled to the Lord as a sure refuge, and were in safety.

4, 5, 6. "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hurried away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail."

Jerusalem was often threatened by mighty potentates, and with all their power; but vain were their assembled troops. They were compelled in shame and distress to seek security in flight.

Thus, also, the legions of darkness have encamped around God's people. The arch-enemy, their malicious leader, has urged them forward. But the city of the righteous has been impregnable. Inglorious flight has dispersed all foes, and victory has signalized the Church.

7. "You break the ships of Tarshish with an east wind."

Another image here depicts the utter ruin of the Church's foes. How weak are ships to withstand the fury of the raging wind! It raises huge billows to overwhelm them. It dashes them resistless against the iron rocks. Thus weak are all adversaries against the might of God.

8. "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 forever."

Many are the promises and predictions that God will uphold His people. Many realizations are before us to confirm our faith. We have every assurance that no destruction shall extinguish the true Church.

9, 10. "We have thought of Your lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Your temple. According to Your name, O God, so is Your

praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness."

Troubles should not detain from public ordinances. In the holy services we should be taught that our God is love. Not only are all His dealings full of lovingkindness, they are altogether righteous. To God's people His love is righteous, and His righteousness is love. Therefore no fear should harass or disturb.

11, 12, 13, 14. "Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; count the towers. Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide, even unto death."

God's people have indeed cause for constant joy. On every occasion He appears on their behalf. It is wisdom fully to contemplate the Church. Behold her type, the city upon Zion's hill. Her fortifications render her impregnable. As her walls and towers protect her, so God defends His people with all His attributes and all His might. Let us realize, also, that we have covenant property in God. He is our own God, and never will cease to be so. While life lasts, He will lead in the way everlasting, and then receive us to be with Him forever.

PSALM 49

The truths of the Bible call for universal heeding. The mysteries will repay all study. Natural men, in their best state, are immeasurably inferior to the people of God. 1, 2. "*Hear this, all you people; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world; both low and high, rich and poor, together.*"

The revelation of God alike concerns the whole family of man. Wherever man lives, he lives defiled by sin, and justly exposed to

wrath. As the malady is one, so too is the remedy. All need it; to all it is proclaimed in the Gospel. What madness can be greater than to close our ears to the precious tidings! The low are raised by it; the high are stripped of their lofty looks. The rich are ennobled by it with the true riches; the poor obtain the true treasure.

3, 4. "My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline my ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp."

The treasures of true wisdom are folded up in God's Word. There He, who is the wise, the all wise, the only wise, declares His mind and will. The Bible student will read, and will declare. His heart will meditate, but not concerning foolish trifles. Solid truths will be the food of his thoughts. He will diligently listen to the mysteries of redemption, shadowed out in great variety of images; and his melody will be concerning hidden wonders.

5. "There is no need to fear when times of trouble come, when enemies are surrounding me."

Countless are the exhortations to the believer never to give place to fear. His constant response should be, I will trust and not be afraid. Days of evil will often overshadow him; reminiscences of past iniquity may leave impressions on the mind, deep as the prints of the heels upon a soft or sandy path. In this there may be ground of humiliation, but there is no cause for misapprehension. The covenant of peace stands sure, and never can be broken. The reconciliation is forever made; the promise will be realized; goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life, and he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

6, 7, 8, 9. "Those who 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 ceases forever;) that he should still live forever, and not see corruption."

The riches of this world are eagerly sought by natural men. They delight in the enjoyments which are thus purchased, and the homage and adulation which are thus won. It is their pleasure to magnify themselves in their apparent distinction above their fellows. But what is their real value when viewed in spiritual light? They are light as chaff—they are worthless as the vilest dross. How can riches deliver a sinner from the grasp of death? How can they prolong his days on earth, or raise from the corruption of the grave?

Shall earthly riches be presented to God as an equivalent for the forfeited soul—shall they be offered as a redeeming price? Is there satisfaction in them to the outraged attributes of God? Can they avail to mitigate merited wrath? The very thought is folly. Man in the utmost grandeur of outward possession is utterly without avail to redeem his brother.

A glorious parenthesis is here inserted. It casts a ray of joy over a saddening truth. It speaks of redemption, and tells us that it requires vast price. Here the blessed Gospel brightly shines. We bless our dying Jesus, our curse-removing Lord, our death-enduring Substitute, that He has accomplished redemption. It was bought by a precious price—even by the price of His own blood—which had infinite efficacy because of His essential deity. It out-valued all the silver and the gold which earth ever produced. It outweighed all treasures. By it every attribute of God is satisfied, and magnified, and glorified. Let us, also, be satisfied with it. This ransom has no need of gradual progress. By the one death of Jesus it is forever secured. It needs no repetition. By His one offering once made, He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

10. "For He sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others."

It is an obvious fact, compelling universal acquiescence, that *mental faculties* cannot secure length of days. Men of the shrewdest intellect move onward to the grave. By their side men lie who are least endowed. Alike they might have been enriched with large abundance of this world's wealth. But their feeble hands cannot retain the grasp. They cannot take their treasure with them. Other inheritors must succeed and count the riches as their own.

11. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

They seem to dream of earthly immortality. They imagine perpetuity of their names. They inscribe their titles on their stately homes, or on their wide possessions.

12, 13. "Nevertheless, man being in honor abides not; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings."

As riches are no protection from the grave, neither do honors bring deliverance. Titles may be grand, distinctions may be brilliant, yet the possessors soon lie low. Mortality is common to them, even as it is to all the herds of animal creation. Their forgetfulness of short-lived continuance is justly termed their folly. But it is incredible, that their descendants tread the same senseless path. They are not instructed by the ignorance of their predecessors—they rather commend their seeming wisdom.

14. "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 titled and the wealthy worldlings do not have stronger tenure of life than the flocks of the meadows. Death claims them as its prey, and feeds upon their lifeless bodies—from their stately halls they

must be carried to mingle with corruption. The morning of the resurrection comes—then the poor believer, however scorned in his passage through life, shall shine in manifested superiority, and shall put on the beautiful robes of everlasting glory.

15. "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for He shall *receive me*."

The believer knows his foundation of perpetual joy. It is true that his body must taste corruption, and lie for a little season in the grave; but he knows that God who has redeemed his soul, by the precious blood of His dearly-beloved Son, will also soon raise his body from the transient tenure of the grave. The redeemed soul shall again inhabit a redeemed body. The blessed consummation shall be complete. The glorified body and the glorified soul shall constitute the glorified man. Thus perfect he shall be upraised to the palace of the King of kings, and shall reign in those bright realms into which death shall never enter.

16, 17, 18, 19, 20. "So don't be dismayed when the wicked grow rich, and their homes become ever more splendid. For when they die, they carry nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave. In this life they consider themselves fortunate, and the world loudly applauds their success. But they will die like all others before them and never again see the light of day. People who boast of their wealth don't understand that they will die like the animals."

Established truths are here repeated. The believer is exhorted to keep his faith from wavering, when he sees prosperity gilding the path of the worldling. The brevity of all mortal condition should check all temptation to be staggered by its prosperity. Worldlings may hold dazzling superabundance; but how long can they call these things their own? They must leave all behind; they can carry nothing with them. Their prosperity might excite adulation and the homage of fellow-mortals. But departure must take place—even to eternal

wretchedness—even to blackness of darkness forever. The cause of this misery is the lack of saving knowledge. There is ignorance of self, of sin, of God, of Christ, of redemption, of salvation. O Lord, open our eyes, give us understanding to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

PSALM 50

We have in this Psalm a revelation of glorious truth. The final judgment is announced in dreadful sublimity. Formalists are rebuked, and warned of the worthlessness of dependence on the Law. In conclusion we have directions as to true worship.

1, 2. "The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined."

May faith be granted that we may realize the scene. The great white throne is set. The mighty God is seated on His sovereign tribunal. Before Him all who have ever breathed the breath of life are summoned to appear. From all the regions of earth—from every quarter of the globe—the inhabitants are called. We are thus mercifully forewarned. We must take our station before the Judge of all mankind. Let us see to it that we are prepared to meet Him.

To prepare us for the great day, God has revealed to us all Gospel truth. Out of *Zion* He has shined. We have not been called to Mount *Sinai*, where the fiery law flowed, amid all the terrors of lightning, and thunder, and appalling clang. We have been invited to listen to the silver notes of the sweet Gospel. God has erected on earth His Church, the perfection of beauty. Here all grace and mercy shine. Here blood is presented to cleanse from all sin; a righteousness to cover all iniquity; and the plea is presented, Christ died for pardon at the judgment-bar and full admission to the glories of heaven. From this throne of *Zion* let us draw near to meet the final judgment.

3, 4, 5, 6. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; 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 Himself is judge."

We return to the judgment-seat. As when God gave the law dreadful terrors surrounded Him, so when He comes to execute judgment all majesty shall be displayed. His irresistible voice shall ring through universal nature. All elements shall send forth the dead whom they contained. But now His professing people are specially named. But all professors are not real children. All who are of the Church are not the Church. Have we become His through the blood of the everlasting covenant? Have we made fellowship with Him through the true Sacrifice, even the Victim who died at Calvary? If so, let us joyfully exclaim, He who shall come to institute judgment is our God, and His right hand is full of righteousness.

7. "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against you; I am God, even your God."

How tenderly this warning intervenes! God's people are disposed to settle on their lees, to slumber on the pillow of self-confidence, to drink the noxious goblet of carnal security. Therefore God, in the plenitude of His mercy, would rouse them. He beseeches them to listen to His gracious admonition. He will not hide from them their grievous faults, and He prefaches His reasonings with them by the loving assurance, that He who chides is God, even your God. O Lord, give us the hearing ear.

8-13. "I have no complaint about your sacrifices or the burnt offerings you constantly bring to my altar. But I want no more bulls from your barns; I want no more goats from your pens. For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. Every bird of the mountains and all the animals of the field

belong to me. If I were hungry, I would not mention it to you, for all the world is mine and everything in it. I don't need the bulls you sacrifice; I don't need the blood of goats."

How vain is all dependence on external service! As aids to faith all outward rites are valuable, but it is the vanity of vanities to dream that by such observance we make God our debtor. The universe and all which the universe contains is His created property. *In all our offerings we only bring Him what is His own.* Let us never fancy that there is merit in most costly rites. When we bring our best to Him we give no satisfaction to His justice, or make atonement to His outraged Law. In Christ—in Christ alone—satisfaction resides. Let us bring Him always in the arms of our faith, and plead for mercy only for His sake.

14. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High."

There is an offering in which God delights—the offering of the calves of our lips—the praises of devoted hearts. Let thanks, like incense, ever reach the courts of heaven. There is a grateful fragrance which He will never scorn. When we entered into covenant with God in Christ we vowed to present unto Him ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, lively sacrifice. How happy is it to redeem this vow.

15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

Amid truths of dreadful grandeur this bright gem seems unexpectedly to shine. Its value is unspeakable. Its comfort to believers in all ages passes knowledge. Wondrous is the word, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The text before us gives special illustration. Many are the believer's troubles—they are necessary, and the chastening is not withheld. But an easy and ready remedy is prescribed. His strength may so fail

that he cannot stir. But he can always call, and never shall he call in vain. His call shall bring his God to his aid; and His hand shall bring deliverance. Light shall spring up out of darkness. It shall be ever true, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble." God's glory shall be the outcome; increasing praises shall break from the delivered heart.

16, 17. "But God says to the wicked, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth? seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you."

The scene changes. Loving words are not now heard. The wicked, the gross transgressors, those whose steps are in the way of open offense, are addressed. God expostulates with such, if perhaps they will repent and turn in deep humility to Him. *Such is the deceitfulness of the unregenerate man* that it will be secure in profession of covenant relationship to God, while the Lord of grace is really hated, and all its saving truths are contemptuously rejected.

18. "When you saw a thief, then you consented with him, and have been partaker with adulterers."

An dreadful picture is exhibited of the extremity of iniquity into which carnal men will rush. They will practice the vilest dishonesty, and lie in the filth of the grossest uncleanness. Yet God in His mercy follows them with remonstrance, "Turn, turn, why will you die?"

19, 20, 21. "You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. You have done these things, and I kept silence; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes."

The tongue, which betrays the inmost working of the heart, pours out torrents of evil and deceit. Even natural affection expires, and slanders assail the sons who hang on the same mother's breast. God

shows abundance of patience; but deluded sinners misinterpret His gracious character. Because wrath is restrained, the impious thought is cherished, that the evil which they love and practice is not abomination in God's sight. But the day comes when God's patience can endure no more. Their wicked deeds, in all their enormities, shall confront the evil—all the circumstances shall stare them in their face; no extenuation can cloak the guilt which must be confessed to uttermost confusion.

22. "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

Tender grace exhorts to deep thought. Let all who do not have God before them consider their dreadful state before the day of vengeance bursts upon them. Then the rejected Savior saves no more. But now Jesus stands ready to deliver from the wrath to come. To Him let us cling steadfastly.

23. "Whoever offers praises glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conversation aright I will show the salvation of God."

Precious conclusion of this wondrous Psalm! What condescension to accept our worthless praise! What godlike condescension to assure us that these praises augment His glory. Let our every breath be praise. In the paths of holiness God will be met revealing all the mercies of His Gospel. Christ will appear with uttermost salvation in His hands; and glorying in Him as full redemption, we shall boldly meet the judgment-seat.

PSALM 51

Of all the Psalms, this is the one, perhaps, which is most frequently interwoven in the believer's prayers and pondered in his meditations. It has been the outbreak of innumerable hearts, and has been, and still is, the wrestling cry at the mercy-seat. Repeated are the prayers

for pardon of vile guilt; struggling are the cries for renewing and sanctifying grace. Professions are uttered of devotedness to God's service, and prayers are added for the Church.

1, 2. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

In the deepest sense of guilt, prayer cries loudly for mercy. The measure of needed mercy is expressed. The measure is quite measureless. It is according to God's lovingkindness. But His love is everlasting love. It has no origin. It can have no end. It is, moreover, in accordance with the multitude of God's tender mercies. But who can count them? Infinitude is their scope. Such mercy is indeed needed; for nothing less than limitless mercy could reach the extent of the prayer for the remission of such transgressions, such iniquity, and such sin.

3. "For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me."

The awakened sinner panted for relief; for grievous was the burden which oppressed him. He did not cloak his dreadful guilt—he felt it, and he confessed it. He did not strive to escape the tormenting memory. There was an appalling object ever in his sight—his fearful deeds. He is not taught of God, who is not conscious of ever-present guilt.

4. "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight; that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge."

The real character of sin is rebellion against God. This constitutes its essence, its magnitude, its malignity. Doubtless fellow-men may be most grievously injured and outraged and afflicted. Many may be

wounded; many tears may have been drawn forth, but the main evil assails God. The blow is aimed at God's supremacy.

Hence God's truth and justice are exalted to their highest pinnacles. In every threat, in every denunciation, in every execution of vengeance, homage is rendered to these essential attributes. When sin is punished, holiness is vindicated.

5. "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin my mother conceived me."

Sin is here traced to nature's original corruption. The tree is radically corrupt. No good fruit can hang from its branches. The spring is poisoned, the waters which flow from it are polluted. When Adam yielded to the tempter's wiles, the whole line of his descendants perished in him. Sad, indeed, is our case, except redeeming grace transplants us from the ruined stock, and grafts us into the heavenly vine.

6. "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom."

When sin is deeply felt and openly confessed, conscience feels that God requires true sincerity throughout the heart. The folly of mocking God with unmeaning tears or unreal prayers is felt; and there is most earnest supplication to God to implant wisdom in the heart and soul, and to guide in the way everlasting.

7. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Obliteration of guilt is again implored in terms fragrant with Gospel-sweetness. Faith clearly sees the purpose of sacrificial rites. It knows that the blood streaming from the dying victim foreshadowed the blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. It knows that this blood is expiation perfect, entire, and forevermore;

that its sprinkling removes every stain of evil, and makes the contrite believer pure as purity can be in the sight of God.

8. "Make me hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice."

The anguish of the soul under sense of God's wrath is pictured by the keenest pains of body; even by the agony of bones fractured and bruised. When healing comes, how great is the relief! Such is the transport of delight which thrills through the soul when God restores His smile, and whispers peace to the conscience. Let each mourning penitent cease not the wrestling cry, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice."

9. "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities."

Pardon is still the foremost thought in the contrite Psalmist's mind. He supplicates it under another image. He fears lest God should keep his sins in the light of His countenance. He therefore prays that an averted look should no more have them in view. Conscious of innumerable transgressions, and feeling need of entire pardon, he beseeches that not one single offense should remain unsprinkled by the obliterating blood.

10, 11. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence; and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."

Desire of pardon is linked to earnest longing for renewing and sanctifying grace. The cleansing of the heart is the absolute work of God. It is a new creation. It is calling that into existence which no power of man could accomplish. Conscious of utter impotence, the cry struggles for creating and renewing grace. Supplication is added for continuance of God's life-giving presence, and the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

12, 13. "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You."

Who can express the joy of realized salvation! It is heaven begun. It is the commencement of the never-ending bliss. But it may be forfeited and interrupted for a while. Allowed sin is quick to extinguish. Let instant recourse be made to prayer. Let God, who only gave and only can renew, be supplicated to restore. The effect of this reviving grace is earnest effort to call others to the ways of God, and faith in Christ. He who enjoys this gracious treasure burns with longing that others may partake.

14. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness."

Remembrance of some special sin will oftentimes haunt the heart. A frightful specter will stand before the eyes. It was so now with David. The dreadful thought was present, that his abominable sin had caused a fellow-creature's death. He saw that his hands were stained with murderous spots. He must be a stranger to all peace, until sure of deliverance from this heinous guilt. With his soul, therefore, he prays that such mercy might be given unto him. The result would be sure; he would be loud in praise, proclaiming that God was a covenant-keeping God, and righteous in fulfilling His promises to forgive all sin through the atoning blood.

15, 16. "O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, else would I give it; You do not delight in burnt-offering."

When the grace of praise is freely poured into the heart, the power to give utterance must still be added. A channel must be opened for the stream to flow. An *open lip* must be desired, in addition to a *full heart*. Faith sees that the outward rite of sacrificial homage is not the real demand of God. Required services may not be withheld; they

testify obedience. But they should do much more. They should evince the soul's entire dependence on the hidden meaning—the true Lamb of God, the all-atoning blood, the death which satisfies every violated attribute. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

17. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

God is a Spirit, and His eye is on a spiritual service. He does not turn with indifference from a spirit broken and crushed, and ground to powder, by the weighty hand of the accusing law. He sees the buddings of real faith, and true apprehension of the appeasing victim. He is ever ready to bind up that which is thus broken. Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

18, 19. "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt-offering; then they shall offer bullocks upon Your altar."

The penitent cannot conclude without embracing the whole Church in his fervent prayer; he supplicates mercy for his beloved Zion, and protection from all her foes. Safe in the loving-kindness of her God, her altars will blaze, the victims will die in countless numbers, the blood will flow in constant stream; but it will not be a mere superabundance of outward rites. In all Christ is seen. Christ is magnified. Christ is honored. Christ is All.

PSALM 52

The proud boasting and the malicious plots of the ungodly come to a fearful end. The case of the righteous greatly differs, and calls for praise.

1. "Why do you boast in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endures continually."

Deep is the malignity of the heart which the Spirit has not softened. To plot mischief is most vile; but it rests not in devising evil; it delights in its sin, and boastingly exults in its shame. How vain is this pride! It checks not the operations of God's goodness. This attribute will ever live while God lives, and will ever be His people's shield. Child of God, believe this and fear not.

2, 3, 4. "Your tongue devises mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness. You love all-devouring words, O you deceitful tongue."

Doeg instantly appears. In dark colors his hateful portrait is displayed. With crafty calumnies he maligned the servant of the Lord. With evil reports he stirred up the king's wrath. This malevolence was his delight. He found enjoyment in pouring forth devouring words.

5. "God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and root you out of the land of the living."

Those who thus propagate malicious lies against God's servants little think that they are planning their own ruin. They consider not that God's eye watches their secret devices, and that His just wrath will surely be aroused. They dig a pit for others, and surely their own steps lead to it. Destruction is planned, but it is destruction of themselves. No wicked ways can prosper. The end of evil is sure misery. Those who would chase others from the earth, will surely find that vengeance follows in their rear. How often requital pursues them in this time-state! How often in their sufferings do they read their sin! How often does the crop of misery prove what seed had been sown!

6. "The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him."

The righteous diligently observe God's ways. It is a book of wisdom full of precious lessons. They mark the outgoings of requiting wrath; holy awe fills their hearts. They tremble at the issue of sin's course. A sneer can scarcely be repressed at the folly of the insulting boaster.

7. "Look, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness."

Pitiable indeed is the man who makes his own arm his strength, and rejects the living God. Where is there greater folly than to put confidence in a mass of silver and gold? How quickly does it fade away, and leave the proud possessor in the straits of poverty!

But the height of madness is to regard wickedness as might, and to believe that the ways of wickedness lead to success and prosperity. The only man who is truly strong, and has enduring treasure, and will prevail, is the humble follower of the Lamb.

8. "But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever."

David discerned how different was his case, and he well knew who made him to differ. While Doeg and all of the same vile character was cast off as a withered branch, David was verdant and fruitful as an olive-tree in most luxuriant soil. He owed his position and his verdant boughs, and clusters of rich fruit, to God's abundant mercy, and in that mercy was all his trust forever and ever. Stable is this foundation of our hopes. Let nothing move us from it.

9. "I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and I will wait on Your name; for it is good before Your saints."

Such distinguishing mercy requires that every breath should be praise. But who can adequately praise God for what He has done, and is doing, and will do for His servants? In humble patience let us wait on all the attributes which make up His name. Let all God's people see our grateful course.

PSALM 53

A repetition of a dreadful scene is again presented. Again the whole world is seen as lying in the wicked one. But the year of the redeemed again appears. May such sight of evil deeply appall us, while we joy in forethought of deliverance!

1. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is no one who does good."

The heart is the true mirror of the man. Its language speaks the real character. If we could hear the secret whispers of a graceless heart, the sound would be uniformly evil. The godless cherish the delusion that there is no being greater than themselves. Their conceit ignores divine supremacy, and scorns to yield to a superior yoke. Such men exist in fearful numbers. The faithful Word declares it, and truly adds that they are fools. They may pride themselves in imagined wisdom, but their real place is in the depths of ignorance. Their light is darkness—their boasted knowledge is extremest folly.

It follows that atheism in heart, is wickedness in life. The spring being impure, what can flow from it but defilement? The tree is rotten at the core; the branches cannot be sound. Their works—the emblems of their hearts—can only be abomination. They only pollute the earth—hateful to God, injurious to man.

Are there no exceptions? Not one by nature. There is no good but what the Holy Spirit implants. Where He is absent only evil dwells, and He has no abode in unregenerate men.

2. "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who understood, who sought God."

We are now directed to Jehovah on His heavenly throne. His piercing eye surveys the universe. He reads the secret of every heart; no thought escapes His omniscient view. What is the purpose of His all-pervading search? It is to ascertain whether all thoughts are turned to Him—whether His knowledge is the prime pursuit—whether prayer seeks the revelation of His will—whether His mind is explored in the pages of His Word—whether His works are studied as picturing His character. Thus to seek God is truest wisdom. Let no man boast of understanding whose mind does not delight in this work. God looks down in search of this. Let us now hear His verdict.

3. "Every one of them has gone back; they have altogether become filthy; there is no one who does good, no, not one."

Observe the case before the flood. We have the counterpart at present. Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually. Men wandered from all paths of righteousness and truth. Their feet were set in error's broad decline. Their garments were sin-soiled; their words were only filth. Uncleanness in its foulest phase was their one element. Let us pause for one moment to bless God that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from all these stains, and make us whiter than the whitest snow.

4. "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up My people as they eat bread; they have not called upon God."

Jehovah sees this universal evil, and He speaks. His voice is strong admonition. It traces sin to the true source—ignorance. If truth were sought, and seen, and loved, and followed, how different would be man's walk! Men work iniquity because their minds are blinded.

Next, evil breaks out in persecution. But who are the persecuted? "My people," says the Lord. We hear the tender voice, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" The issue of such conduct is the restraint of prayer. "They do not call upon the Lord." Thus we have in connected links four marks of unregenerate men—*ignorance, iniquity, persecution, prayerlessness*.

5. "There they were in great fear, where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you; you have put them to shame, because God has despised them."

But to the wicked there is no calm peace. Great are their fears. Clear tokens show that God is mighty in His people's midst, and that His presence is their sure defense. They may well fear whose weapons are directed against God. The godly make the Lord their refuge. He is the high tower to which they always fly. Beneath the shelter of His wings they find protection. Let persecutors sneer and ridicule such trust; but happy experience shows that none seek God in vain.

6. "Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

This darkness issues in a glorious dawn. Israel's long night shall cease. She shall arise and shine. Her light shall come. Her tedious years of cruel bondage shall reach a blessed close. Her sons shall return from distant lands. Her many promises shall have exact fulfillment. From Jerusalem the blessed tidings of salvation shall resound. "If the casting away has been the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving be but life from the dead?" Then, indeed, shall joy and gladness be the portion of Israel's sons. Then shall praise and thanksgiving ring throughout earth's length and breadth. Let us trust, and pray, and hope. Bright days are coming. Hasten the joy, O Lord, in Your own time!

PSALM 54

Deep distress afflicts the Psalmist. He knows his refuge, and flees to it. In confidence of gracious aid he vows the sacrifice of praise. We, also, are born to trouble. May we in faith use our ever-present help.

1, 2. "Save me, O God, by Your name, and judge me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth."

David is here surrounded by distress. Billows on billows threatened his ruin. Traitors were ready to surrender him to his cruel foe. Vain is all human support, and he betakes himself to God. He invokes His aid by all the precious attributes which constitute His *name*. In intensity of supplication he calls upon God, and all that God is, to save him. He looks for vindication to the omnipotence of God's might. In wrestling earnestness he beseeches that heavenly ears would listen to his cry, and that his words might not be cast out at the mercy-seat. Let us, also, diligently ponder the revelation of God's character, and summon every attribute to advocate our cause. Save me by Your *name*, is an all-prevailing plea.

3. "For strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul; they have not set God before them."

David uses not vague and general petition. He clearly states his especial errand to the mercy-seat. He points to the betrayers who were active to deliver him to the infuriate king. He points to their ungodly treachery. They were enemies to God, and therefore enemies to God's servant. Prayers sometimes err in being diffuse in generalities. We should distinctly see our present need, and distinctly specify it. The plea is strong when we can urge that our cause is God's cause, and that those who hate us hate God also.

4, 5. "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my soul. He shall reward evil to my enemies; cut them off in your truth."

Distresses rather brighten, than extinguish faith. They open the door for its expanded exercise, and in its exercise it recruits its strength. Unless it is brought to trial its existence might be doubted. We often pray, O Lord, increase our faith. The answer may be an accumulation of distress. Such is David's case in this crisis of his life. The treachery of false friends pierced him to the heart. But they led him to feel that he had a friend who could never fail, and amid his fears he firmly realizes, "God is my helper."

This truth, when tightly grasped, raises us victorious above desertion and betrayal. He knew that those who would maintain his cause would surely prosper, because omnipotence was on their side. Strong is the little band of whom it may be truly said, 'The Lord is with them.'

He foresaw, also, the total overthrow of his enemies. He knew the many promises which predicted their final overthrow. All these he steadfastly believed, and he humbly prays that God would fulfill His word, redeem His pledges, and do as He has said.

6, 7. "I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all trouble; and my eye has seen his desire upon my enemies."

Can faith thus brightly blaze, and joy not fill the heart? David foresees complete deliverance and freedom for holy worship. He feels that he will soon be at liberty to bring his victims to the altar, and to encompass the mercy-seat with incense of thanksgiving. He sees his enemies low in complete defeat, and his every desire most fully granted. It is a happy exercise to give free scope to the expanded wings of faith, and to anticipate the blessed day when

victory over every foe shall be assuredly conquered, and Hallelujahs become the endless song.

PSALM 55

In the eventful life of David trouble follows trouble as wave succeeds to wave. His intervals of rest were very few. Throughout his days darkness seems often to gather clouds. But he finds refuge in God; and deliverance was his happy experience. This God is our God forever and ever. Let us trust. He will not fail us.

1 , 2. "Listen to my prayer, O God. Do not ignore my cry for help! Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles."

It is a wondrous privilege that we may be importunate with God. It is no presumption to use holy boldness, and to give Him no rest in cries for audience. We are permitted to tell out our sorrows in mourning terms, and to pray that our sadness may attract attention. Strong crying and tears marked our Lord's hours of supplication. We cannot err in following Him.

3, 4, 5. "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 sorely pained within me; and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me."

It is good in prayer to specify the cause of our distress. *What we deeply feel, we should distinctly state.* David is cast down by the open reviling of his enemies, who scrupled not to impute all wicked ways to him. Here we see the type of Him who suffered such malignant charges against His holy walk. *The Psalmist states his agonized condition.* Trust in God does not destroy feelings of alarm, though they restrain them from overwhelming force.

In this fearful description of his inward agony, can we fail to see the path which our great Redeemer trod? What was His state of mental misery when He felt the crushing burden of His people's sins, and was bowed to the earth by its overwhelming load? Sorrow was indeed the occupant of His heart when the exclamation was pressed out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" We may be terrified, but we must never yield to despair.

6, 7, 8. "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."

It is a feeling common to the breast of man to flee turmoil and to desire rest. There is a charm in tranquil peace which sweetly attracts desire. Rest and peace are among the sweet promises from our great Lord's lips. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you." Sweet is the promise, "The Lord Himself shall give you peace always and by all means." Therefore, as the timid dove with rapid wing flees to the lonely desert, and seeks shelter from tempestuous winds, so the soul longs for the tranquility of repose.

But in these desires there must be moderation. When called to combat we must not use the coward's flight. When called to patient endurance we must not show impatience. If we would win the crown we must not shrink from the cross. We may find rest *in* trouble, when rest *from* trouble is wisely withheld.

9, 10, 11. "Destroy them, Lord, and confuse their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city. Its walls are patrolled day and night against invaders, but the real danger is wickedness within the city. Murder and robbery are everywhere there; threats and cheating are rampant in the streets."

We have here an dreadful picture how sin will spread, and how sinful men sow seeds of mischief. When this is evident, let the godly man appeal to heaven, and pray God's power to check the evil. We have encouragement in the case of the Babel-builders, and thus may ask for plotting tongues to be confused.

12, 13, 14, 15. "For it was not an enemy who reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he who hated me that magnified himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to 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."

The bitterest pang is when hostility is found in one who was loved as an intimate friend, and trusted as a faithful guide, and sought as a confidential adviser, and walked with, as a fellow-worshiper. David drank this bitter cup; so did our beloved Lord. Judas from walking by His side hastened to the blackest crime. But he went to "his own place." Dreadful is the thought. It is recorded for our warning.

16, 17. "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."

Under the pressure of such a weight of woe, David makes holy profession. Let the wicked rage—let foes prove treacherous—let malignity in every form assail, he will still look to God. *The severest trials are only blessings in disguise when they quicken our speed to the mercy-seat.* Then burdens become light, and darkness brightens, and songs of deliverance break forth.

David resolves that he will not use his voice in lamentations or reproach, but will call upon God; and he will do so not in formality, or in lifeless exercise, but in the full assurance of faith, that audience will be given. Happy are they who know that they have free access

to the ears of God, and that their petitions, perfumed with the Redeemer's blood, will encircle the mercy-seat with fragrant incense.

He resolves, also, that stated periods should be set apart by him for distinct worship. Doubtless, we should be always in a prayerful frame, and constant prayers should carry our desires on high. But still to prevent forgetfulness, it is the part of wisdom diligently to adhere to regulated times. Three times each day David made distinct supplications.

18. "He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me; for there were many with me."

Happy is the mind which is enriched with large experiences of felt mercies. No act of heavenly goodness should be forgotten. The catalogue is capable of almost daily enlargement, and it should be studied with devout thanksgiving. David had been a warrior from his youth. He had taken part in many battles. He had been preserved, not in safety only, but in peace. He had felt that God was on his side, and that in God's support he was stronger than all the hosts of men. While others trembled he knew no fears.

Is not this God *our* God forever and ever? Leaning on His arm, should we not realize immovable support? David felt that there were many with him. The eyes of Elijah's servant were opened to behold the surrounding mountains filled with horses of fire and chariots of fire. Is it not true that thus many are with us, and that the angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him and delivers them?

19. "God shall hear, and afflict them, even He who abides of old. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

David's faith grows stronger as his trials swell. Unwavering is his confidence that his prayers shall all be heard, and vengeance shall

destroy his foes. He states the ground of his confidence, even his knowledge that God changes not, but is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. His mercy, which has been from everlasting, endures forever.

A reason is given why the ungodly disregard the Lord. They have no changes—they are at ease. Soft is the nest in which they quietly repose. They have comfort today, and they fondly think that it will always last. Whereas the children of the Lord, who are emptied from vessel to vessel, learn in each change to cling more closely to their God.

20, 21. "He has put forth his hands against those who are at peace with him; he has 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."

A picture is reproduced of the falsehood of the ungodly. They treacherously assail the friends who trust them—their pledged promises are wantonly disregarded. With gentle language and with oily tongue they flatter and profess love, while the bitterest enmity is lurking in their hearts.

This cruel trial burst with intensity on the head of Jesus. The traitor drew near with words of reverence and love, with treachery in his heart.

22, 23. "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never allow the righteous to be moved. But You, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in You."

A precious exhortation follows, supported by precious promises. It is acknowledged that burdens may press heavily upon the child of

God; but he is exhorted not to sink beneath them, but to cast them on Him who is ever at hand to receive them, even the Lord. Oh, for faith most fully to obey, and thus to obtain entire relief! Let us clasp to our hearts the promise, "He shall sustain you." Amid most raging billows Peter did not sink. Mountains of adversity crushed not David.

Two inferences follow. He had full assurance that his cruel and treacherous foes were only digging the pit of misery for themselves, while his deliverance would only deepen his unfailing confidence in God. Oh for more of this happy trust! It is worth more than ten thousand worlds.

PSALM 56

Similarity of circumstance leads to similarity of conduct. Continued troubles prompt continued prayer. Prayer may wrestle long, but it will never strive in vain. Answers will come—the answers will be deliverance. In reading this, may we gain holy comfort!

1, 2. "Be merciful to me, O God; for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresses me. My enemies would daily swallow me up; for they are many who fight against me, O Most High."

We are not left in doubt as to the occasion which prompted this hymn. David flees from the persecuting Saul. His steps guide him to a persecuting land. He would make Gath his hiding-place; but vain is his hope of refuge in man. There is no friendly support for him there. The men of Gath would give him up to Saul. His eyes are open to his perilous condition. A multitude pursue him with inveterate hate. The wild beasts rushing with open mouths to devour their prey are the fit emblem of his pursuing foes. He clearly sees that in man there is no safety for him. He looks away. He looks above. He asks no pity from surrounding foes, but he asks pity from Him whose pitying ears are ever open to the cry of faith. He humbly

prays, Be merciful to me, O God! There is mighty power in the cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" It never will go forth in vain. It takes Him by storm whose delight is mercy, whose riches is His mercy, whose mercy is built up forever.

3, 4. "When I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God I will praise His word; in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do to me."

Natural feelings have deep root, and will continue to spring up in the most enlightened hearts. When David looked around he saw encompassing enemies. Saul threatened in the rear—the Philistines encamped in front. Thus when he looked to MAN timidities were prone to rise. Tremblings allowed that he knew fear, but happy confidence was not extinct. Many waters cannot drown love; many troubles cannot slay faith. Out of the lowest depths he looked above, and saw bright light. His heart responded, I am afraid, but I will trust. God was his confidence. God's word was the strong foundation on which his heart was fixed. Realizing his oneness with his God, he felt that all God's promises were his unfailing heritage. His word was a safeguard which shielded his breast; it was the helmet which guarded his head; it was the sword before which no foe could stand; it was the light which dispelled all darkness; it was the song which drowned the clattering of advancing foes. Blessed is the man who can similarly cry, In God I will praise His word. But what praise can do justice to its exceeding excellence!

5-7. "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 your anger cast down the people, O God."

The constant effort of the godly to walk without reproach in the sight of man fails to secure success. Words uttered in loving spirit and in pious frame are perverted by the lips of slander. The ungodly

unite in cruel plots, and watch, with base design, the most blameless walk.

Instantly the case of our beloved Lord appears. False witnesses were obtained; things were laid to His charge from which he was entirely apart. If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Faith then puts the crucial question, 'Shall they escape by iniquity?' They may escape the censure and condemnation of the world, but there is a judgment coming, in which assuredly they will be cast.

8. "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book."

"God sees me," is the sweet solace of the true believer. "He knows the way that I take," will make that rugged way seem smooth. If perils and distress so shake the heart that plenteous tears give evidence of suffering, these tears are marked on high, and tender compassion will wipe them all away. The day has not yet come when there shall be no more tears. But the day is always present when they awaken sympathy in the Redeemer's breast. He who wept on earth will soon wipe all tears away.

9, 10, 11. "When I cry to You, then shall my 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 to me."

Faith boasts of near and assured deliverance. It is confident of success. Its deep feeling is, 'This I know.' But where does this knowledge come from? There is assurance that God is a present help. Hence the fear of man vanishes as mist before the rising sun.

12, 13. "Your vows are upon me, O God; I will render praises unto You. For You have delivered my soul from death; will You not

deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"

In days of trouble vows are often made that merciful deliverance shall be duly praised. Let these vows be fully paid, and let the assurance brighten, that He who died to save the soul from eternal death, will never permit that soul to perish in the upward path. The haven is sure; the voyage shall be without a wreck.

PSALM 57

Trouble, prayer, confidence, and praise are the pervading notes of this instructive hymn. Our faith will surely have its trials. May each trial cause it to grow stronger! The shaken tree takes firmer root.

1, 2. "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until this violent storm is past."

The help of mercy is here keenly felt. A reiterated cry calls down its aid. In prayer importunity can never be excessive. Sometimes answers are delayed that this sweet exercise may be prolonged. Abundant pleas enforce the soul's desires. Here confidence in God is urged. It is a prevailing utterance, 'Help me, for in You is all my trust.'

As when storms give sign of near approach, or the hawk hovers in the sky, the frightened brood seek shelter beneath the parent's wings, so the believer hides himself in God, and will not leave his refuge while perils are still near. Faith knows well the Covenant, and cries in full assurance that no good thing will be withheld, and that God, who begins the work of grace, will carry it to its end in glory.

3, 4. "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him who would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and

His truth. My soul is among lions; and I lie even among those who are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."

Here faith looks not for mercy only, but for fulfillment of the pledged word. Happy are those who are well versed in the exceeding great and precious promises, and can confidently pray, 'Do as You have said.' It is this confidence which sustains God's children even when malignity most rages and cruelty is most fierce. Such was David's case when Saul and all his court pursued with every form of persecution. He knew their savage malice; his eyes were open to their unsparing violence; but he looked upwards, and fainted not.

5. "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth."

It is a precious thought, that when God appears to vindicate His people's cause there is accession to the glories of His name. The adversaries cannot but discern the favoring and protecting arm. They tremble, and their fear gives reverence to God. Therefore when we beseech God to stand by our side, we ask that honor and praise and glory may be more truly given.

6. "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves."

After this prayer David reverts to his foes; he sees their plots, and is oppressed; he sees the pit prepared in his path, but he feels that his steps will not be entrapped, but that the ruin so craftily designed will be ruin to the contrivers.

7. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

In all his troubles his steadfast confidence in God could not be moved. He stood as a rock amid assailing billows; he realized his sure deliverance; his ready harp was tuned for praise.

8, 9, 10, 11. "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early. I will praise You, O Lord, among the people; I will sing unto You among the nations; for Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and your truth unto the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth."

Intense is the desire of faith to glorify God. The believer chides his tongue for being dull and remiss in this delightful duty. He resolves to redeem time from unnecessary repose that the refreshed faculties may consecrate their powers to God. He resolves that all to whom his voice could extend should hear of the great attributes of God. His delight shall be to tell of mercy and truth. But how can their infinitudes be reached? High are the heavens above the earth, but higher far is mercy which overtops the skies, and truth which soars above our powers to comprehend. The chorus again sounds, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth."

PSALM 58

Persecution in another form here agitates the Psalmist's mind. A fearful picture of the persecutors' hate is next exhibited. Confidence in their ruin is expressed. God surely will maintain the righteous cause.

1-2. "Justice—do you rulers know the meaning of the word? Do you judge the people fairly? No, all your dealings are crooked; you hand out violence instead of justice."

If any seat should be preeminently conspicuous in honest equity, it is the tribunal of justice. But when the cause of God has called for

righteous judgment, how often has iniquity perverted the decree! David found no acquittal from the courts of Saul. Mark, also, the Sanhedrin and the unstable judge who administered the Roman law! Spotless innocence did not avert unrighteous condemnation. No guilt was found; freedom from shadow of blame was allowed; but the sentence was, 'Let him die.' Crucifixion was decreed. Happy are those who look to Him whose right hand is full of righteousness, and look to the tribunal where the plea "Christ died" cannot be urged in vain, but ensures not acquittal only, but exaltation to the throne of glory.

3-5. "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 stops her ear; which will not listen to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

Injustice and cruelty are here traced to the first cause of original corruption. These noxious streams issue from an evil spring. These hateful berries hang on branches rotten to the core. Men are shaped in iniquity; in sin do mothers conceive their offspring. If heavenly grace comes not mercifully to renew, convert, and sanctify, a corrupt offspring cannot fail to move in paths of corruption. Mark what issues from the nursery—proneness to depart far from God; tendency to fabricate untruth, and to misrepresent, and to delight in lies. Their words contain all venom. The viper's poison is the emblem of their destroying tongues. To all instruction they are deaf. As the adder with closed ears is unmoved by sweetest melody, so they are touched not by the silver notes of God's enchanting word.

6-9. "Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out, O Lord, the fangs of the lions! Let them vanish like water that flows away; when they draw the bow, let their arrows be blunted. Like a slug melting away as it moves along, like a stillborn child, may they not see the sun. God will sweep them away, both young and old, faster than a pot heats on an open flame."

The Spirit here, to support and console afflicted saints, gives strong assurance of approaching vengeance. The weapons of their foes shall be broken. Their power of evil shall gradually be brought to nothing, as waters lessen when they flow away. They may bend the bow, and prepare the arrows, but these implements shall take no effect. Graphic images of weakness portray their utter impotency to prosecute their schemes. Wrath shall break suddenly upon them, and sweep them from the earth, as the fury of an unexpected whirlwind. Quickly will they perish, even more quickly than the blazing fuel can warm a caldron.

10. "The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked."

When God's holy indignation is thus conspicuously displayed, the godly should thankfully recognize God's just displeasure. Pity for the miserable offenders they should feel, but joy in God's glory should prevail. The blood of the wicked should be as a fountain, in which their feet should wash, and as a warning to walk more warily.

11. "So that a man shall say, truly there is a reward for the righteous; truly He is a God who judges in the earth."

The truth will brightly shine, and compel acknowledgment that the righteous shall at last inherit manifestations of favor, and God's unerring tribunal will righteously dispense justice. When the great white throne is set, may we receive the welcome, "Come, blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

PSALM 59

Imminent perils surround the Psalmist. Foes environ his path. Means of escape seem utterly to fail. But God can never fail. Prayer flies to His presence and faith rejoices in immovable confidence.

1-4. "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, look, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty have 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."

David was imprisoned in his own abode. The door was guarded, and, to appearance, means of extrication could not be found. Instant death extended an unresisted hand. But he sinks not in despair. He forgets not that God is his God, and that the God of all power was near. Conscious of freedom from all fault, he boldly looks up and cries, "Deliver me, O my God, save me, O my Lord."

5-8. "O Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, rise up to punish hostile nations. Show no mercy to wicked traitors. They come at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets. Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths, the piercing swords that fly from their lips. "Who can hurt us?" they sneer. But Lord, you laugh at them. You scoff at all the hostile nations."

Importunity gives God no rest. It cries as though slumber diverted attention. But He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. In earnest supplication, he names his foes as utterly ignorant of God, and in mind and feeling on a level with the worshipers of stocks and stones. He compares them to the hungry dogs who, when the shades of evening prevail, seek their accustomed haunts around the city, and howl in search of the cast-out refuse. Impiously they conceive the thought that the omniscient God has closed His ears to their malignant threats. But faith adheres to true views of God, and knows the precious truth; "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision."

9-15. "You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me, for you, O God, are my place of safety. In his unfailing love, my God will come and help me. He will let me look down in triumph on all my

enemies. Don't kill them, for my people soon forget such lessons; stagger them with your power, and bring them to their knees, O Lord our shield. Because of the sinful things they say, because of the evil that is on their lips, let them be captured by their pride, their curses, and their lies. Destroy them in your anger! Wipe them out completely! Then the whole world will know that God reigns in Israel. My enemies come out at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets. They scavenge for food but go to sleep unsatisfied."

Mighty may be the foes of God's people, and terrible their strength; but from this fact *faith* gains the argument that greater far is the omnipotence of God, and therefore fear should be repressed. There is much preciousness in the title, "The God of my mercy." God's covenant secures mercy's outpouring; and the believer knows that mercy shall precede and follow him. Prayer sometimes deprecates the immediate destruction of the foe. It knows that there is much teaching in God's continued exhibition in His people's cause. It therefore supplicates, not that they should be slain, but scattered and exhibited in low estate. The image is again repeated, that as evening-dogs wander around in search of prey, they should be permitted to show their vile desires.

16, 17. "But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto You, O my strength, will I sing; for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy."

The joy of faith is a flame, which waters cannot quench. It has a life, which never can be slain. It has wings ever ready to soar on high. Paul and Silas, in their dungeon, prayed and sang praises. David, in his abode, closely besieged, professes that songs shall be on his lips. He announces the *subject* of his thanksgivings; they are the power, the strength, the mercy of his God. The same attributes are our property, our defense, our refuge, our shield. In the darkest days,

then, let us sing. When hope seems gone, let us rejoice in the God of our salvation.

PSALM 60

In the bright day of prosperity the gloom of adversity is not forgotten. The contrast elevates the joy of success. Abundant victories are realized, and God is acknowledged as the author and giver of all good things.

1-3. "O God, You have cast us off, You have scattered us, You have been displeased; O turn to us again. You have made the earth to tremble; You have broken it; heal the breaches thereof; for it shakes. You have shown Your people hard things. You have made us drink the wine that makes us stagger."

The past miseries of the kingdom are vivid to the mind of David. He remembered the internal commotions, and the people like sheep scattered and imperiled on the mountain's brow. He traced this to the just displeasure of God. He well knew that sin produced this alienation of God's favor. The prayer goes forth that righteous displeasure might now cease, and that God would again visit His people with His favor. He realized the terrible effects of God being estranged. He compares it to the terrors which result when the earth quakes and trembles to its base. He acknowledges the hard sufferings of the people, and marks the astonishment which darkened every brow. *O sin, O sin! what miseries you have brought upon a fallen earth!*

4-5. "But you have raised a banner for those who honor you—a rallying point in the face of attack. Use your strong right arm to save us, and rescue your beloved people."

The retrospect increases the joy that God, who had afflicted, had not cast off. Signs of favor had reappeared. When the enemy came in

like a flood, God had lifted up a standard against him. Around this banner David mustered his people. He saw in it a proof that God would not permit His truth to fail, nor His pledged word to be trampled beneath ungodly feet. He knew that God had a beloved flock, and that for their sakes deliverance would be granted. The Lord of hosts had left for Himself a blessed remnant "in the midst of His people, as a dew from the Lord, and as the showers upon the grass."

6-10. "God has 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 my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; Holistic, triumph because of me. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? Will not You, O God, who have cast us off? and You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?"

Bright prospects glitter before David's eyes. He sees not only the firm establishment of Israel's kingdom beneath his sway, but the extension also of his dominion among tributary states. The assurance of this grand supremacy is founded on the Word of his God. God had spoken in His holiness. What God had promised in His holy Word He would assuredly perform. Therefore David's heart, full of this faith, overflowed with joy. He realized the preeminence of Judah's tribe. He knew that laws and decrees should issue from it, and that in God's good time the great Deliverer would be among its sons. He realized too that other tribes would await His royal decrees, and that neighboring provinces would bow before him. Moab should be reduced to servile work; Edom would be trodden down beneath his conquering feet; Philistia's triumph should be annexation to his rule.

The spiritual meaning is most obvious. Relying on God's holy Word, we should rejoice in the secure establishment of grace within our hearts, and we should long more, and strive more for the rapid

growth of the Spirit's empire within, and the subjugation of all lusts and godless passions. David views the almost impregnable strength of Edom's fortress; but he knew that it must quickly fall; for God had returned to give victory to His arms.

11-12. "Give us help from trouble; for useless is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for it is He who shall tread down our enemies."

He sees that all his armaments are weak except upheld by God. He prays for this help. He believes that it will surely come. He believes that, through his God, valiant exploits would be performed, and that through his God his feet would crush the necks of His foes. We believe that through Jesus we too shall do valiantly, and that yet a little while and Satan will be crushed beneath our feet.

PSALM 61

Attention to prayer in a season of great distress is supplicated in the experience of former mercies. Promises are remembered, and grateful service is vowed.

1-2. "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

Prayer, which is our precious privilege, and should be our continuous delight, should ever be from the very depths of the heart, and in the earnest wrestlings of the soul. Can there be coldness, can there be weakness, can there be formality when we draw near to the immediate presence of our God, and pour into His listening ear our every need and our every desire?

Here David is all zeal and all intense effort. He doubles expression to awaken a gracious hearing. Doubtless His need now was very

great. But that need is no small blessing which raises us direct from earth and places us before our God. He was an outcast—banished from his home, from his family, and his cherished friends. Strangers and aliens were around him. But on the outstretched wings of faith he soars to a Heavenly Father's house. He desires to be uplifted from his low estate, and his feet set on elevated ground. We have a Rock; and when standing upon it, impregnable is our position and glorious is our prospect. That Rock is Christ. May our prayer be constant that we may be kept grounded and settled on Him, and never moved away from the hope of our Gospel

3-4. "For You have been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings."

Experience here supplies a prevailing argument. The Psalmist could look back on many perils, but the Lord had delivered him out of all. That arm was not shortened; that mercy was warm as ever. It had never failed; it will never fail. Therefore in his exile he had persuasion that he would be restored to the city of his God, and join again in the services which he loved. He knew that the wings which had sheltered him would shelter him to the end, and therefore his trust abided firm.

5-6. "For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name. You will prolong the king's life; and his years as many generations."

Those who watch for answers to their vows will have abundant cause for joy. God's Word is pledged in many forms that prayer shall not go forth in vain. All these promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus; and heaven and earth shall pass away, and all the universe be wrapped in ruin, before fulfillment can be denied. The answers come, and they abound in comfort and encouragement. David realized that through faith he was heir to an inheritance which paled all earthly possessions—the heritage of those who feared God's

name. Blessings indeed are linked to this ennobling grace. It belongs to all who have found forgiveness in Christ Jesus. They love the Lord with all intensity of rapture; they love His Word and will; and nothing could induce them willingly to offend. Therefore mercy surrounds them. High as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy towards those who fear Him. O Lord! implant Your fear in our longing hearts! It will enrich us now and ever. This David fully realized. He saw that His days were equivalent with the ages of eternity, and that all those days would be happiness and glory.

7-8. "He shall abide before God forever; O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him. So will I sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows."

He looked onward to the fullness of joy in the presence of God, and to the pleasures which are at His right hand forever. With this bright prospect, who will not fear His name—who will not devote himself to God's service? But all our vows and all our efforts are utter weakness unless we are helped from on high. In deep knowledge of his own nothingness, he prays that mercy and truth may ever be at hand for his preservation; and then he resolves that suitable praises shall be rendered. Thus prayer and trust lead to everlasting joys.

PSALM 62

Firm confidence in God is here avowed. He is commended as a high fortress of protection. The ruin of the ungodly is foreshown; exhortations to trust in God follow, with recognition of His precious attributes. May we be enabled to adopt His language as the feeling of our souls!

1-2. "Truly my soul waits upon God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved."

Amid all tossing conflicts and disturbing alarms, the Christian has a home of sweet repose. He can recline on God, and feel that everlasting arms are underneath him. This, amid all the troubles of his troubled life, was David's sweet experience. He looked not to man; he conferred not with flesh and blood. He knew that from God only sure protection came. With overflowing joy he testifies, "He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense." A rock high above all foes, immovable against all assaults—salvation to the very uttermost from all the menaces of man, from all the miseries of sin, from all the accusations of conscience, from all the powers of Satan. Sheltered in Him, he had no fears that he should be cast down; he might tremble when hard pressed, but he well knew that he should not be greatly moved.

3-4. "How long will you imagine mischief against a man? You shall be slain, all of you; you shall be as a bowing wall, 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."

From his high munition he expostulates with his crafty foes. He foresees that their schemes will soon be overthrown—that all their boasted prowess shall be crushed in ruins, as the wall falls whose foundations are undermined, and as the weak fence which shakes beneath the slightest touch. He avows his knowledge of their inward character—their plot to subvert those whom God has exalted. Falsehood and curses are their constant means of mischief.

5-7. "My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God."

By easy transit he reverts to God, and realizes his own happy state. He calls upon his soul to utterly reject all other trust, and to make God its only resting place. Faith glows in brighter blaze, and renews expressions to testify the firmness of such hope. He recently had

stated that he had no fears of being "greatly moved;" but now he rejoices in the persuasion that he shall not be moved at all. What God was to David, the same is He yesterday, today, and forever. Let us fan by all means this persuasion into the strength of full assurance. Then we shall lift high our heads above surrounding troubles.

8. "Trust in Him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us."

Faith ever strives to win others to partake in its delights. Here others are exhorted at all times to repose their confidence in God. Let them restrain no feeling. Let them hide no distress. Let them pour forth all their woes. Let their inmost need be referred to Him. Let their whole hearts be opened to His view. He will not turn away. He will give audience. His arms will be a sure and ready refuge.

9-10. "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."

Disappointment is the lot of those who turn from God to man. No sure help can ever be derived from such source. Survey our total race from highest station to the lowest grade. Weigh them together in the balances of truth. How worthless is their accumulated weight! One inscription marks them all— "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity."

If wealth is hoarded, and iniquitous means obtain it, let the heart scorn it. There is no real help in it.

11-12. "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongs to God. Also unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to every man according to his work."

Blessed be God, He has revealed Himself! Again and again His attributes are set before us. Let them be our constant study and our constant trust. They tell us of His POWER. It is omnipotent. Is it not then sure protection? They tell us of His MERCY. It has no bounds. Will it not extend to us? They tell us, also, that soon the JUDGMENT will be set and the books opened, and we shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to our works.

PSALM 63

Warm expressions show the intense longing of the soul for God. The joy of public ordinances is set forth; confidence is added in the final triumph of the righteous, and final ruin of their foes. May we thus follow after God!

1, 2. "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary."

They are seated on the highest throne of joy, and revel in the sweetest sunshine of delight, who know that God is their sure possession. They who hold Him as their own by the hand of faith have greater riches than earth can give, and surer property than this world can amass. And can it be that WE may enjoy this treasure? By the faith of Jesus we have this privilege of glorious possession. We may thus say with David, "O God, You are my God;" and again, "This God is our God forever and ever." We may pour out our hearts in the darkest hours of desertion, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" Those who have thus found the pearl of great price will be always intent to realize their joy. With morning light they will be eager to rejoice in this joy.

David adds, "Early will I seek You." May He who is the first have our first thoughts! David was now an outcast in a dreary wasteland, and far from the Temple with its holy rites. The land was barren, unrefreshed by fertilizing streams of service. David had worshiped in the might of faith, and thus through outward means had drawn near to see Him who is invisible. He ardently longed for return of these blessings; with all his powers he longed to be in near approach to God.

3-4. "Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name."

Life is a wonderful gift. It links us to eternity. But what is life without the favor of our God? *If we receive not grace, we cannot inherit glory. We only tread a dreary passage to a world of woe.* God's lovingkindness is the gift of gifts. In thought of this, the Psalmist vows that praise should ever be streaming from his lips, and that in adoring love he would raise adoring hands.

5-7. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips, when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night-watches. Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice."

Amid external desolations inward joy can be abundant. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The Lord will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. He will plant in the wilderness the choicest of the evergreens.

As the body craves the support of food, so too the soul has craving appetites. But they are all satisfied. The manna falls, and gives support and strength. The pilgrim sits down beneath the tree of life. Its laden branches present refreshing produce. The fruit is sweet to

the taste. Those who hunger and thirst after God assuredly shall be filled. The richest fruit is ever by their side. When evening shadows prevail, the inward light does not expire. When the body needs repose, the active mind will hold communion with the Lord, and the night-watches be calmed with heavenly meditations. Experience recalls past help. The soul nestles beneath the shadow of God's wings, and is rightly glad.

8-10. "My soul follows hard after You; Your right hand upholds 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."

Real desolation is distance from God. This anguish the righteous soul cannot endure. With every energy, with every power, it presses after its beloved object. It seeks uninterrupted fellowship. But, ah! how often is it weak to follow—how often do the tottering limbs need to be upheld! This help is very near. God extends His right hand, and thus the fainting one pursues his course. Divine help enables to draw near to God, and to reach the presence which is heaven begun. While the believer thus strives and prospers, misery overwhelms the enemies who seek his life. God needs not instruments of destruction. They shall be overwhelmed, and perish as those whose carcasses are the food of beasts of prey.

11. "But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone who swears by Him shall glory; but the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped."

A glorious prospect ends this hymn. It is unspeakably blessed; it is full of glory. May the prospect encourage us to join ourselves to the Lord, and to vow vows in His most holy name.

PSALM 64

The voice of prayer again is heard amid the multitude of afflictions. But deliverance shows a smiling face. Foes will fall prostrate and the righteous shall rejoice.

1-2. "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 Psalmist is here seen as a child of sorrows cradled in distress. His daily portion is affliction's bread. He holds a cup filled to the very brim with trouble. He cannot stir but amid snares and hostile threats. On every side the enemy shows a front of menace. But he has his refuge. It is near. It is secure. It is the mercy-seat to which prayer brings him near. Who will dread trouble when such remedies are at hand! Foes may have cruel malice in their hearts, but all their malice will prove blessings in disguise when they convey on wings of prayer to God's immediate presence. Thus cruel distress is often made the means of boundless good. So it was with David. In his worst straits he could look up and cry, 'Preserve my life, O God, from fear of the enemy.' He knew that the wicked laid their secret plots, and that the workers of iniquity were planning to rise up against him. But no fears disturbed his peace when he could appeal to God to spread His sheltering wings around him, and to hide him in His pavilion, from the machinations of insurgents.

3-6. 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 they shoot at him, and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying snares privately; they say, Who shall see them? As they plot their crimes, they say, "We have devised the perfect plan!" Yes, the human heart and mind are cunning.

In warfare the *sword* is a mighty weapon. It inflicts deadly wounds and drives back the attacking foe. So, also, *arrows* do destructive work. The Psalmist felt these weapons were arrayed against him in the malice of attacking words. Sharp as the sword were their tongues, piercing as the arrows were their words; secret was the ambush, and suddenly they rushed out to fight. They hold malicious counsels. They flatter themselves that darkness would conceal their plots. In disregard of the all-seeing Eye they vainly question, 'Who shall see us?' They use, also, every endeavor to malign. They strive to discover some evil which they may bring to light, and use in slander against the objects of their hate. Who can fathom the evil of their thoughts, the evil of their hearts? Truly this evil is a deep well.

7-8. "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."

If our hope sprang only from this world, our hands might hang down in despair. If help came only from the sons of men, helpless indeed our state would be. How soon would we be trampled down by overwhelming hosts; how soon would Satan send forth his legions to sweep us into uttermost destruction.

But God is our hope, our help, our strength; therefore unfailing victory must be on our side. He will bend His bow, and His arrows never fail to reach their mark, and to discomfit the insulting hosts. In a moment, when they least expect defeat, like Sennacherib's hosts, they shall lie as dead men. Like Pharaoh's army, they shall be overwhelmed and no more seen. God does not need to call in new implements of ruin; their own tongues shall put forth destructive power. Self-wounded, self-ruined, self-destroyed, they shall exhibit a spectacle so fearful that frightened spectators shall dread their very sight.

9-10. "And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider His doing. The righteous shall be glad in

the Lord, and shall trust in Him; and all the upright in heart shall glory."

Awe shall be widely spread when such requital is beheld. The hand of the Lord shall be conspicuous, and shall be reverently acknowledged. Intelligence shall perceive that God's mind has been the directing cause, and God's power accomplished the overthrow. Happy thankfulness shall pervade the hearts of the righteous. They shall rejoice not so much in the misery of the wicked and at their total overthrow, as that God's work shall be thus manifestly seen, that praises should adore Him, and all glory be ascribed to Him.

PSALM 65

Incessant praise is God's undoubted due. Countless are the motives which awaken it. May it be the exercise in which our souls unweariedly delight!

1. "Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion; and unto You shall the vow be performed."

Among God's people in the Zion of His dwelling, praise is ever ready to break forth. At every moment, in every circumstance, it strives to issue from adoring lips. How happy are God's people if praise is happiness; for their happiness flows as a river. They may have been in trouble—they may have known affliction's darkest hour—they may have felt desertion's misery. In these trials they sought deliverance, and vowed to pay the tribute of thanksgiving. Deliverance has come—their vows are duly paid. They call upon their souls and all that is within them to bless God's Holy name and to remember all His benefits.

2. "O You who hears prayer, unto You shall all flesh come."

Many sweet titles tell of our Lord's abundant goodness. We read of Him as a God ready to forgive—as a God who receives sinners. Here He is proclaimed as a God who hears prayer. Time would fail to recount all the promises which assure us of accepting favor. We are invited—we are importuned—to draw near to the mercy-seat by repeated promises that if we ask we shall receive. What is the saint's life, but the recital of prayers heard and prayers fulfilled! This truth rolls as an unceasing flood throughout the pages of the Bible. Oh! for more faith to clasp these grand assurances to our hearts. It would make earth one communion with heaven—it would show heaven descending unto earth on wings of glad reply.

Why are we so poor and needy, so scanty in grace, so downcast in spirit? It is because our prayers are faithless. How different would be our state if earnest prayer gave God no rest—if wrestling supplications took heaven by storm! Then praises would proclaim that God is true; and praying lips can never pray in vain. This truth put forth into action would make this world a house of prayer. "Unto You shall all flesh come."

3. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You shall purge them away."

The believer is ever conscious of his sin-soiled state. He meekly cries, "My sin is ever before me." But still praise super-abounds. He knows that Christ has by His one offering purged away all his sins. He knows that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Mindful of this pardon, what praises, what thanksgivings he pours forth!

4. "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple."

The Book of Life, written before the foundation of the world, is here. Blessed indeed are they whose names are therein inscribed!

The *cause* of this blessedness is everlasting love—its source is far above, out of our sight. But the *effects* are manifest. The happy objects of this love are won and drawn by grace. They cannot rest but in the presence of their God; and this they seek in holy ordinances, and here their souls are satisfied with tokens of God's goodness.

5-13. "By awesome things in righteousness will You answer us, O God of our salvation; who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are afar off upon the sea; which by His strength sets fast the mountains, being girded with power; who stills the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. Those also who dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid of Your tokens; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water; You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it. You water its ridges abundantly; You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers; You bless the springing thereof; You crown the year with Your goodness; and Your 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."

Prayer calls God to manifest His power—answers are not withheld. Terrible is the overthrow of all evil—faith is confirmed, and the glory of God is widely seen. His power shines brightly through the realms of nature. The operations of His hand declare it. The mighty mountains stand fast through His resolve. The raging waves repose at His word; morning sweetly smiles, and evening closes on a rejoicing world. Refreshing streams irrigate the thirsty soil; abundance richly follows; the year displays God's goodness as its diadem; fertility follows where His feet are set. Pastures and valleys are luxuriant plenty. Praise, then, is His just due. Let all within us praise His name.

PSALM 66

Praise is the note which sounds throughout this hymn. Marvelous mercies are recounted, both temporal and spiritual. All demand devout thanksgiving. As recipients of mercy, may our hearts joyfully respond!

1-2. "Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands; sing forth the honor of His name; make His praise glorious."

An exhortation sounds to all the dwellers upon earth. All lands, with all their inhabitants, are called to loud and joyful praise. What mighty motives urge to this work. How sweetly mercy beams upon the world. Behold creation in its every part. How suited to provide for happiness and comfort. In every part we see benevolent contrivance for man's good. There is no moment when blessings are not strewn around. There should be no moment when responding praises should not ascend. Away with *meager* praise and *scanty* payment of blessing. The exhortation bids us to make His praise to be *glorious*. It should be our noblest exercise. It should call forth the grandest energies of our noblest powers. But if temporal blessings require these bursts of adoration, how much more do the blessings of the Gospel demand the overflowings of this grace!

3. "Say to God, How awesome are You in Your works! through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves unto You."

We are encouraged to recite to God the manifestations of His awesome power. Thus to enumerate them is to deepen in us the sense of their greatness. It is a sad fact that from creation's hour hostile powers have armed themselves against God. In vile hatred they have raised their puny arm against His majesty and rule. They have vainly thought to subvert His empire—to wrest the scepter from His hands. But how tremendous has been their overthrow! He

who sits in the heavens has laughed. The Lord has had them in derision.

4. "All the earth shall worship You, and shall sing to You; they shall sing to Your name."

Prediction here proclaims the glories of the coming kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." Every lip shall praise Him. Every heart shall swell with adoration—one loud hallelujah shall pervade the world.

5-6. "Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His works toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the flood on foot; there we rejoiced in Him."

We are here invited to draw instruction from the study of God's works. How precious is the contemplation! It shows in large and wondrous page how God has manifested Himself in olden times. It tells of deliverances in extremest times and from extremest perils. Great is the value of such study. For the God of our fathers is the God of His present family, and will be the God of His children to the last day. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever in love and power. In His lovingkindness and in His truth there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Ponder these manifestations in the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In the rear the king pursues with overwhelming hosts—on each side heights impassable forbid escape—in the front the sea presents the obstruction of impeding billows. Moses is commanded to wave his rod. The waters part. A dry pavement opens the passage of deliverance. The people march as on dry land. In safety they look back and see the returning billows rolling their foes to fearful death. Awesome was the work. The past deliverance bids us take courage. So, also, when Canaan's promised land was reached, the rolling Jordan did not impede entrance. The waters

parted. The hosts marched onwards as on by ground. Marvelous was the deliverance—a type that no opposing foes shall check our entrance to our promised home.

7-9. "He rules by His power forever; His eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves. O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard; who holds our soul in life, and allows not our feet to be moved."

The same power still sits on the throne of universal sway. The same eye still looks down upon the fury of the nations. Let the rebels take heed. Their destruction cannot be escaped. But let God's people bless and praise Him. Their souls yet live far above the reach of injury. Their feet still stand immovable. Let us trust more and more. Let us praise more and more.

10-12. "For You, O God, have proved us; You have tried us, as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction upon our loins. You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but You brought us out into a wealthy place."

The dealings of God are all mercy and truth to His chosen heritage, but these dealings often show a dark and trying aspect. A scourge is used, and grievous troubles multiply. But such discipline is needful. Without it we would slumber in our nests, and indolently indulge sloth. Our feet would go astray, and we would not ripen for the heavenly home. The vine will not be fruitful unless pruned; the silver will not be purged from dross unless the furnace be again and again employed. It is our wisdom thus to see the hand of love in all our seasons of affliction.

The Psalmist recognizes God's hand in bringing him into his many difficulties. The afflictions which oppress are the burdens which the Lord imposes. Afflictions do not arise from the dust; they are all designed to humble, to excite watchfulness, to purify, to sanctify, to

bless, to produce conformity to our Elder Brother's image. For a season our adversaries are permitted to trample on us with insulting feet. This is a grievous passage in our pilgrimage; but it has its end, and proves to be the entrance of enlarged prosperities.

14-15. "I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay my vows to You, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth has spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats."

Times of trouble strongly attract us to the mercy-seat. Prayer becomes more fervent, and grateful service is devoutly vowed. These pledges should be all redeemed, and public acknowledgment should be rendered. Gratitude does not forget the large mercies of deliverance. It delights to pour forth streams upon streams of pious adoration.

The Psalmist brought his appointed victims to the altar; he shed the prefiguring blood; he presented the foreshadowing offerings. We know that these types were emblems of our blessed Lord, through whom alone we can draw near to God; and who, by the incense of His blood, gives perfume to our every service. In the full faith of Christ may we thus ever worship; pleading His blood, may we bring all our vows. Acceptance comes when in His name we thus approach.

16-17. "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue."

The Psalmist invites the saints who are around him to come and listen to his grateful tale. Right indeed it is to encircle God's throne with praises; but gratitude should not be limited to such devotion. Our lips should tell aloud to all around His gracious dealings. Those

who fear the Lord speak often to one another. This exercise is not disregarded on high. A book of remembrance is written.

Of what did the Psalmist speak? Of all that God had done for his soul. Oh! the breadth and length, the depth and height, of this most marvelous declaration! He visited his soul in darkness, and gave the light of life. He found it in the prison-house of the devil, and translated it into the kingdom of grace and glory. He saw it laden with all iniquities, and removed the total burden. He saw it filthy in all the mire of evil, and clothed it with the garments of righteousness and salvation. Such is the theme of the believer's story; but heaven must be reached and eternity exhausted before the whole can be told.

He adds the assurance that he was incessant in prayerful cries, and that his tongue was ever loud in raising high the praises of his God.

18-20. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But, truly, God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me."

He adds the solemn warning, that if iniquity is fondled in the heart, vain will be the utterance of his lips. Prayer is a holy exercise; the admixture of unholiness reduces it to nullity. But his prayer was the offspring of sincerity and truth; the answers which came gave evidence that the petitions were sanctified by the Spirit and accepted of the Lord. With what happiness would he exclaim, "Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me."

PSALM 67

A hymn here meets us earnest in prayer, bright in prospects, shining in prophecies, glorious in anticipations. Hope gazes with delight on the fullness of the Gentiles—on the consequent ingathering of the

Jews, and all the glories of the second Advent. May we here find a subject for our supplications—a theme for rejoicing hope!

1-2. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations."

We rightly use the promises of God when we turn them into earnest prayer. We cannot doubt that we pursue a track which leads to all riches of fulfillment, when our lips plead that God would do unto us according to His word. Often are we assured that God is rich in mercy unto His people, and that His blessing is their promised heritage. How earnestly, then, and joyfully may we put God in remembrance, and plead with Him to be merciful unto us, and to bless us, and to lift up upon us the light of His countenance, and to cause the shining of His smile to beam around us.

But such prayer should not be limited to our own joys only. It should enfold in its embrace the whole family of man. Our supplications should beseech Him to look beyond our own needs, and to make known throughout the world His purpose, His will, His grace, His love, His design in sending Jesus to assume our flesh, His covenant of everlasting peace in Him. But such prayer lacks the essence of sincerity if it evaporates in word only, and makes no effort to secure fulfillment. How vain to pray and not to labor in the missionary cause!

3-4. "Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy; for You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

What a glorious prospect here rises to our view! What joy and gladness animate the scene! What sound prevails? It is the praises of our God. Where issue forth these precious notes? Not from one heart only; not from one family only, but from all who throng the earth. From every climate, from every nation, from all who breathe the

breath of life, adoration is uplifted. "Let the people praise You, O God, let all the people praise You." How earnestly should we pray, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and establish this reign of universal gladness. For then shall all nations sing for joy.'

How abundant will be the cause of this thanksgiving. The blessed Jesus shall sit upon the throne of His kingdom. His happy subjects shall adore Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. His rule shall be righteousness. The laws of His empire shall be perfect holiness. Sin, with all its miseries, shall be cast out. Its hideous features shall be no more seen. Nothing shall appear which shall mar the happiness of all the rejoicing subjects. The tabernacle of God shall be with them. The purposes of redeeming love shall be fully manifested. A righteous King shall govern righteous subjects. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

5-7. "Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You. 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."

Again and again shall prayer ascend for the ingathering of the Gentiles into the fold of Christ. The blessing is promised, and no rest should be given until the happy consummation comes, and the fullness of these new subjects shall be as life from the dead to the expectant world. Then, as when renewed fertility crowns the surface of the earth with goodness, so every token of joy and blessedness shall be seen throughout the world's length and breadth. "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Who can conceive the blessings which Christ Jesus bestows on His ransomed heritage? How can we adequately love and bless and praise and adore Him! Let us go forth in faith, and ponder the coming wonders of His reign. Let our lips often cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

PSALM 68

Happy was the occasion of this hymn. David was permitted to see the joyful day when the ark, the type of the blessed Jesus, was brought to its resting-place in Zion. It was a fit occasion for joy and gladness; and joy and gladness were largely manifested. The hymn thus used looks back to the history, and looks onward to the time when Jesus, having subdued all foes, ascends in triumph to the heaven of heavens. God's mercies are throughout abundantly proclaimed. May we realize these mercies, and call upon our every faculty to give praise!

1-3. "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them exceedingly rejoice."

God's glory is most dear to all His people. It is their anguish when His name is blasphemed and His cause reviled. Therefore their constant aspiration that God would arise and gird Himself with strength, and drive His foes into perdition. The prayer continually goes up that this ruin may be complete. Let smoke ascend in thick clouds and darken all the view. Let now a breeze arise; the mass immediately dissolves, and vanishes from sight. So let the enemies of God be driven into nothingness. As the wax seems to be a solid mass, but instantly dissolves and flows away when heat is applied, so let these enemies melt and be nowhere found; but let the righteous rejoice in God's gladdening favor; let there be no bounds to their exulting praise.

4-6. "Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the LORD— rejoice in his presence! Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets

the prisoners free and gives them joy. But for rebels, there is only famine and distress."

How abundant are the topics of our praise! Who can reach the heights—who can fathom the depths—who can measure the infinitudes of the incommunicable name, Jehovah! This tells His glory as the cause of His own being, as the giver of life to all who live. Above the heaven of heavens He sits, thus surpassing all thoughts of glory. We cannot praise Him according to His greatness, but let us praise Him according to our abilities. But though He is thus infinitely great, He condescends to look in pity on the feeblest and weakest of our race; He supplies parental support to poor orphans; He does not permit the widow to be oppressed; He causes the inmates of the house to rejoice in happy fellowship, and mutually to supply each other's need; He delivers from captivity those who have been bound with fetters, and leads forth His people from Egyptian bondage.

7-8. "O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You marched 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."

It is faith's happy exercise to fly back and ponder all God's gracious dealings from the birth of time. On all there is inscribed the evidence of His gracious care. All His attributes are manifested planning and executing mercies for His people. In the work past we have assurance of His present care and of His never-failing providence. He who loved the fathers of our family still loves with the same love, and will love forever. The Psalmist reverts to God's wondrous goodness as He preceded His people through the wilderness. The redemption from Egypt's bondage is a pledge of our redemption from the captivity of sin and Satan. The awesome marvels displayed on Sinai, when the Mount trembled, and terror shook all hearts, teach us to this day to regard with awe the majesty of our God.

9-10. "You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby You confirmed Your inheritance, when it was weary. Your congregation has dwelt therein; You, O God, have prepared of Your goodness for the poor."

Did God supply the need of the camp? Did manna never cease to fall and the stream to trickle? So to the present hour His bounty sustains and replenishes His people. They may be poor and needy, but the Lord thinks on them, and makes preparation for them.

11-12. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who published it. Kings of armies fled apace; and she who tarried at home divided the spoil."

It is not the Lord's will that His goodness should be disregarded or unacknowledged. Therefore in every age He has raised up faithful men to bear record of His grace and love. How earnestly should we pray that He would supply a band of faithful ministers, and give them the tidings that they should proclaim. Then all enemies will flee, and the weakest will be enriched with spoil.

13-14. "Though they lived among the sheepfolds, now they are covered with silver and gold, as a dove is covered by its wings. The Almighty scattered the enemy kings like a blowing snowstorm on Mount Zalmon."

The Lord's people sometimes lie in depths of degradation, and their hands are soiled by servile work. In Egypt the children of Israel were debased to the drudgery of the lowest slaves; but the time of vile service passed away, and they shone brightly as the honored and admired upon earth. They changed their garbs of degradation for the splendor of magnificent estate. When in Canaan, God appeared in their behalf, and the frightened kings fled in vain for concealment; then they shone forth arrayed in panoply of royal state; the snow-capped mountain glittering beneath the sun's rays was an emblem of their high supremacy. Believers now may be poorly clad in clothing of corruption; but yet a little while, and their corruptible shall put on

incorruption, and they shall shine arrayed in glory far brighter than the sun in his strength.

15-16. "The majestic mountains of Bashan stretch high into the sky. Why do you look with envy, O rugged mountains, at Mount Zion, where God has chosen to live, where the Lord himself will live forever?"

Zion is here presented to admiration as far surpassing in beauty all surrounding heights. This Zion is a type of the Church of Christ. Where shall we find words to commend its all-surpassing beauty? It is beautified with the glories of salvation, and shines as the chosen, the beloved, the honored of the Lord. How utterly vain is the self-exaltation of other institutions! how contemptible their puny efforts to aggrandize themselves! They are of the earth and earthy, and with the earth shall be laid low. The Church is of heaven and heavenly. It is the chosen abode of God. God is in the midst of her, therefore she shall not be moved. He dwells forever in her as His favored abode. Never will He leave her or desert her. Salvation is her walls and bulwarks. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God will rest forever in His loved abode.

17-18. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

The terrors of Sinai are an instructive study. God is represented as moving in majestic procession, attended by countless hosts of angels. Let us clasp to our hearts the precious knowledge that He sends forth these spirits to be our constant guardians and to minister to our protection. The ark ascending Zion's hill has a prophetic voice. It foreshadows our Jesus returning to take His seat at God's right hand, the mighty Conqueror over sin and death and hell, and all the legion who had fought against Him. The cruel enemy who

had subjugated man is dragged as a captive fast bound to our Lord's victorious chariot. The Conqueror receives for His people the gifts and graces which He had so gloriously won; He pours down sanctifying graces into His people's hearts, that so their hearts may be a fit abode for the indwelling God.

19-23. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He who 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 goes 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 your foot may be dipped in the blood of your enemies, and the tongue of your dogs in the same."

The goodness of our God each day heaps blessings on us so vast that we can scarcely bear the load; for each, responsive thanks should swell to heaven. His crowning blessing is eternal salvation and deliverance from the grasp of death. Let us study the title—"God of our salvation." Let us study the blessing—Escape from "the issues of death." But while His people thus live and are thus saved, what terrors overwhelm the wretched multitudes who reject His offers of pardon and of life! What dreadful images predict their doom!

24-25. "They have seen Your 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."

The grand design of public ordinances is here commended. The ways and works of God are openly proclaimed. His character is displayed. True worship should exhibit God in the wonders of His grace and love, His power and glory. We should attend the service of the sanctuary with hearts intent to learn saving lessons of redemption's design and work. Happy the worshiper who retires bearing testimony, 'I have seen the goings of my God, my King.'

Every faculty and every arrangement should be devoted to render due praise. In the infancy of the Church external rites were diligently used to teach the truth that devotion should engage all our powers. Now that the true light shines and symbols have passed away, the essence of true devotion should grow stronger.

26-27. "Bless 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."

Happy is the congregation from which true praise ascends to heaven! It is the very foretaste of heaven, when united voices swell the chorus, and harmony with one heart is raised by delighted crowds. All who spring from the common lineage of Israel are here invited to this blessed work. But the call applies to us; for if we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Let us obey, and bless the Lord in the assemblies of His people. In this happy service all the families of man should join. The tribes were all assembled to bring the ark with all rejoicing to the hill of Zion. So all ranks, all stations, all degrees should gladly join in publicly ascribing honor to our God.

28. "Your God has commanded your strength; strengthen, O God, that which You have wrought for us."

The covenant of grace contains all things needful for the Church's well-being. The command is therein registered, that strength for all service and all work should surely abound. It is our privilege to convert these provisions into prayer. Acceptance surely awaits the petitions which wrestle with God for the performance of His pledged design, and for perfecting the work begun in His servants.

29-31. "Because of Your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bring presents to You. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, until everyone submit

himself with pieces of silver; scatter the people who delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

The public acknowledgment of God in the services of the temple shall attract extensive attention and awaken general homage. God's power shall subdue all adversaries. The rebels, senseless as creatures of the lowest grade, shall bring tokens of submission. The cruel, who take pleasure in the miseries and carnage of war, shall be dispersed. Potentates from afar shall recognize the supremacy of God, and shall flock to do homage, and to lay their treasures at His feet. Wise indeed are the rulers who reverence the King of kings and Lord of lords, and who rejoice to be His devoted subjects.

32-35. "Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises to the Lord. To Him who rides upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; look, He sends out His voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe strength to God; His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, You are awesome out of Your holy places; the God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God."

It is the wisdom as also the duty of the kingdoms of the earth to give glory to God. The exhortation is predictive, and tells of the coming day, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. All worship of idols, of stocks and stones, shall be cast to the bats, and God shall be adored enthroned in the heaven of heavens, and spreading awe throughout the world by the voice of His thunder. Let all might and power be ascribed to God. Let Him be adored as the giver of all strength to His people. Worthy indeed is He that every voice of every inhabitant of earth should shout from the inmost soul; "Blessed be God!"

PSALM 69

The Psalmist is involved in intensity of misery. The severest troubles in every form assail him. The downfall of his enemies is foreshadowed, and the conclusion of the hymn is praise.

1-2. "Save me, O God; for the waters have come in to my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters where the floods overflow me."

The picture is exhibited of a drowning man. He sinks in overwhelming waters.

There is no standing for his feet. There is no rescue for him from immediate ruin and a watery grave. In this scene of misery we see the man over whom the waves of affliction pitilessly break.

But the picture mainly represents the blessed Jesus. What sorrow ever was like His sorrow when He trod earth's path in human guise! Satan assailed Him with his utmost fury. No rest, no respite was permitted. This arch foe, also, stirred up ungodly men to wound Him with all the darts of malice and of rage. Jesus well knew that 'earth' could bring no help. He looked above, and prayed; "Save me, O God."

3. "I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; my eyes fail while I wait for my God."

Incessant supplications tested His powers of utterance. He ceased not to pour forth cries. He looked above for support. He watched for replies until His failing eyes were dim.

4-5. "Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty; then I restored that which I took not away.

O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You."

Jesus appeals to God that all this enmity, proceeding from such a host of mighty foes, was utterly without a cause. The persecution was wrongful malice. He did no wrong. His work was to render good for evil. He here allows that, though guiltless in Himself, He stood before God as laden with all the follies and all the sins of His people. He received the burden transferred by God to Him, and acknowledged His *imputed* guilt.

6-8. "Let not those who wait on You, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those who seek You be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children."

A new petition is preferred. Its intensity is seen by the strong expressions in which God is invoked; as the Lord God of hosts, clothed with universal power; as the God of Israel, loving His people with everlasting love. The petition is that the righteous who wait on God and seek His face should never be disheartened or cast down by sight of the troubles which were so multiplied. He deeply felt that reproaches were heaped upon Him; but feeling that they arose from His faithfulness to God, He drew encouragement from them in His approaches to the mercy-seat. Reproaches for the cause of God are highest honor. *God's smile will more than compensate for all the sneers of man.* But it is a grievous trial when those who are brought up in the same home, and are most closely joined by ties of blood, stand apart and evidence their alienation. Jesus knew this trial. His own brethren believed not on Him. The children brought up in His reputed father's house did not uphold Him.

9-12. "For the zeal of your house has eaten me up; and the reproaches of those who reproached You have 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. Those who sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards."

Intensity of zeal for true religion often occasions the derision of the wicked. The disciples remembered this word when they witnessed Christ's indignation in the polluted Temple. How keenly, also, were Christ's feelings moved when He heard His Father's name blasphemed. No pious conduct could check the impious sneer. Every kind of insult met Him. Even those who sat in the seats of justice refrained not their lips from slander, and the very drunkards made Him the jest of their insulting songs. *How keen must have been the sufferings of the Lamb of God.* Let us do not forget that they were all endured for us.

13. "But as for me, my prayer is unto You, O Lord, in an acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear me, in the truth of Your salvation."

We draw sweet profit from affliction's cup when prayer is quickened by it, and trouble has no depths from which the face of God may not be seen. Therefore prayer is plied in the assurance that acceptance will not be denied. The time is always acceptable. Answers are always ready when supplications plead the name of Jesus. "He ever lives to make intercession for us." God's mercy, also, and His covenant engagements, are prevailing pleas. Mercy ceases to be mercy, truth fails, if faithful prayer should not be heard.

14-15. "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."

Troubles are again compared to deep and overwhelming water-floods, but God's helping hand is able to extricate from all the mire and all the depths; and prayer wrestles that this hand would help.

16. "Hear me, O Lord; for Your lovingkindness is good; turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies."

Love is here seen as the source and origin of all God's gracious dealings. He loves, therefore He withholds nothing that is good; He loves, therefore He crowns us with lovingkindness. He has revealed His name as Love. On that name we may rest all our supplications.

His name, also, is Merciful. He is rich in mercy. His mercy reaches unto the heavens. His mercy endures forever. His mercies exceed all number; and as is their number, so is their tenderness. They will never fail, who pray to be dealt with according to the multitude of God's tender mercies.

17-18. "And hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble; hear me speedily. Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; deliver me, because of my enemies."

When troubles darken around, it is faith's province to seek the light of God's countenance. If clouds should veil God's smile, trouble would indeed oppress. Faith knows this well, and is earnest for speedy help. If answers have long delay, then affliction is affliction indeed. But faith will follow God with cries, that He would in mercy draw near. It pleads; 'The enemy is near; come quickly to my help.' Such pleading will prevail. For sure is the promise, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

19. "You have known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor; my adversaries are all before You."

The believer's heart is comforted by the knowledge that his God is ever by his side. A voice is ever ringing in his ear, "Do not fear not, for I am with you." God's eye surveys his path. His ear receives his every breathing. He marks his every circumstance. All the malevolence of adversaries is clearly known. Therefore help in every hour of need may surely be expected.

20-21. "Reproach has 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 food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

But still reproaches inflict painful wounds. Jesus drank this cup. His holy nature would peculiarly feel the painful touch of hellish malice. In our afflictions, also, the sympathy of friends gives sweet relief. This was denied to Jesus. In His deepest woe no human arm was stretched to help Him. The Spirit here takes us distinctly to the Cross. We see the fulfillment of this cruel mockery when, to the parched lips of Jesus, they extended a sponge filled with vinegar, and put it to His mouth. What misery was ever like His misery! But His sufferings were vicarious, and by His stripes we are healed.

22-24. "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 Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them."

The Spirit proceeds to predict the terrible vengeance which must fall upon Christ's foes. The believer reads the terrible decree, and meekly bows his head. He humbly acquiesces in the Lord's predicted wrath. He knows that God is love, and that in love He will do all things well.

Let us turn from the appalling picture, blessing from our hearts our gracious Lord, who saves His people from all the penalties of sin; and, waiting for His return from heaven, "whom God raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."

25. "Let their habitation be desolate, and let no one dwell in their tents."

Judas stands as a dreadful monument of the fulfillment of this verse. In his miserable case we learn how surely the predicted wrath will come. There may be respite, but respite is not a full pardon. What God has righteously announced He will most righteously perform. What Truth has uttered shall be truly done. Let the ungodly take warning. The unrighteous shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are the sinner's inevitable doom.

26. "For they persecute Him whom You have smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom You have wounded."

The main feature of their sin is effort to destroy the cause of Christ. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He was smitten by the hand of *justice* for our iniquities; He was wounded for our transgressions; but the malice and hostility of *man* added great burdens to His crushed spirit. The persecution of Jesus extends to the persecution of all His members. The arresting voice checks Paul in his infuriate career; "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

27-28. "Add iniquity to their iniquity; and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous."

It is their miserable case that they are permitted to go on from sin to sin, and thus to fill up the measure of their iniquity. The decree has gone forth, "They are joined to idols; let them alone." No melting word softens their obdurate hearts; no converting grace turns them from the downward path. They never reach the happy land, in which all are clad in the beauties of God's righteousness. Their names cannot be found in the book of the living or in the catalogue of the righteous.

29-30. "But I am poor and sorrowful; let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving."

Jesus confesses that He stands among men despised and rejected—a very worm, and no man; but He well knew that He would be delivered from the oppressive burden of vicarious suffering, and raised to salvation's highest throne. He looked onward from the day, when His lips uttered humble and mournful prayer, to the day of triumphant gladness, when thanksgiving will be the endless song.

31-32. "This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock which has horns and hoofs. The humble shall see this, and be glad; and your heart shall live that seeks God. For the Lord hears the poor, and despises not His prisoners."

How condescending is the heart of God! The praises of His people are His chosen abode. While formal service without sincerity and warmth finds no acceptance, the voice of thanksgiving fills heaven with grateful fragrance. The humble followers of the Lamb mark such acceptance, and profit by such experience. They see how Jesus was upheld; they see how favor smiles upon His grateful followers; and they rejoice in the joy of their fathers in the faith.

Happy are those who seek God, who make His word and will their constant study, and who in their every step follow hard after Him! They shall not be disappointed. Spiritual life shall now uplift them; eternal life shall soon be their glorious crown. For this earnestly have they prayed even in the prison-house of this poor flesh. Their prayer has not been in vain. The Lord has heard them. Their desires have obtained success.

34-36. "Let the heaven and earth praise Him, the seas, and every thing that moves 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 those who love His name shall dwell therein."

In prospect of God's saving mercies to His people, all the universe and every creature that has life is exhorted to abound in praise. But

what praise can reach the glories of the prospect? Prosperity shall be granted to the earthly Zion; but such security was but a dim outline of the glories of the New Jerusalem. There the chosen seed shall dwell forever. There those who love His name shall have unending bliss. Their praises shall be vast as eternity, for every moment will give fresh cause for praise.

PSALM 70

Respite from trouble is not of long duration. The tide flows back with unabated strength. Earnest prayer is the ready refuge; the confusion of foes is confidently expected, and faith looks with undimmed eye for sure deliverance.

1. "Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord."

When perils are urgent, destruction seems at hand. If they are not instantly removed all strength must fail. Unless the storm abates the little bark must soon be a wreck. Unless the devouring wolves are stayed the little lamb cannot escape. Unless returning light should dawn the footsteps will stumble in the darksome course. This sense of imminent destruction urges the Psalmist to be importunate in prayer. Boldness in supplication grows very strong. He prays the Lord to awaken from appearance of indifference—instantly to put forth His strength—without delay to hasten to his rescue. Blessed be God, such importunity is not forbidden—no, rather, it is earnestly encouraged.

2-3. "Let those be ashamed and confounded who seek after my soul; let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, who desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha!"

The Psalmist clearly saw the wicked malice of his foes. Nothing would satisfy them but to stain their hands in his blood—to take away his life was their one object. He as clearly saw how God could defeat their schemes and lay them low in disappointment and in shame. He spreads this out before his God, "Let them be ashamed and confounded." They were rushing forward in all the fury of malignity, reckoning that success would soon be theirs. The Psalmist's hope was bright, and he appealed to God to turn them backward, and overwhelm them in confusion. He heard their mocking and derision. Their insulting cries were anguish to his heart; but he felt that their noisome sneers and wicked merriment would soon be exchanged for bitterness of woe.

The deliverance of the godly is just as sure as the deliverance of our great Head from the cruel taunts of those who mocked Him in His extremest anguish. They shall shine brightly as the sun in his strength, while the wicked shall cry in vain for rocks and mountains to conceal them.

4. "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, Let God be magnified."

In the extremity of anguish the saint will look beyond his own sad case. The Psalmist prays not for his own deliverance only, but for the joy and gladness of the whole family of faith. This prayer should often swell, also, in our hearts. It will not go forth in vain, for peace and happiness are secured for us in the covenant of grace.

The desire is added, that one note should be full on the lips of those who delight to realize salvation's blessedness. That note should be, Let God be magnified! How can He be praised enough, who has wrought such wonders for us, and who never ceases to bless us and to do us good?

5. "But I am poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God; you are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying."

The sense of need returns, and again the prayer is urged, that God would speedily put forth His mighty arm to save. Confidence is added that God would arise when thus importuned; and the Psalmist avows that he has no other hope of rescue. "You are my help and my deliverer." Surely the God of our salvation will show Himself to be a God ready to extend all needful aid.

PSALM 71

Weighed down under the burden of his many years, harassed by ingratitude and cruelty, David warmly expresses his unwavering confidence in God. Increasing afflictions seem to fan trust into a brighter blaze. Faith pursues its usual flight to the high throne of grace. May we thus trust, thus pray, and thus be comforted!

1-3. "In You, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Your ear to me, and save me. Be my strong habitation, where I may continually resort; You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress."

We trust in those of whose love we have undoubted assurance, and of whose gracious dealings we have had much experience. We believe that what has been will be, and that help in time past will continue help unto the end. With what power do these motives awaken trust in God! He has loved us with an everlasting love—a love so mighty and so true, that He gave Jesus to every suffering and every shame, that He might save us and bring us home to Him. Let past days speak. Let the volume of our lives be read. They are all records that His goodness and His mercy, and His providential care, and His sustaining power have never ceased to follow us. These

motives urge us to put full trust in Him. Harder than the nether millstone would be our hearts if this trust faltered or decayed.

When we avow this trust in Him, we may firmly clasp the assurance that we shall never sink in shame. Enemies indeed may never cease their vile attacks, but we may appeal to God's faithfulness and truth that He will raise us high above their malice; that He will incline His ear unto us and save us. Faith well knows that it has a high fortress of deliverance in God—an immovable Rock, on which it may take its stand, an abiding dwelling, to which it may always resort. It knows that such refuge is provided in the covenant of grace, that the Father stipulated for full deliverance, and that the Son undertook fully to accomplish the whole work. It draws near, therefore, with the sustaining cry, "You have given commandment to save me."

4-6. "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked; out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. By You have I been held up from the womb; You took me out of my mother's womb; My praise shall be continually of You."

In his petition he opens out his grievous trials. He was assailed by wicked and unrighteous and cruel men. They raised the hand of violence against him. They held back no efforts to destroy him. But he was far from hopeless. He knew that God had helped him in former extremities. His opening years had been years of trial and of persecution. In his earliest afflictions he had put all his trust in God, and he had found God to be an all-sufficient help. He looked back to days of infancy, and his earliest memories abounded in tokens of God's goodness. In his present trial, then, praise hastened to his lips, and all despondency vanished in thanksgiving.

7-9. "I am as a wonder unto many; but You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails."

The trials and many afflictions of God's servants will often appear strange to the observer. It is a natural conclusion, that if God really befriended, He would drive troubles far away—that if He really loved, the bright shining of His smile would cause all to be bright and joyous around. Such taunt assailed our blessed Lord when He was uplifted on the accursed tree. But the believer knows that such dealings are not inconsistent with eternal love, nor in opposition to the terms of the everlasting covenant. Therefore, in his weakest moments he can appeal to God, "You are my strong refuge." He would give praise to God and ascribe honor to His name at every moment of his time, with every breath of his mouth. But he especially desired that old age might not find desertion. When strength fails and decrepitudes bring low, and energies can no more strive, and strength can no more show the brawny arm, false friends may turn aside with unconcern. Such are not the ways of God. *Man's inability is His opportunity to display His power and His love.* While God is God, let no believer fear.

10-13. "For my enemies speak against me; and those who lie in wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken him; persecute and take him; for there is no one to deliver him. O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let those who seek my hurt be covered with reproach and dishonor."

Afflictions come in gloomy guise; they cast dark mantles over the downcast sufferers. The wicked see this, and they vainly think that this depression is desertion. They plot together, and in their ignorance exult that God has forsaken them, that their fortress is laid low, that protection utterly has failed, and that the afflicted are now exposed an easy prey to persecuting rage.

But how different is the sufferer's estimate of his condition. He knows that the cup of anguish is mixed and presented by a Father's hand; his prayer becomes more urgent for speedy deliverance, and that confusion may overwhelm the adversaries. It is no presumption;

it is abounding faith to cry, "Do not be far from me; O my God, make haste for my help."

14-18. "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more. My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your 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 Your righteousness, even of Yours only. O God, You have taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have shown Your strength unto this generation, and Your power to everyone that is to come."

Afflictions fan the flame of hope; they bring more fuel so the fire will burn more brightly; they add more oil so the flame will not expire. If no trials came, there would be no expectation of relief; if relief were not given, the voice of praise would not so loudly sing.

The Psalmist knew that righteousness and salvation were laid up for him in the covenant of grace, and he resolves that his lips should never cease to give due praise. The mercies of his God exceeded his powers to comprehend, therefore the praises should exceed all powers to calculate. He utterly excluded the thought of power in himself. His every step should be in realizing apprehensions that Omnipotence upheld him. Therefore God's righteousness should be his only confidence and his only song. He could look back on many days, in all of which God's gracious dealings had been his instruction. His constant testimony had been that He whose name was Wonderful had done wonders in his behalf. In this persuasion he implored that God would still be with him in the decrepititudes of age, and help him still to testify that God's power and strength could never fail.

19-21. "Your righteousness also, O God, is very high, who have done great things; O God, who is like You? You, who have shown me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring

me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

Who can reach the summit of God's faithful dealings! In height they tower above the heaven of heavens. We mark, and can only humbly adore. O God, who is like You! Lips become mute when they presume to institute comparison. The joy of faith instantly super-abounds. Assurance comes that He who brings His people into great and sore troubles, and lays them in the lowest depths, shall quicken them again. Such resurrection often occurs in the experience of the afflicted, and is an emblem of the glorious change which shall be seen in the great day of the Lord, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

22-24. "I will also praise You with the psaltery, even Your truth, O my God; I will sing to You with the harp, O Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You; and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; for they are confounded, for they are brought to shame, who seek my hurt."

Resolves to give God thanks become more fervent. All the powers of lip and soul, all the energies of mind and body, all the instruments which are can furnish shall here find delighted exercise. The day will be too short to proclaim the mercies of entire deliverance. Ah! how sad the contrast! While believers thus sing, the adversaries are confounded and brought to shame.

PSALM 72

This Psalm presents especial grandeur and magnificence. In the first instance we have a description of the glorious reign of Solomon. But this reign soon fades before the sublimities of the reign of Jesus, the glowing words portraying it in a diversity of aspects. An appropriate ascription of glory concludes.

1. "Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king's son."

The aged monarch looks with fervent interest on his successor. Well did he know that prosperity must be the gift of God, that no talents or possessions could prevail unless God upheld him. It is a blessed thing to know that every good and perfect gift is from above. David especially supplicates that justice and equity might be the rule of the young monarch's reign, and that all his doings might be ordered by desire to execute God's will.

2-3. "He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness."

The prayer is scarcely uttered before fulfillment is realized. The people are represented as prospering under righteous government—all orders of subordinate officers are represented as conducting to the peace and happiness of the subjects.

But a far greater than Solomon is here. We see our blessed Jesus seated on the throne of David, and wielding the scepter of His righteousness. His scepter indeed is a righteous scepter. All events regulated by Him bring peace and comfort to those who receive Him as their Lord and King. He will so govern that those who hold office in this world shall own His sway, and shall be guided according to His good pleasure to subserve the interests of His cause. 4-5. *"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 You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations."*

The poor and needy seem to be Christ's especial care. They may have little of the things of earth, but Christ's smile and blessing marks them heirs of all things. Men may oppress them. But this mighty King will break the oppressor's rod.

This prediction finds its grand fulfillment when Jesus triumphs on the cross, and rises from the grave the mighty Conqueror of sin and Satan. The perfecting of His kingdom is next declared. He shall never lack subjects who, while they love Him, still serve with filial reverence. While the world lasts, His kingdom shall abide, and when the world passes away His kingdom shall shine forth in everlasting brightness.

6-7. "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 endures."

A sweet and graphic emblem shows the fertilizing refreshment which His people shall receive. Let the eye look upon the pastures over which the scythe has passed. They seem brought low, they show no sign of fertility. But when the gentle rain descends and genial showers fall, how quickly will vitality spring up, and plenty flourish around. So our great King will visit the depressed hearts of people by His presence, by His Spirit, by His Word. Then sweet revivals shall occur, and grace uplift a joyous head.

The beauties of His kingdom are exceeding great. His people are all righteous, and all the fruits of righteousness abound in them, especially the fruits of peace. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." The world may be in terrible commotion, but peace sweetly sings in the believer's heart—a peace which passes all understanding, a peace which this world can neither give nor take away. The King of Israel is "the Prince of Peace."

8-9. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust."

Omnipotence is the property of our great King. His dominion extends precisely as His will directs. Sometimes we seem to fear that His subjects are a little flock. But He has His hidden ones, and

He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. The wildest nations shall be subdued when He is pleased to send His truth into their hearts; and those who oppose His sway shall lie low in shame. Come, Lord Jesus, reign in the midst of Your enemies!

10-11. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."

These words receive a striking confirmation in the historian's page. The ships of Tarshish and of the neighboring isles come laden with their treasures to enrich King Solomon. Superabundance has poured in to give supplies to render the Temple the glory of the world. The Queen of Sheba comes in person to render her homage, and her train is splendid with presents from her land.

Thus, also, when Jesus lies a newborn babe at Bethlehem, Magi from the East are guided to His lowly dwelling, and spread their offerings at His feet. In after days Isaiah prolongs this prophecy that kings shall be Your nursing fathers and their queens Your nursing mothers. Does the historian relate that in fulfillment of these words, all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom and that he reigned over all kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt; and shall we doubt that universal sway shall be our Lord's dominion, and that the crown of all shall be assigned to Him?

12-14. "For He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him who has 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."

We have here a sweet picture of the peaceful reign of Solomon; benevolent care protected all his subjects; their petitions found him ever ready to give audience; cruelty and oppression were checked, and all injury to them was regarded as the highest crime.

How sweetly do we see Jesus here! His subjects may be low in earthly state, their abode may be in the midst of poverty and need, but no earthly degradation lowers them in His esteem. They all have instant access to Him; and when their cry proclaims their need, His melting heart brings full deliverance. They may be permitted to suffer from deceit and violence, but their souls are safe in His redeeming arms. They may expire amid the martyr's pains, but injury to them is injury to Himself. He keeps them as the apple of His eye.

15-17. "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 a 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 forever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."

Other kings grow old; their strength declines, they go down to the grave. David, when he had served his generation, fell on sleep. Not so our glorious King. Immortality is His property—eternal days are the duration of His reign. It is the joy of His willing subjects to present their offerings to Him, and prayer continually encircles His high throne. His subjects, also, shall marvelously increase. The seed of His truth sown in places unlikely to yield fruit shall bring forth abundantly, as corn cast on the top of barren tops of mountains shall sometimes gladden with signs of fertility. The crowded city, also, shall be thronged with converts—they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. Ages shall run their course; but while the sun hangs out its glorious light, the name of Jesus shall be magnified, and nations blessed by His favor, upheld by His power, and magnified in His might shall honor Him as the one source of blessedness, and shall adore Him forever as the blessed.

18-19. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen."

This glorious hymn can have but one conclusion. Doxology must be its end! But how can we praise Him enough to whom alone the wonders of redemption appertain? forever and forever let blessings magnify His glorious name. Throughout the length and breadth of earth may His glory be resplendent! May our grateful hearts respond, "Amen and Amen!"

PSALM 73

The mind is often sorely tried by seeing the wicked in such great prosperity. Doubts are disposed to rise in reference to God's righteous government. But these doubts soon vanish when His purpose and will are scripturally weighed. An increase of confidence is the happy result.

1. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart."

It is sweet happiness to have clear knowledge of the goodness of our God. It should be a frequent prayer that He would make all His goodness pass before us, and that He would proclaim in our hearts His glorious name, especially in the wonders of redemption.

We should, also, mark well *our character* to see if it be that of the family of His love. They are described as clean of heart. Not only are they clean from all outward stains of evil by the cleansing application of the expiating blood, but they are clean, also, by the mighty indwelling of the Spirit working through the wonders of the Word. "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you."

2-3. "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

From the contemplation of God's goodness the Psalmist turns to confession of his own weakness. His steps had been tottering—not firmly set in the narrow way of life—not boldly climbing Zion's upward hill. He had wavered, he had stumbled, he almost had a grievous fall. But what was the occasion of such inconstancy? He saw the ungodly. Prosperity smiled on their path—their cup of happiness seemed to overflow. The Psalmist was staggered. Such dealings seemed inconsistent with God's righteous government.

4-5. "For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

Examples are given of their untroubled course. To many the bed of sickness is a bed of deep distress. Pains and weakness bring sufferings to the declining frame. From such anguish the wicked are sometimes free. They have lived in ease, in ease they now depart. The common lot of trouble has not been theirs. While other men were emptied from vessel to vessel of affliction, they have reposed on the soft pillow of comfort and of peace.

6-7. "Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish."

But is such prosperity in itself a blessing? Unsanctified by the grace of God, it really has the character of curse. Elated by their seeming superabundance, they regard themselves as high above their fellow-men. Pride seems to encompass them; violence is the robe in which they strut. Their very appearance indicates luxurious self-indulgence; and their possessions surpass their utmost desires. Such is the state to which prosperity will sink a graceless heart.

8-10. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore His people return here; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them."

There is no check to the workings of their deep-seated corruption. This is evidenced by the proud blasphemy of their words. They openly profess oppression. There are no limits on earth to the outgoings of their presumptuous language. They scale the very heaven of heavens, and madly insult God upon His throne.

11-12. "And they say, How does God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

The Psalmist confesses the evil conclusion which in his weakness he was prone to make. It seemed an easy inference that if God abhorred evil He would not distinguish the wicked by seeming tokens of approval. The increase of their wealth seems an evidence of their being in His favor. But a word is added which unmasks the cheat. They have prosperity indeed, but it is prosperity only in this world. But the world is a vain show. It passes away and the lusts thereof. They in their lifetime "receive their good things."

13-14. "Truly I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

We have dreadful warning here that Satan will often urge God's children to form erroneous conclusions. If they listen to his vile suggestions, how erroneously will they view themselves, and God's dealings with the wicked. Aware of the malice and the power of this tempter, let us pray more and more for the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, and deliverance from the tempter's arts. Without God's light we stumble in dark paths.

15. "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Your children."

The faculties of observation and deduction correct erroneous impressions of God's dealings. The Psalmist feels this, and pauses in his wrong conclusions. He feels that to give utterance to such thoughts would be to impinge against all which God's children in their experience had found.

16-17. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end."

But still he found that providential orderings were a mystery with which unaided reason could not grapple. Reason had no torch to illumine the dark passage, but full knowledge was provided. Let God's people study His ordinances and His revealed Word. In them all knowledge is plainly written.

Those who are deeply versed in the declarations of the great Book are the wisest among the children of men. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To know Him is to know all things. Thus the Psalmist learned the true end of all this seeming prosperity. The path might be strewn with flowers and charms of beauty, but fearful indeed was the abyss to which it led. 18-20. *"Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image."*

Their path seemed free from peril, and obviously to lead to joy and gladness. But the ground was slippery—there was no sure safety for the feet. We read, "Their feet shall slide in due time." Then what prop will sustain them—what arm will hold them up? No deliverance is near. Downward, downward they descend, like rolling

stones from mountain-heights, until they plunge into destruction's gulf.

No time is granted to amend their ways. Terror utterly consumes them; and their sad beginning reaches an inevitable end. The state of the ungodly is at best but a vain dream. So when God comes forth in just displeasure, He shakes them from their vain imaginations, and shows how contemptible were the images of their sleeping hours.

21-22. "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my spirit. So foolish was I, and ignorant I was as a beast before You."

The Psalmist, fully alive to the folly of his erroneous conclusions, feels bitter grief. We should indeed be pained when we indulge in thoughts not enlightened by the Word. We should open our eyes widely to our folly, and grant that the very brute creation teach us higher wisdom.

23-24. "Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

But comfort is not gone. Such folly has not drawn down the chastisement of desertion. The believer still adheres to God, and it is his joy to find that God's right hand is extended to hold him up. He is gladdened by the sweet assurance that grace would be his constant guide; that he would hear the voice, "This is the way," when he would turn to the right hand or to the left; and he knew that when the perils of the way were passed, he would have abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. His guide on earth would give him welcome at heaven's gate.

25. "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!"

The believer has Jesus for his portion. Can heaven give him more? He rejoices in his superabundant possessions, and counts all things but loss for this inheritance. He who has Christ indeed has all things. He desires no more; for nothing could enlarge his treasure.

26-27. "My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For lo, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who go a whoring from You."

Flesh and heart fail in hours of strong temptation; flesh and heart often fail when death draws near. But the failure is not real. God's strength upholds; and eternal bliss is the sure issue. But then the ungodly lie down in woe.

28. "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works."

It is the highest wisdom to draw near to God. The promise is sure, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Let us put all our trust in our Heavenly Father's love, and devote all our time and our powers to show forth the wonders of His gracious works!

PSALM 74

Hostile invasion had brought ruin into the city. Grim desolation frowns where once the Temple magnificently stood. The outrage of the enemy is plaintively described. Importunity calls upon God to interfere, and confidence is expected that light would arise in darkness.

1-2. "O God, why have You cast us off forever? why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old; the tribe of Your

inheritance, which You have redeemed; this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt."

The Psalmist thus writes with mournful eye fixed on the ruined city, and especially on the desolations of the Temple. In bitterness of heart he cries aloud to God. He seems to expostulate, 'Can it be that these miseries signify our final desertion!' The believer thus flies to the mercy-seat when adverse oppression casts him into the depths of grief. Let it be noted in what terms the aid of God is supplicated. His people are depicted as the sheep of His pasture. God is thus reminded of His tender office as the good and great Shepherd, who will never fail to tend His flock, and to protect them from all foes. They are described, also, as the congregation which He had purchased. Can Jesus ever forget the company for whom He shed His precious blood, and whom He bought at such high price out of the hands of their enslaving foes? They are described, moreover, as the portion assigned by the measuring-rod to be His inheritance—the possession which will be His pride and His glory. They are called, moreover, the Mount of His abode. Never will He withdraw His presence. He will always abide in them, and they in Him. Safe indeed must they be who thus can claim an interest in God.

3-4. "Lift up Your feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy has done wickedly in the sanctuary. Your enemies roar in the midst of Your congregations; they set up their banners for signs."

The cry is earnest that God would no longer tarry, but advance to view the Temple's sad state. With noisome tumult the insulting foe had burst upon the assembled worshipers, and hostile banners had been erected in most holy places. This wretchedness is spread before the Lord. The feeling is deep that such iniquity would not be permitted to prevail.

5-8. "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at

once with axes and hammers. They have cast fire into Your sanctuary; they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of Your name to the ground. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together; they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."

It is high privilege in any way to be permitted to promote the interests of true religion. Fame rested on those who felled the trees of Lebanon to aid the erection of the Temple. Substance and tools are never better expended than in raising the sanctuary in which God will be worshiped and His name proclaimed. No honor will be theirs whose parsimony expends on luxury and self-indulgence the means which might erect or beautify sanctuaries for holy worship. The Psalmist witnessed the destruction of what piety had raised, and the noble works of former zeal a prey for the devouring flames. But neglect may gradually accomplish what violence may rapidly effect. May such neglect be ever absent from us!

9. "We see not our signs; there is no longer any prophet; neither is there among us any who knows how long."

The eyes of the disconsolate in Jerusalem no longer rested on tokens that God was in their midst. The symbols of His presence had disappeared in smoldering heaps. The voices of accredited ministers no longer spoke in the Lord's name. No cheering predictions gave hope that this misery would soon brighten into former joys. Grievous indeed was such trial. *No greater misery can oppress any people than to be deprived of godly teachers.* 10-11. "*O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? pluck it out of Your bosom.*"

In such extremity of anguish prayer presents a ready refuge. All other help seems utterly to fail. But though the Temple be in ruins, God lives and loves, and is very near. He can repair the ruin; He can

revive the services. To Him let approach be made. However hopeless the case may seem, let prayer be made, and all will be well.

12. "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth."

When all is desolate, faith brightly sparkles. It sings amid surrounding ruins. It looks above all to God, overruling all things for His glory and His people's good. It is assured that through all the earth, in all events, His people will be safely guarded.

13-15. "You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You broke the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gave him to be food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. You cleaved the fountain and the flood; You dried up mighty rivers."

God's wonders of old are the joy and comfort and support of His people in all ages. They read in them His constant love and His unfailing strength. The perils of the Church of old seemed to exclude all hope. But out of the furnace of Egypt He led forth His oppressed people. The sea parted and opened a safe passage for their feet. The monsters of the deep could do no hurt. They perished as the host advanced. The carcasses of mangled foes were cast along the shore. Did waters fail? Did the vast multitude look in vain for means to relieve their thirst? Did the parched wilderness afford no ray of hope? God graciously appeared. He gave the word. The smitten rock opened, and gushing streams flowed forth. He who worked these wonders in olden times, is still the same in tender love, in watchful care, in all-controlling power. He has raised His people from extreme desolation. He still will be their Savior.

16-17. "The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter."

The works of creation teach as clearly as the works of providence and grace. In the realm of nature how wondrous are the changes which occur. The day brightly shines, but shadow soon overcasts the scene, and night in thick darkness hides all things from view. Again the morning dawns, the night and shadows flee away, and joy and gladness smile on the face of the awakened world. The wealth and rich luxuriance of summer robes earth with beauty— makes it as Eden's garden of delights, and fills it with the melody of heaven. But bright days shorten—winter comes, and strips the fields and groves and gardens of their bright attire, and binds the babbling streams in fetters of ice. All these changes are the work of God. We are thus taught that changes, also, will mark the course of grace. It may not always be a summer-day. But faith knows that receding summer will return, and winter has its limits. Earth, also, has varying climates. God sets all the borders of the earth. Happy is it to mark His overruling hand, and to know well that He has done and will do all things well.

18. "Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed Your name."

Faith will remind God that the persecution of the godly is war against His kingdom. It will stir up God to bear in mind that His people are His chosen heritage. To touch them is to touch the apple of His eye.

19-23. "O do not deliver the soul of Your turtle-dove to the multitude of the wicked; do not forget the congregation of Your poor forever. Have respect unto the covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. O let not the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise Your name. Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; the tumult of those who rise up against You increase continually."

The Church is here set before God under the tender image of a turtle-dove—timid and meek amid scenes of desolation. The gentle bird seems to enlist all sympathies. So God is moved to pity His disconsolate people. The Psalmist concludes with earnest cries for God to arise, to maintain His own cause, to extinguish all the cruelty and oppression of the wicked. Let the conclusion in our hearts be deep assurance that, though distress may be very great, God is still near, and will in due time manifest Himself for their comfort and deliverance.

PSALM 75

Notes of thanksgiving introduce this hymn. Resolution is professed to minister right government. Promises of renewed praise are added.

1. "Unto You, O God, do we give thanks, unto You do we give thanks; Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near."

It is a joyful exercise to render thanks unto the Lord. Why is not this our main employ? We rob our souls of much delight when lips are silent and not indulging in this happy work. What cause have we for never-ceasing adoration? God's wondrous works in providence and grace are always loudly speaking. Every moment brings new tokens of His loving-kindness—they tell us that He is always near in manifestation of His name, which is the united display of His wisdom, power, and love. Let us draw near to Him in praise. He will draw near to us and cause His presence to be felt.

2. "*When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.*" These words can leave no doubt that they proceed from one invested with supreme authority. A throne was his seat, a scepter was in his hands. David is thus before us, rescued from his many perils, and raised to be the King of Israel. No exaltation is evinced. His one desire is to execute the rule of righteousness. We see, also, our

Jesus. The scepter of His kingdom is a right scepter. Righteousness is His rule, both in and for His people.

3-6. "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it. I said to the fools, Do not deal foolishly; and to the wicked, Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south."

David had seen the kingdom in weakness and confusion, without stability and strength, under the evil sway of Saul. That which should have a sure foundation was shifting and unstable as the sand. He profited by this sad misrule, and he resolved to regulate the empire, so as to sustain it in righteous ways. When will men learn that *all wickedness is folly!* None are truly wise, but those who seek wisdom in the Word of God, and strive to embody its holy precepts in their daily walk. David exhorted his subjects to depart from evil's ways, and thus to become truly wise. He saw, also, that *pride was at the root of all their wrong judgments and wrong conduct.* He called on them to walk humbly with their God, and to see clearly that all true honor comes from Him. Let us receive and treasure the sure word, "Those who honor Me I will honor."

7-8. "But God is the judge; He puts down one, and sets up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He pours out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."

God's mode of dealing is often wrapped in mystery. We fail to understand why one is elevated to the highest rank, while others seem to waste their days in poverty, obscurity, and low estate. But no misgivings should arise. It should be firmly fixed in our persuasions that in all these matters God's hand prevails. Thus, also, afflictions, sorrows, trials are all appointed by the same unerring wisdom. His hand holds a cup which is mixed in accordance with His righteous will. According to His good pleasure He causes the

sons of men to drink from it. But what will be the portion of the wicked? Let them tremble. They are forewarned that they must wring out the dregs indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish forever.

9-10. "But I will declare forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."

In conclusion, we have the bright resolve of faith to uplift the voice of praise, to discountenance all evil, to proclaim the misery of God's adversaries, and the blessedness of His people. May this be our resolve, this our holy employ, until faith shall end in sight and hope in full reality! Grant it, O our God, for the sake of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ!

PSALM 76

Probably some illustrious victory was the occasion of this ode. It especially celebrates God's glory in the preservation of His Church. For this all praise is due. Unto Him all service should be rendered. Exhortations call to be earnest in such exercise. May we obey!

1-2. "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion."

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, was Mount Zion. Its supereminent glory was the tabernacle, in which God's presence resided. This sanctuary was the type of Christ. He is the revelation of God. He testifies—"He who has seen Me has seen the Father." It represents, also, God's people. In them the glories of His name conspicuously shine. In them His perfections are revealed. They manifest Him as the God of grace and goodness, whose love from everlasting is love to everlasting. It is a grand word, "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is known by the Church

the manifold wisdom of God." In Christ is God known. His name is great in His Church. May His dwelling-place be in our hearts!

3. "There He broke the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the weapons of war."

Many foes at various times assailed the favored city. But God arose, and all their might was shattered. Arrows might fly, shields might glitter, swords might be brandished, and the battle might rage fiercely, but all was vain when God protected. Thus, also, Satan and all his legion use mighty weapons to destroy the Church. Fiery darts fall terribly. Incessant warfare rages. But God is a sure defense. No fatal wound is given. His people are all safe. They are wrapped in victory.

4. "You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey."

Zion is here extolled as grandly surpassing the mountain-tops in which ravenous beasts mangle the prey. So God's people, in whose hearts dwell the beauties of celestial grace, exceed in excellence all wild and savage powers who use their strength in cruelty and plunder.

5-6. "The stout-hearted are plundered, they have slept their sleep; and none of the men of might can lift their hands. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep."

The enemy may come on fearless in courage, stout in resolve, but at God's word their prowess quickly dwindle. In vain they look for conquest from their own hands. Their arms hang down as broken reeds. They may command the chariot and the horse, but the God of Jacob speaks. The chariot and horse become weak as sleeping impotency.

7-9. "You, even You, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your sight when once You are angry? You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth."

Let us stand in awe of God. Who will not tremble at His wrath? Who among earth's sons can stand when His anger kindles? His eyes are on the madness of His foes. He will arise to save His meek and lowly servants. Then vengeance shall descend from heaven, and the trembling earth shall cease its proud resistance.

10. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; the remainder of wrath shall You restrain."

Man may rage, but God will use the raging hand. Persecution enlarges the Church. The threatening hurricane purifies the air. If wrath still lingers in the heart, His curb will check it.

11-12. "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God; let all that be round about Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes. He is dreadful to the kings of the earth."

Great is the Lord's glory in humbling the loftiest potentates. Let us be wise, and vow allegiance to the King of kings. Let us present to Him, as a willing offering, our bodies, souls, and spirits. He justly claims all reverence. His service is the luxury of life.

PSALM 77

A train of sorrows moves along this page. Relief is found in drawing near to God, and meditating on His wondrous works. We may have the same sufferings. May we find the same rescue!

1. "I cried to God with my voice, even to God with my voice; and He gave ear to me."

Before the Psalmist delineates his grievous state, he openly avows the action of his soul, and the remedy obtained. His voice was uplifted in earnest and repeated cries to God. He sowed good seed, and reaped success. Happy would be our case, if we converted sufferings into prayers, and made them gates of heaven. Let this be our resolve. It will turn darkness into light.

2-4. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. You hold my eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak."

The days of the godly are often thus darkened. Troubles are needed, and therefore will be sent. But they excite the soul to seek after God. We have not a long road to travel. He always is by our side.

The Psalmist's present trouble seemed to be exceedingly heavy. The spiritual pain gave anguish like wounds festering in the night. There was no relief. The usual methods of consolation failed. His case seemed to be hopeless. Even the thought of God brought not its usual joy. Doubts cast a veil over His ready smiles. No sleep gave soothing ease. Utterance refused to be the outlet of distress. He watched in silence; and in mute anguish mourned.

5-6. "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with my own heart; and my spirit made diligent search."

In meditation he pondered the records of God's ancient dealings. The annals abounded in evidence that God's love had never failed. They displayed His arm always mighty to deliver. He next reviewed his own eventful story. He remembered times of lively joy, when the night heard his songs of praise. It is well that the same periods be treasured in our minds. Past pleasures should revive. He sought, also, the cause of his discomfort. He probed the recesses of his heart.

He used all efforts to discover what leaks admitted these waters of bitterness.

7-9. "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

Wave upon wave of doubts and fears break over the mind. Apprehensions in terrific forms appear like specters. God's dark frown of anger seems to look down. Smiles are obscured by unbroken gloom. The gate of favor no longer opens. He trembles lest he should be cast off forever, and mercy no longer give solace. He plaintively inquires, "Will lovingkindness no longer cheer me?"

He had feasted on the rich meal of precious promises; these promises no longer brought support. Can it be that he is forever excluded from this heritage of God's people? Grace is God's delight. Can He forget this exercise of His goodness? Has anger so barred the door that tender mercies can have no passage? Thus he questioned; and the questions seemed to imply that such doubts must be groundless temptations.

10. "And I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Faith, though it had been downcast, revives. The Psalmist sees that all this disconsolation sprang from his own weakness. Spiritual power had failed. The real cause was not in the wavering love of God, but in decline of holy trust. He confesses, This is *my* own infirmity. He sees the remedy. He looks back to God's dealings in the long history of His Church. Ages have passed; but ages have brought no diminution in God's power. His right hand, which had wrought such wonders, is His right hand still, and never can grow weak.

11-12. "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Your work, and talk of Your doings."

Reviving faith returns to God, and drooping doubts are cast aside. It flies on renovated wings to contemplate God's wonder-working hand. It enters the precious treasury full of past records. Here it finds renewal of assurance. Happy meditation traverses the path impressed by heavenly footsteps. Thus refreshed, it opens the mouth in edifying conversation. Those who fear the Lord will speak often one to another. The words of their mouths, as well as the meditation of their hearts, will be acceptable in His sight. To God also thanksgivings ascend. The knowledge of His glorious works is the fruitful parent of adoration.

13. "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God?"

The footsteps of the Lord are clearly seen in the ordinances of His house. It is the school of heavenly lessons. There His Word reveals His character. There intelligence illumines devout worshipers. They contemplate with open eyes God's majesty, and glory, and grace, and love. The thought cannot be repressed that His every attribute is infinite. Where is greatness like His greatness! What power can be compared to His! To know Him is to lie low at His feet in boundless adoration.

14-15. "You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the people. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph."

His sublime works shine as the midday sun. His omnipotence appears as an impregnable shield and an all-conquering sword. His omnipotence is as strong now as in the days of old. His arm has been displayed in redeeming His chosen people from the furnace of affliction, and from the iron grasp of relentless foes. But this power

most brightly shines in redeeming His own from the powers of darkness, and saving them from the chains of the arch-enemy of souls. In contemplation of this work the shout breaks forth, "Who is so great a God as our God!"

16-18. "The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook."

The waters of the sea opposed a barrier to the fleeing Israelites. Deep billows stopped an advance. But God appears; they tremble and retreat; they leave a dry passage. Throughout, also, the march in the wilderness, all nature seemed arrayed to provoke the opponents of God's people. A deluge poured down from above. The skies peeled with appalling sounds. The thunder and lightning fought on their behalf. So, also, by miracles warring on their side, the people were established in the land of Canaan.

19-20. "Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

The ways of the Lord are past finding out. It is our wisdom to trust His heart, when we have no skill to trace His hand. Who could have imagined the dividing of the waters of the sea! The like had never before been seen! Faith learns the happy lesson, that though God's dealings are inscrutable, no impossibilities can impede Him. The good Shepherd will be a faithful guardian of His flock. At His will He can raise up ministers to be their guide. As Moses and Aaron went before the rescued hosts, so appointed leaders shall watch over His people. Let none distrust who have this God for their God.

PSALM 78

We are enjoined to give earnest heed to the words spoken from heaven. A dark display of Israel's ingratitude and rebellion follows. God's repeated and abundant mercies seem only to awaken evil. May the sad example be a profitable warning!

1-6. "Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old; which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children."

This introduction claims especial notice. We often crave audience of God. He here calls us to incline our ears to His instruction. Let us be quick to hear. His revelation is the truth of truths, the light of light, the joy of joys, wisdom in the highest. Not only should we read, and mark, and learn; we should impress these doctrines on our offspring. Fathers should teach their children; and children's children should in turn transmit.

7-11. "Those who might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had shown them."

Bible-study quickens grace. By pondering God's works of old, confidence will strengthen and hope become more bright. We shall tremble, also, at the dreadful iniquity of Israel's sons. They quenched the recollection of the repeated mercies, which blessed their fathers. Armor was provided for them, but they refused to stand firm, and fled before their foes. They closed their eyes, and would not see His arm extended for their help.

12-16. "He did marvelous things in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as n heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers."

A recapitulation follows of the wonders which cradled the childhood of His people. In this history, God's character—His love, His might—is written as with a sunbeam. No enemies could crush. No perils could destroy. Impossibilities vanished. He made the waters of the deep to be a highway for their feet. The mighty billows stood as a wall on their right hand and on their left. That their journey might be safe, a cloud from heaven preceded their march by day, and a canopy of fire shone over them at night. Does thirst oppress them? The hard rock opens its flinty sides, and refreshing streams flow in their rear. Miracle followed miracle, proclaiming His unceasing care.

17-25. "And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking food for their lust. Yes, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? can He provide flesh for His people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was angry; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed

not in God, and trusted not in His salvation, though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the bread of heaven. Man ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full."

Can it be that such miracles of love could fail to melt their hearts; and that such evidence of fatherly guardianship should allow rebellion still to live! Alas! abundant kindness awakened superabundant sin! They sneered at past lovingkindness. They allowed that their thirst had been relieved; but they doubted whether food could similarly be provided! Can we marvel that God's wrath went forth, and that fire raged in their camp? *While we bless God for His goodness, let us remember that to hardened rebels He is a consuming fire.*

26-29. "He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven; and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea. And He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they ate, and were well filled; for He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust."

How striking is this instance of God's forbearance! Tender compassion checks the outbursts of just vengeance. Instead of punishing, He gratifies their impious desires. He sent the food which they believed He could not grant. He multiplied it beyond their power to gather. They fed until their appetite was more than sated.

30-32. "But while their food was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works."

Let presumptuous rebels tremble. Wrath may linger, but delay is not forgiveness. In due time it will blaze forth, and terrible will be the

results. The dreadful sequel shows this truth. While they feasted, vengeance fell. The richest and the mightiest found no refuge in their high estate. They perished with the lowest in the camp. But the hard hearts, unmelted by the plenty, and unappalled by wrath, grew more daring in rebellious feeling. They had no confidence in His goodness, no fear of His anger. Reprobate is the case which neither mercy nor sternness leads to submission.

33-37. "Therefore He consumed their days in vanity, and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant."

Their troubles were continued. The scourge drove them to seek relief; but their outward change was not inward conversion. In semblance they became other men; but the same features were behind the mask. With utterance they seemingly drew near; but falsehood dwelt on their lips. They were not slow to promise; but their unstable minds were like the leaking sieve. They made a covenant; but it was only to break it.

38-41. "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yes, many times He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

But still compassion is not utterly exhausted. Our God is infinite in all His attributes. He pitied them still, and held back the arm uplifted to destroy. He remembered their utter feebleness. For a little season only they sojourned on earth. We hear the wind, but it soon is gone.

So from this scene they would be quickly taken, and their places would be no more found. To enumerate their sins exceeds all power. So, also, to enumerate God's acts of goodness. While we shudder at their vileness, let us adore forbearing mercy. 42-48. *"They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan; And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods that they could not drink. He sent different kinds of flies among them; which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase to the caterpillar, and their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts."*

Great had been their deliverance. They well knew God's terrible acts upon their foes. He had shown that all instruments of vengeance subserved His will. All creation at His bidding would arise to plague. Their annals were the record of His power to avenge. But vain was the lesson. Provocation was their rule.

49-51. "He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending destroying angels among them. He made a way for His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham."

Wrath terribly smote Egypt. Every form of plague spread desolation. All agents of evil did their ruthless work. Misery reached its height when the firstborn fell, and death was the inhabitant of each home. The evidence is clear that God, who delights in mercy, can righteously execute severity. Ah, sin! what have you done? Let us ponder and be wise!

52-55. "But made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He

brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."

It is sweet to return to views of God's gracious dealings. Behold Him guiding His own from this land of thraldom, as a shepherd tending his beloved flock. Behold Him preceding through the wilderness, and bringing them safely to the promised land. Behold Him driving the natives from their land, that Israel's tribes might settle in the goodly heritage. The history is an assurance that He will safely bring His own to the heavenly rest.

56-58. "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not His testimonies. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their engraved images."

Can it be that a people thus favored can forget their God, reject His testimonies, and provoke Him by idolatries! Alas! what evil will not man perpetrate! God was deserted. Altars to idols were erected.

59-64. "When God heard this He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel. So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand. He gave His people over also to the sword; and was angry with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation."

Warnings are here multiplied. God saw Israel's rebellion and raised the arm of vengeance. The tabernacle of His presence was deserted. The enemy came in like a flood. The inheritance was laid waste. Misery consumed the flower of their youth. *Oh! let us dread the wrath of God. We are warned that He marks and punishes iniquity.*

65-66. "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine. And He smote His enemies in the hinder parts; He put them to a perpetual reproach."

Here evidence returns that free grace reigns. Mercy rejects slumber. God is aroused and drives back the insulting foe. He inflicts terrible chastisement. When His people merit extremities of wrath, love will still love them.

67-69. "Moreover, He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He has established forever."

The tribe at first so honored receives mark of rejection. The Temple must not rise in Shiloh. Joseph must be humbled, and Judah must be honored with distinguishing favor. The Ark must be removed to rest on Mount Zion, and there the Temple—the joy of the whole earth—must show its glorious front. Let us again take warning. The Gospel is not restricted to one place. If it is not gladly welcomed and devoutly honored, God may remove it, and gladden others with the sound.

70-72. "He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands."

God's mercy does not leave His people without the guidance of a wise Prince. He chooses David. He raises him from low estate, and places him on a high throne. He gives him skill and wisdom to rule in righteousness. Here we have our rightful King. The government is on the shoulders of our Jesus. Let us fall low before Him; and serve Him faithfully and love Him supremely. To us He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

PSALM 79

The ruins of the Temple and the cruelties of the insulting foe impel to the mercy-seat. Promises of praise are uttered. In the depths of distress may we thus seek and vow!

1. "O God, the heathen have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps."

With tearful eye the pious Israelite beholds the desolation of his hallowed places. He would move mournfully amid the ruins of his beloved city. Can it be that the Temple has thus fallen! Can it be that the protecting walls are thus laid low! Have the heathen thus triumphed! Is the chosen city thus deserted! Such thoughts of anguish naturally arise amid the desolate scene.

2-3. "The dead bodies of Your servants have they given to be food to the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was no one to bury them."

Cruel carnage marked the invader's course. The slaughtered were exposed to vilest indignities. Devouring birds mangled the neglected corpses; ravenous beasts rioted in the abundance of their prey. Blood flowed in copious streams, and no survivors could bury the dead.

4. "We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to those who are round about us."

The neighboring nations, who once viewed Jerusalem as the perfection of strength and beauty, and feared her as the mistress of the earth, now sneered at her fallen state. No tender pity softened their hearts. Derision sat upon their lips.

5. "How long, Lord? will You be angry forever? shall Your jealousy burn like *fire*?"

The period of calamity seemed endless. It is traced to its real cause. God's displeasure has poured down these miseries. The cry goes up to Him for intermission. It cries, Let not Your anger be thus prolonged; let it not burn like an inextinguishable flame. It is our wisdom when lying in the depths of sorrow thus to plead.

6-7. "Pour out Your wrath upon the heathen that have not known You, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Your name; for they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place."

Prayer beseeches God to mark that the triumphant nations were also enemies to Him. They did not know His majesty and glory. They had never acknowledged Him as their God. It is the province of faith to appeal to God that we are truly His, and that those who hate us honor not His glorious name.

8-9. "O remember not against us former iniquities; let Your tender mercies speedily meet us; for we have been brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Your name's sake."

The remembrance of former iniquities should ever be before our eyes. Our cry should be that mercy would heal these wounds. Our only plea should be that God would thus glorify His great name, and make us monuments of His redeeming powers.

10-12. "Why should the heathen say, Where is their God? let Him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of Your servants which is shed. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before You; according to the greatness of Your power preserve those who are appointed to die; and render to our neighbors seven-fold into their bosom their reproach, with which they have reproached You, O Lord."

Let not the sneer prevail that God has cast off His own. Rather let His glory be conspicuous in the ruin of the blood-stained foes. Let the plaintive wails of the captives prevail, and let the death-doomed find deliverance.

13. "So we Your people, and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations."

The happy result shall be constant flow of grateful praises from generation to generation. A ransomed flock shall magnify the Lord.

PSALM 80

Suplicants in deep misery flee to the mercy-seat. A graphic allegory portrays the Church. May we bear fruit as lively branches of the true Vine!

1-2. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us."

In terms tender and urgent the heavenly Shepherd is implored to watch over His beloved flock. He is invoked, also, as the God whose presence sanctified the mercy-seat. When the tabernacle moved the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh brought up the rear, and so were the nearest to the cherubim overshadowing the Ark. Thus the symbol of His presence was adjacent to these tribes. Let us profit by this invocation. In our distresses—and they may be very many—let us think of the Good Shepherd, and remind Him of His tender love. Let us think of our God upon His mercy-seat, and beseech Him to manifest His strength.

3. "Turn us again, O God, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved."

The confession is implied that we drink the cup of sorrow because of our wanderings from God. The supplication sounds, that He would, in His full mercy, bring us back, and chase away our gloom by the shinings of His smile. If He vouchsafes to grant this mercy, perils and destruction flee away, and we stand immovably on salvation's ground.

4-7. "O Lord God of Hosts, how long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people? You feed them with the bread of tears; and give them tears to drink in great measure. You make us a strife unto our neighbors; and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved."

Penitential prayer had sued, but answers lingered. Fast-flowing tears bedewed the cheeks. Needful food was mingled with bitter tokens of affliction. In importunity God is besought no longer to delay His aid. Not only did a wounded conscience utter words of sorrow. The surrounding nations also marked their calamities, and heaped derision on the downcast people. The cry is renewed, Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved. If delay occurs, let it quicken our earnestness.

8-11. "You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the heathen, and planted it. You prepared room before it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches to the river."

In the midst of suffering it is salutary to revisit times of joy and gladness. Israel recalls God's early favor. He brought His people like a tender plant from Egypt's soil. He removed the heathen, and planted it in earth's loveliest spot. Here it took root and sent forth luxuriant branches. Such mercies now were recalled by their mourning hearts. The contrast awakened a plaintive cry.

12-16. "Why have you then broken down her hedges, so that all those who pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood wastes it, and the wild beast of the field devours it. Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself. It is burnt with fire; it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of Your countenance."

The present desolation shows a terrible reverse. Protecting barriers are leveled. All passengers may pillage as they please. Wild animals may devour the fruits. Again prayer beseeches God to return and visit His ravaged vine. In remembrance of former mercies, let us pray that He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ.

17-19. "Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, upon the Son of Man whom You made strong for Yourself. So will not we go back from You; quicken us, and we will call upon Your name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved."

Hope now brightens. The eye rests on Jesus. God is besought to uphold His beloved Son endued with all strength to save us. He will restore our souls. Quickened by His grace, prayers shall continue to wrestle with Him for renewed support. Repetition proves the earnestness of the soul.

PSALM 81

Observance of public ordinances is enjoined. The path of obedience is the path of blessedness. May we listen to our God; He will appear rich to multiply mercies.

1-3. "Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm and bring here the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day."

It is a constant duty publicly to worship God, and to assemble in joyful crowds within the sanctuary. It runs on through the year's course. But there are especial times which should awaken especial thanksgivings. It is most wise to celebrate appointed seasons with all the aids which reverence can bring. Thus gratitude and love will kindle into brighter flame, and sense of mercies will take deeper root. Thus shall we ripen for the day when every crown shall be cast at the Redeemer's feet, and endless Hallelujahs issue from all lips.

4-5. "For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt; where I heard a language that I understood not."

Such service was enjoined to the elders of faith's house. It was ordained to promote their wisdom, joy, and profit. Doubtless the true light now brightly shines, and we have passed from the shadowy forms of types and emblematic worship. But the essence of true religion abides the same. If forms are not observed, reality may soon be lost. We are called to note the period when these injunctions were given. It was at the moment of their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt; from the oppression of those who were aliens both in heart and tongue.

6-7. "I removed his shoulder from the burden; his hands were delivered from the pots. You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you from the secret place of thunder; I proved you at the waters of Meribah."

Grievous burdens oppressed the groaning people, but God delivered them, and their servile bondage ended. In the wilderness trouble

continued; but from the cloud—the home of thunders—answers responded to their cry, and faith grew strong by frequent trial.

8-10. "Hear, O My people, and I will testify to you; O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me; there shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

The Lord tenderly expostulates. He stoops to crave attention. He assures those who if they would obey, He, and He alone, would be their God, and no vile deluders should mislead them. He reminds them that He is the same God who wrought such wonders for them in their early days. He assures those who He is the same in the infinitudes of His love and power; that they were not straitened in Him; that if they would be willing to receive, He would fill them until no more could be contained. Let us thus open our hearts, and doubt not that He will fully occupy.

11-12. "But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would not submit to Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels."

We shudder at the madness of rebellious man. He closes his ears; he rejects God, and thus God leaves him. Terrible curses follow. The decree goes forth, Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.

13-16. "Oh that My people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I would soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord would have submitted themselves unto Him; but their time would have endured forever. He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you."

Mournful is this upbraiding note. The scene is darkened by a picture of the blessedness thus forfeited. No mercy would have been withheld from the obedient. Their enemies would have fallen low before them. There would have been no *evening* to their bright *days* of joy. Their life would have been a perpetual feast. Their table would have been luxuriantly spread by God's own hand. Let us be wise, and hearken diligently, that we may enjoy such blessedness.

PSALM 82

God's supremacy over all magistrates is declared. Unjust judges are reproved, and prayer is made that God would maintain justice.

1. "God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods."

Man raised to a seat of pre-eminence is prone to forget the hand which thus uplifts. His boastful heart regards the power as his own prerogative, and rules as if accountable to no one. But God's kingdom reigns over all. Earthly authority emanates from Him. In courts of judicature He is supreme. His eye discerns the movement of each heart. His hand is ready to control. The wicked Sanhedrin little thought of the presence of the Lord of all. The unrighteous Pilate felt not that he could have no power at all except what was given him from above.

2. "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?"

God condescends to expostulate. He upbraids the folly of injustice. It is sin in His sight to regard the status of men rather than the cause of truth. Let us remember that a day is coming when a righteous tribunal shall be erected; when a righteous Judge shall sit, whose scepter is a righteous scepter—whose right hand is full of

righteousness. On that day a crown of righteousness will be accorded to His faithful followers.

3-4. "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; rid them out of the hand of the wicked."

The principles are declared which should regulate the halls of justice. On the judgment bench, the poor should ever see the guardian of their rights. Those who have no interest from wealth and station should feel that they are safe in rulers who do not regard station and despise the bribe. Happy are the courts in which pure justice reigns, and happy the people who are thus ruled! The thought cannot be checked; happy are those who from their hearts can say to Jesus, 'We believe that You shall come to be our Judge. We well know that You will deliver us from oppression, and keep that which we have committed unto You.'

5. "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course."

Injustice springs from an unenlightened heart. If eyes were opened from above, it would be quickly seen that it is wisdom to love truth. But darkness too often spreads its blinding power. Confusion is the sure result! The very earth seems tottering. It rests on no stability. Again we feel that they dwell safely on a rock for whom God's right hand orders events righteously.

6-7. "I have said, You are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

God again reminds that all authority is from Him. He calls magistrates to rule in His name. He confers titles which show that they must be honored as His deputed officers. But though thus raised, their origin is dust and ashes. They soon will crumble in their

native earth. The great ones who preceded them had been stripped of all external show, and laid in the humble grave. They, also, must fall. Where then will be their supremacy? Wise only, are the earthly judges who hear God's judgment-trumpet sounding in their ears.

8. "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations."

From this contemplation faith gladly turns to God. The cry goes forth that He would quickly take to Himself His great power and reign, and mold all hearts to be submissive to His will. May glorious prospects gladden our transported gaze, when we pray, Your kingdom come.

PSALM 83

God is called to mark the confederacy of the ungodly, and to avenge His cause as in times of old. God thus appearing shall be acknowledged as Jehovah.

1. "Keep not silence, O God; hold not Your peace, and do not be still, O God."

It is the happy privilege of faith to deal intimately at the mercy-seat. As a child it may boldly cling to a loving Father. With importunity it may crave attention. It may give God no rest until His power is displayed. Thus God is here implored to raise His voice against the enemies of His kingdom.

2. "For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up the head."

Shall God be silent, while those who hate Him are loud in insults? Shall He sit indifferent, while the earth rings with the tumult of rebellion? Speak, Lord, Your voice causes earth to be mute.

3-5. "They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted against Your hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against You."

Not only do they loudly rave; they plot in secrecy, and craftily devise rebellious plans. Hate is the moving principle within. It is misery to them that God's people live, are honored and exhibit power. In dark conclave they consult to extinguish their name, and to bury them in oblivion. But God watches His hidden ones. They may not be conspicuous upon earth. No pomp may signalize their course. No grandeur may court homage. But God has known them before the world's birth, and will in due time proclaim them as kings and princes to Himself. *Let none of His children complain that their way is hidden from their God. He has engraved them on the palms of His hands. They shall shine brightly in the day when He makes up His jewels.*

6-8. "The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have held the children of Lot."

If God knows His meek and humble followers, and calls them all by their names, so, also, He well knows the multitude of confederate hosts. The catalogue of Israel's adversaries classified by name, proves that the haters of God are individually perceived. The powers allied against Israel were all overthrown. Separately they perished. So all God's enemies shall be arraigned in distinct personality, and each shall receive his due reward. They will each hear, 'O you wicked one, thus and thus have you done; thus and thus must you be requited.' Crowds shall not hide individuality.

9-12. "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison; which perished at Endor; they became as

refuse for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb; yes, all their princes as Zebah and as Zalmunna; who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession."

It is true piety to remind God of His former deeds of wrath, and to implore Him again to do as He has done.

13-17. "O my God, make them like a tumbleweed; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burns a forest, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire; so persecute them with Your tempest, and make them afraid with Your storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yes, let them be put to shame, and perish."

Graphic images show the weakness of rebellious men. Their stability is as a *tumbleweed*. Their firmness drifts as stubble before the wind. They yield as the trees of the forest to the power of devouring flame. God is besought to overthrow them with shame, that they may humbly seek His knowledge.

18. "That men may know that You, whose name alone is Jehovah, are the Most High over all the earth."

The ultimate desire is that He who alone bears the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the self-existent, and the cause of all life, may be exalted above all the earth, and that every tongue may praise, and honor, and adore Him. In accordance may the longings of our hearts be to magnify His name.

PSALM 84

Longing desires are expressed for the joy of public ordinances. The happiness is extolled of those who frequent God's court. The God, who hears and answers prayer, is magnified.

1. "How amiable are Your tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

The Psalmist speaks as one far distant from the hill of Zion. He remembers the delight of gazing on the beautiful Temple. The very sight had kindled love and devotion. In the fervor of retrospective ecstasy he extols the much-loved spectacle. May the sight of every consecrated house of worship fill us with adoring thoughts of Him whose worship there is sought!

2. "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God."

Passionate expressions pour forth intense desire for the enjoyment of God's presence in the sanctuary. The heart burns with longings; the internal feeling is warmly exhibited. May the like feeling ever swell within us!

3. "Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God."

Some obscurity may hide the precise significance of this poetic image. Let us be content to gain edification. Regard the birds of the air. They seek and find some secret places of repose, where they may rest in calm security and nestle with their infant brood. Thus our souls should find their tranquil home in nearness to their King and their God.

4-7. "How happy are those who can live in your house, always singing your praises. Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who set their minds on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains! They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem."

We see the picture of the tribes pursuing their journey to the great festivals at Jerusalem. They faint not, neither are weary. The needful strength is supplied. They are upheld in the journey. A gloomy valley must be passed, but in it they find refreshment. Water fails not. The wells have been replenished by the seasonable rains. Their limbs each day are girded with fresh strength. At last each pious Israelite safely treads the sanctuary for which his heart had panted. This is a picture of believers toiling through the march of life. The way is sometimes long; dark valleys must be passed, but sweet streams are ever near. Needful vigor is maintained. The heavenly Zion is surely reached. No pilgrim has perished on the road. They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

8. "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob."

In such prospect who will not cry, 'Give ear, of Jacob, listen to my cry, and bring me safely to Your longed-for home?'

9-10. "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed. For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

It is good to cause our pilgrimage to resound with prayer, and ever to recognize God's protecting presence. It is good to remind Him that we have the unction of the Holy One, and have received the earnest of heaven into our hearts. It is good to add that we prefer the lowest station in His courts to the highest splendors of stately palaces. Let us be followers of Moses, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

11-12. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You."

Who is a God like our God? What can we require that is not ours in Him? What is the sun to the world? What is the shield in the day of battle? All this and more than this He is to us. What can they need, from whom no good thing is withheld? May the Spirit guide us to walk uprightly! Then shall we inherit the blessedness of all who trust in Him.

PSALM 85

Bright views of redeeming love shine forth in the opening of this Psalm. Prayer is made that grace may still abound. God's attributes are shown to be all reconciled in Christ. May we gaze with delight, and give all glory to our God!

1-3. "Lord, You have been favorable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger."

The immediate occasion of this triumphant joy is doubtless the deliverance of Israel's sons from some oppressing enemy. But the predictive shadow is soon chased away by the bright shining of redemption's rescue. In this scheme the riches of God's grace are seen. Free favor comes forth mighty to save. The wonders of mercy are ascribed to this love as their source. We see the origin of complete salvation. Wrath had existed against all sin; anger had fiercely blazed against iniquity; but vengeance is quenched in the ocean of redeeming blood. Where is iniquity? It is all forgiven.

Where are sins? They are all covered. Let our rejoicing souls testify, Lord, You have been favorable to us.

4-7. "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? will You draw out Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation."

But the ransomed heritage often fails to realize secured salvation. They tremble lest God's anger should return, and favor cease to smile. Let this temptation always drive to prayer. This is the time to supplicate that dying graces may revive, and that joy and gladness may reoccupy the soul; that mercy may again abound; and that salvation's glories may illustriously shine.

8. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly."

Answers will surely come. Let us open wide our hearts to welcome their arrival. They will fly on the wings of peace. The voice will be heard, Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. The Lord of peace Himself will give us peace always by all means. But let us take heed, and never turn aside to folly's fears and doubts and ways. Let us ever listen to wisdom's teaching, and walk in wisdom's ways.

9-10. "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

It is rich mercy that salvation is not to be sought in a far-distant region. Tedious efforts and protracted wanderings are not needed. It is ever by our side. We may open the hand and take it. What a constellation of blessedness brightens in the thought! Mercy, which ever pitifully yearns, has ample scope. Truth hastens to meet her

with the assurance that it no more opposes. Righteousness enrobes the ransomed flock. All heaven is at peace, and all God's attributes embrace. Oh! blessed Jesus, we adore You for your saving work!

11-13. "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before Him, and shall set us in the way of His steps."

Glorious results follow. On earth truth shall be as a fruitful crop, and righteousness shall flow down as showers from heaven. Every grace shall flourish and abound. The Good Shepherd shall precede His flock, and shall guide them safely in all righteous ways. How glorious is our Gospel, in its origin, in its work, in its effects! May we fully receive it! It is the blessing of blessings.

PSALM 86

A stream of continuous prayer flows throughout this Psalm. Praise is sweetly intermixed. Pleas for audience with God are urgently enforced. May we thus pray, and verily we shall be heard!

1. "Bow down Your ear, O Lord, hear me; for I am poor and needy."

The cry is the breathing of humility. To seek help from our own poverty is to draw water from an empty cistern. Let us fly to God's fullness; it ever overflows.

2. "Preserve my soul, for I am holy; O my God, save Your servant who trusts in You."

Enemies are always near; God only can keep and save. Let us urge the plea, We are Yours by entire surrender of ourselves. All our confidence rests on You.

3-4. "Be merciful to me, O Lord; for I cry to You daily. Rejoice the soul of Your servant; for to You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."

Mercy is our hourly need; for mercy let our hourly cry ascend. We shall hear joy and gladness, if on Him only our eyes are fixed.

5. "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive; and plentiful in mercy unto all those who call upon You."

When we thus call upon our God, we only ask for the display of His own heart. Goodness and mercy, grace and love there dwell. O God, give them scope. Let them come forth to help.

6-7. "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You; for You will answer me."

The cry continues, I cannot let You rest. I must take heaven by storm. Awake, awake in my behalf. Troubles abound. But they bear me on their tide to You. I come in full assurance that Your promises shall never fail, and faithful prayer shall never be cast out.

8-10. "Among the gods there is none like You, O Lord; neither are there any works like Your works. All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord; and shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things; You are God alone."

Precious is the season when the eye of faith contemplates the greatness—the majesty—the glory of our God. In heaven and throughout earth He sits supreme, worthy of all praise—all homage—all adoring love! In every climate enlightened servants now bow down to worship Him. The day will come when His knowledge shall cover the earth, even as the waters cover the sea. Then every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall magnify His name. O Lord, hasten the blessed time!

11. "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name."

How quickly the believer flies back to prayer. Here is his solace and his heart's home. His grand desire is that the Lord would instruct him in the path of life. He has no greater desire than to walk in God's truth. He feels that his heart is prone in all its parts to wander. In itself it has neither cohesion nor stability. He prays that God would so restrain it by His bands, that no part should ever deviate from His fear.

12-13. "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify Your name forevermore. For great is Your mercy toward me; and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

He vows that eternal praise shall issue from his comforted heart. Such glory is indeed God's due. For through redeeming blood He has rescued from perdition's lowest depths.

14-15. "O God, the proud have risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set You before them. But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, patient, and plentiful in mercy and truth."

In contrast to this mercy the Psalmist sees the enmity of man. But he takes refuge in his God. His compassions never fail; His grace abides forever; His patience is inexhaustible; His mercy and truth are overflowing.

16-17. "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give Your strength to Your servant, and save the son of Your handmaid. Show me a token for good; that those who hate me may see it, and be ashamed; because You, Lord, have helped me, and comforted me."

This view of God prompts the prayer, that He would arise and strengthen and save; and give such tokens of His lovingkindness,

that all observers may perceive that believers are the blessed men receiving help from heaven, and rejoicing in the Spirit's comforts. When such manifestations abound they cannot be hidden. Shame depresses the cruel adversaries. They are constrained to confess, that vain is their enmity when God extends His hand to work deliverance. May we be monuments of such help!

PSALM 87

The Church is commended as beloved of God. Neighboring nations flock to it. It is a spring of refreshing joys.

1 . "His foundation is in the holy mountains."

The eye seems to rest on the Temple, the type of God's Church. It stands securely, for it is based on the noble hill of Zion. But what is the stability of the material fabric, compared to that of the spiritual edifice? Of the former it was said, Not one stone shall be left upon another. The latter is built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

2. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

Zion was the spot which the Lord chose and regarded with especial favor. So the Lord loves the Church, and every member of it. Happy is the man who can realize, 'Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me. He has loved me with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness He has drawn me.' The response follows, 'I love Him because He first loved me.' May our souls ever bathe in the ocean of Christ's unfathomable love!

3. "Glorious things are spoken of You, O city of God."

No eloquence can sufficiently commend the Church. What can be added to the assurance that she is recognized as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife? She was beloved by the Heavenly Bridegroom before time began, with a love which cannot know a change. She is endowed by Him with all He has, and with all He is. He has placed all the promises as a treasure in her hands. His angels watch around her. His providences guide and defend her path. His righteousness is her beauteous robe, rendering her fit to shine forever in the palace of the heavenly King. Her seat is prepared beside Him on His throne. It would exhaust all time to give a brief survey of the glories which adorn her.

4-6. I will record Egypt and Babylon among those who know me—also Philistia and Tyre, and even distant Ethiopia. They have all become citizens of Jerusalem! And it will be said of Jerusalem, "Everyone has become a citizen here." And the Most High will personally bless this city. When the Lord registers the nations, he will say, "This one has become a citizen of Jerusalem."

The influx of Gentile converts to the Church is here predicted. They shall come from countries which had been noted for their hostility. The Lord shall send forth His mighty Spirit. He shall soften their hearts and open their eyes, and enlighten their understanding, and lead them as willing captives to receive the Gospel yoke. They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and shall surname himself by the name of Israel. And when at last the Book of Life is opened, it shall be found that multitudes from all climates have been gathered into the Church of the living God.

7. "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there; all my springs are in you."

Joy and gladness shall be in her midst. She shall come to the Lord with thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. No element of

happiness shall be absent. The Lord's presence near—His presence forevermore—shall be her inexhaustible ocean of delight. Sweetly it is said, 'In His presence is the fullness of joy; at God's right hand there are pleasures forevermore.' Let us now respond, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.'

Deep and ever fresh are the springs from which we may here draw salvation. Let our tent be always pitched beside this overflowing well. Let us bless His holy name that we have been born again and adopted into the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. Happy is the present portion; what will be the endless realization!

PSALM 88

Sounds of bitter grief wail through this Psalm. We hear the mourning of a wounded spirit. All earthly refuge is shunned; help only is in God.

1-2. "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; incline Your ear to my cry."

This Psalm is received as the wailing of Heman the son of Zerah. He was illustrious among men for mental gifts. Solomon scarcely exceeded him in wisdom. But under sense of sin he did not find relief in intellect. He flies to God, and pours out his heart in prayer. The whole strain is misery at its full. There is but one word of comfort. He calls upon God, as the God of his salvation. Grasping the plank of saving grace, he could not sink. Let us learn the happy art of wrestling with God, in like spirit of supporting faith.

3-5. "For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down into the pit; I am as a man who has no strength. Free among the dead, like the slain who

lie in the grave, whom You remember no more; and they are cut off from Your hand."

His soul is faint through excess of anguish. All vital power seems to be extinct. He regards himself as utterly cut off from life, and as now moldering in the grave. So terrible was his grief that he speaks of himself as already an inhabitant of the tomb.

6-7. "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves."

Misery sighs in deeper notes. He mourns as now separated from God. He wails as though lying in the very pit—amid all blackness of darkness—in the uttermost depths. Can misery be more miserable! Let us look up to Jesus. He has delivered us from all wrath.

8-9. "You have put away my acquaintance far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. My eye mourns by reason of affliction; Lord, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You."

Troubles lose much of their burden, when loving friends are near to solace. This comfort was denied to Heman. Alone he mourned. Such too was the lonely state of our beloved Lord. All His friends forsook Him and fled. Prayer will bring Jesus to our side. We may plead His promise, I will never leave You, nor forsake You.

10-12. "Will You show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or Your faithfulness in destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? and Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

The plea is urged, that relief delayed may be too late. When we lie down in the grave, we can no more show forth God's praise, or

spread abroad His wonders. While life continues, let us strive to magnify Him, before all our powers are silent in the grave.

13-14. "But to You have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer come before You. Lord, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?"

While we have life let it be prayer. This grace will prevail. Let the earliest dawn witness our supplications. Let our cry be the first utterance which reaches God. Let us thus seek to learn why He is absent from us, and why His smile no longer cheers.

15-18. "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer Your terrors I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me; Your terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. You have put lover and friend far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness."

Fearful is this picture of a soul agonizing under a sense of God's withdrawal. What must be the misery of those realms, into which hope never comes! *Let us strive to look off from sin's deserts, to the boundless merits of the dying Savior.*

He verily redeems from all iniquity. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Let us flee to Him. Let us cling to Him. Let us rejoice in Him. *Sheltered in Him we cannot be exposed to wrath.* There is redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. O Jesus! we bless You, we adore You!

PSALM 89

This Psalm is bright in praises for the countless mercies of our God, especially for faithfulness to His covenants. Prayer is added. May we with joyful hearts adopt this tone!

1-2. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever; You shall establish Your faithfulness in the very heavens."

Mercy is a theme for everlasting praise. Faithfulness cannot be adequately commended. Mercy and truth go hand in hand to consummate salvation. Mercy and truth shall ever be the song of the redeemed. May they be our song now!

3-4. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn to David my servant. Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations."

We have here the glad announcement that a covenant is established by God with Jesus, the Son of David. This covenant secures the perpetuity of the chosen seed. It stands forever.

5-6. "And the heavens shall praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared to the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?"

Due praise awaits the Lord for these His wonders. It shall commence on earth. It shall be lengthened throughout the days of heaven. These wonders are great beyond all thought. They spring from the unchanging heart of Him, who is the great I AM.

7-10. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence of all those who are about Him. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like You? or to Your faithfulness round about You? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves arise, You still them. You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm."

Should not filial fear, and holy reverence encircle the throne of God? Mark His might. Is the earth full of commotion? If He speaks, stillness reigns. If He displays His power, His enemies vanish, as smoke before the wind.

11-14. "The heavens are Yours, the earth, also is Yours; as for the world and its fullness, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name. You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your throne; mercy and truth shall go before Your face."

Survey the universe. It is the work of His hands. From north to south creation recognizes Him as sovereign Lord. Thus great is His power. Great, also, are all His attributes. Justice and judgment are His abode. Mercy and truth precede His steps.

15-18. "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name shall they rejoice all the day and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength; and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our King."

Blessed indeed are they whose ears receive the gospel's joyful sound. Their walk is bright, for God shines on them. In His Name and in His righteousness they are exalted. He is the glory of their strength. In Him security surrounds them.

19-23. "Then You spoke in vision to your Holy One, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him. With whom My hand shall be established; My arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him."

Here Jesus is most gloriously revealed. He is called of God to be our uttermost salvation. He is anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King. No enemy shall prevail against Him. May we receive Him in all His offices, and powers, and work, and thus be seated on the pinnacle of safety.

24-29. "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him; and in My Name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry to Me, You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven."

It is the delight of faith to contemplate Jesus thus exalted by Jehovah's power to the throne of salvation. The Father proclaims Him, 'You are My Son, this day have I begotten You.' His voice responds, 'You are My Father, My God, and the Rock of My salvation.' The promise goes forth, 'I will make His seed to endure forever.' Eternal glory shall be the sure property of all who believe in Him. Shall we not laud Him with all the faculties that we possess; and trust Him at every moment of our time!

30-37. "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor permit My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie to David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

It is sadly foreseen, that His children will oftentimes be transgressors, and stray from gospel-paths. God will mark their iniquities, and due chastisement shall recall them to His ways. But still their rejection shall not be final. Lovingkindness will not expire. The covenant shall abide secure. Jehovah's oath shall not be broken. Not one of Christ's seed shall perish. His throne shall never totter. It shall abide, as the moon in the firmament. It shall appear as the rainbow, the pledge that no deluge shall return.

38-45. "But You have cast off and abhorred, You have been angry with Your anointed. You have made void the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. You have broken down all his hedges; You have brought his strongholds to ruin. All those who pass by the way plunder him; he is a reproach to his neighbors. You have set up the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies to rejoice. You have also turned the edge of his sword, and have not made him to stand in the battle. You have made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground. The days of his youth have You shortened; You have covered him with shame."

The scene is here changed. To all appearance David's kingdom is brought very low. His enemies are allowed to triumph. His days are shortened, and shame covers the land. All things indicate desertion. Such is the case in the spiritual kingdom. But though sins may bring dark days, the sun still rules in heaven. The covenant may not screen from temporal distress, but it secures eternal life.

46-52. "How long, Lord? will You hide Yourself forever? shall Your wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is; why have You made all men in vain? What man is he who lives, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Lord, where are Your former loving kindnesses, which You swore to David in Your truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants; how I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; With which Your enemies have reproached, O Lord;

with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed. Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen, and Amen."

Faith has undying root in the believer's heart. Cast down, it is not cast off. It can still send forth the voice of prayer. It can still call God to look down graciously. It can implore that sufferings may be pitied, and cruelty rebuked. Deliverance thus sought will be given. The mercies of the covenant stand as a rock, and the rejoicing spirit will soon shout, 'Blessed be the Lord forevermore! Amen and Amen.'

PSALM 90

This Psalm is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God." As such it justly claims devout attention as the earliest of inspired songs. In adopting it may we move forward on the heavenward road!

1. "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations."

Happy has been the experience of the saints of God at every period. They could always find a home on high, in which they might repose and sweetly dwell. To all who approach in the name of Jesus the portals of heaven open, and smiles welcome. By faith may we thus enter, and in God continually abide. No monarch occupies so grand a palace.

2. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or before You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God."

A glorious description of the self-existent and everlasting God here meets us. Before time was, while time rolls on, when time shall be no more, He lives—the great "I am that I am."

3-6. "You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men. For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers."

In contrast mark the short-lived instability of man. Formed of the dust of the earth, God speaks the word, and to that dust he instantly returns. In God's sight time has no place. A thousand years are but as a fleeting day. Many images combine to show the brevity of man's existence. A rushing torrent bears him out of sight. Sleep soon ceases, and in the morning leaves no trace. The night-watch tarries not. When day dawns the grass is green, before evening it is withered up. Human life is but a momentary bloom.

7-9. "For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told."

Sin is the root of this nothingness. Our iniquities are many. They may be hidden from our view; but they are all unmistakable to the omniscience of God. When His anger is aroused, we vanish as the remembrance of a brief recital.

10. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Those who are permitted to count threescore years and ten, should regard their allotted course as fully run. The fleeting generations in the wilderness taught this lesson to Moses. Few who entered Canaan had seen that period. If unusual strength should lengthen out man's days, the failing powers bring labor and sorrow. The continuance is fleeting. Departure is at the door.

11-12. "Who knows the power of Your anger? even according to Your fear so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

God is not limited in any attribute. His anger then may work dreadfully. Let us tremble to provoke His wrath; and rather in knowledge of life's brevity give our little space to search for true wisdom. He is well taught who studies God in Christ.

13-17. "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

Solemn prayers are the fitting conclusion. The Lord is implored to return, to relax displeasure, to cause mercy to overflow. Then joy and gladness will super-abound. He will not be slow to reveal His wondrous power to beautify His people with salvation, and to make all their work to prosper. May these prayers ever ascend from our hearts! Descending blessings will crown us with delights.

PSALM 91

Internal textual evidence establishes that the apprehension of near sickness and the approach of pestilence awakened this Psalm. Firm confidence is expressed in God's protecting power. May we find Him a very present help in all our troubles!

1. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

The Ark behind the veil was regarded as the symbol of God's presence. Common gaze penetrates not the secret place. In general men do not strive for acquaintance with God. They do not seek Him in Christ. But those who thus find Him will ever cling to Him with strengthening grasp. They will rest in Him as in a calm and cool abode. His shadow will ward off the fiery darts of Satan, and avert the hot persecution of the ungodly.

2. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust."

Faith makes bold profession. It casts off fear, and avows that in God it finds a safe retreat—a sure protection—an almighty friend. This confidence will never be disappointed.

3-6. "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the harmful pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust; His truth shall be your shield and rampart. You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday."

Troubles are enumerated such as are common to this mortal lot. But trust in God exalts above their fatal reach. The fowler may lay hidden snares, but they shall not entrap. The noxious pestilence shall inflict no deathful wound. The Almighty shall extend His covering wing. His faithful promises shall uphold the combatant in the hour of battle. By night, by day, the dwelling shall be impervious to plague.

There may be a literal reference to the deliverance of Israel's sons, and their exemption from all contact with harm when plagues laid low the Egyptian hosts. There may be spiritual reference to the deliverance of God's children from the destroying attacks of Satan. But one truth is undeniable. The real happiness and safety of true

believers is emphatically assured, and we are exhorted to pray for sustaining faith, and in all perils to trust without one fear.

7-10. "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there no evil shall befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling."

Other terms are added to strengthen assurance. Those who by faith repose on God shall surely be upheld. Though troubles be multiplied, they shall never be cast off. In much apparent peril they shall be really safe.

11-12. "For He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways. They shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone."

This promise is distinctly addressed to Jesus. As such the devil quoted it, and Jesus heard without rejection. If we are one with Jesus, the promises which were poured upon His head will flow down to us, and will invest us in security.

13-16. "You shall tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet. Because He has set His love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

The same encouraging strain still sounds. All who have set their love on God, and all who know His name, may claim fulfillment. They shall have deliverance in every day of trouble. God will honor them in time, and honor them with a long life, even forever and

ever. Happy indeed are the people who thus dwell in the secret place of the Most High.

PSALM 92

Here strong exhortations enforce the duty of praise. Motives for such adoration are specified. May they tune our hearts to luxuriate in like pastures of joy!

1-3. "It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to show forth Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound."

Thanksgiving raises the heart above this lower scene. It is the melody which sounds in heaven. It should be the happiness of earth. Our mercies are boundless and unmerited. For each, warm praise should be uplifted.

But here our powers wane. Let us pray that the Spirit may revive and strengthen them. Let gratitude to God brighten the dawn of day. Let the last sounds of evening bear testimony to His faithfulness. Thus let each day declare that loving and faithful is the Lord. Every faculty and every means of harmony should be summoned to give aid to heaven-taught praise.

4. "For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands."

A mighty motive impels the believer's heart. It is experience of God's wondrous dealings. Marvels of love are shown in creation, providence, and grace. The believer knows that all things work together for his good. He doubts not that goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life; that victory over all foes and

impediments is before him; and that at last he shall reign in triumph. Can he realize these truths and not exult in praises?

5-9. "O Lord, how great are Your works! and Your thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knows not; neither does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish; it is those who shall be destroyed forever. But You, Lord, are most high forevermore. For, lo, Your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered."

Ignorance of God's power encompasses the world in darkness. The ungodly show a flourishing appearance. They spring up in multitudes. But their prosperity is short-lived. God speaks and nothingness becomes their grave. All who oppose Him have a fruitless toil. They labor only to insure destruction.

10-11. "But you have made me as strong as a wild bull. How refreshed I am by your power! With my own eyes I have seen the downfall of my enemies; with my own ears I have heard the defeat of my wicked opponents."

The ungodly will surely perish. So surely will the godly triumph. Mighty strength shall be supplied, which shall level mountains of hindrances. Joy and gladness shall be their portion. They shall receive the unction of the Holy One. Where are their foes? They are brought low. What sound reaches the ear? It is the wailing of hopeless agony.

12-15. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Images of verdure and fertility depict the beauteous prosperity of the righteous. We learn too in what soil they are rooted. They are planted in the house of the Lord. They live in heavenly fellowship. They realize God's presence. They delight in His ordinances. Their fruitfulness is that of the choicest trees. Their last days shall be their best. Their works of age shall exceed those of youth. This assurance comes from the character of their God. Like the rock, He cannot be moved; and His uprightness ratifies His word. Security promised is security enjoyed.

PSALM 93

The reign of Christ here shines forth in illustrious splendor. It is glorious in power and holiness. May the description lead our hearts to more intense desire to serve devotedly our heavenly King!

1. "The Lord reigns; He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, with which He has girded Himself; the world also is established, that it cannot be moved."

Jesus is proclaimed as King. What confidence, what peace should this assurance give! He reigns supreme. All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. His kingdom rules over all. Irresistible is His sway. Nothing can thwart His sovereign will. He directs all things in providence and grace, in time and in eternity. He appears in His royal robes of majesty and glory. Let us meekly bend the knee, and give the homage due to His supremacy. He wears the belt of omnipotence. Let us delight in the thought. It proclaims the security of those who seek the shelter of His wings. The earth is the present scene of their abode, and no power can shake its stability. It rests on firmness and cannot be moved.

2. "My throne is established of old; You are from everlasting."

Earthly kingdoms quickly rise and fall. Yesterday they were not; tomorrow they are gone. A breath makes them, and a breath destroys. But eternity is the possession of this King. Before time was, He lived "I AM." When time shall be no more, He still shall be the great "I AM."

3, 4. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yes, than the mighty waves of the sea."

Though Jesus is thus mighty, He reigns not unopposed. Wild and frantic passions are in commotion against Him. Mark the sea when raging tempests lash its billows into fury. Terribly they swell. Gigantic waves lift up their foaming heads. They dash against the rocks, as if their strength could overcome all barriers. But they toss and swell in vain. Thus the maddened rage of rebel man is weak against this kingdom. Christ sits above the water floods. He calmly views the impotent infatuation. Happy are those who are forever one with Him. They too shall sit on thrones.

5. "Your testimonies are very sure; holiness becomes Your house, O Lord, forever."

Repeated testimonies announce with trumpet-tongue this truth. The Word abounds with declarations that the government is upon Christ's shoulder. This Word cannot be broken. His empire must abide forever. Sweet is the concluding word. His right hand is full of righteousness. The scepter of His kingdom is a right scepter. All His rule is holy. Holiness is inscribed on all His work, ordinances, and decrees. His people, also, are all holy. Holiness is the bright title on their brow. May we be holy even as our Lord is holy! May our constant prayer be, Sanctify us wholly, body, soul, and spirit! Sanctify us through Your truth! Thus alone can we take comfort in the hope of gazing forever on the unclouded glory of our God. *Heaven is holiness* in more than meridian splendor. The entrance of

evil in the slightest form would change the total appearance. Light could not be one with darkness. The torrid zone could not show icy plains. The door is barred against iniquity. The Lamb's bride is all-glorious without in the pure obedience of the Lord, and all-glorious within through the indwelling of the Spirit.

PSALM 94

God is supplicated to maintain His cause and not to allow His enemies to triumph. Afflictions are named as frequent benefits, and the afflicted are assured of comfort. May this hymn teach and console!

1-2. "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself up. Lift Yourself up, Judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud."

Faith knows that it may boldly call upon God to manifest His rebuking powers. It desires that evil may cease. It knows that if God should arise, this issue would quickly be accomplished, and the proud lie low in shame.

3-7. "Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces Your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage; They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

Cries for God's interference are redoubled. The cruelty of the ungodly seems to prevail too long. Various acts of their tyranny and oppression are enumerated. The godly know that help only can come from heaven. Thus supplications are multiplied.

8-10. "Understand, you brutish among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who chastises the heathen, shall not He correct? He who teaches man knowledge, shall not He know?"

Remonstrance is addressed to the ungodly. They are rebuked for their presumption. They are reminded of the power and omniscience of God. He who endows man with organs of intelligence, shall He not be intelligent? Shall He from whom all knowledge comes, lack knowledge? Omniscience is His attribute. No evil can escape detection. The hand of punishment will work vengeance.

11-13. "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your law; that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked."

Vain man may plot iniquity. But he sows the wind to reap the whirlwind. Afflictions may thus be heaped on the righteous; but they will prove to be real mercies. They often are blessings in disguise. They will drive to the study of God's Word. Thus the blessed man will find delight and profit in the contemplations of God's law. And yet a little while he will see that the ungodly have fought against themselves.

14-16. "For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance; but judgment shall return unto righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it. Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"

Forever is the grand truth established in heaven, I will never leave you nor forsake you. The Lord hates putting away. With Him is no变ableness, neither shadow of turning. His sheep shall never

perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. In all our trials let us trust and not be afraid.

17-23. "Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slips; Your mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me Your comforts delight my soul. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with You, which frames mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge. And He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yes, the Lord our God shall cut them off."

If God could desert, the godly must perish. But this can never be, and therefore they live and prosper. And in all the misgivings of their troubled minds God's comforts are their support. There is an dreadful contrast. God will arise, and uttermost perdition will overwhelm all wickedness.

PSALM 95

Warm exhortations call to joyful thanksgivings. It is shown that God is truly entitled to such homage. Warnings to the unbelieving and disobedient are adjoined. May the life-giving Spirit teach us!

1-2. "O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms."

It is good to encourage each other in every holy work, especially in the work of encircling our God with praises. Abundant causes awaken thanksgivings. He is the strength of our salvation. Who can estimate what salvation is? It is decreed in the counsels of the Triune Jehovah. It is wrought out by the great God and our Savior Jesus

Christ. It is applied by the great God the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore gladly hasten into His presence and throng His courts. Let us be loud and fervent in acclamations of delight. Salvation is a rock raised and supported by Jehovah.

3-5. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land."

Consider the mighty motives which kindle our gratitude. Ponder God's majesty and greatness. Potentates of earth vanish before Him. Their power is utter weakness. He is invested with all supremacy as King of kings and Lord of lords. Mark creation's multitudinous fabric. He spoke the word, and the world assumed existence. All things in land and sea bow to His sway. Great are these wonders. He is Lord, whose will created and maintains the universal frame of nature. 6-7. *"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."*

Such contemplation should prostrate us before His throne. We are also especially led to worship when we consider His inestimable goodness. He is the tender Shepherd. We are the flock of His watchful care. He leads us to lie down in the green pastures of His truth. He guides us to drink the still waters of His refreshing love. Let us then in deep humility adore.

8-11. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people who err in their heart, and they have not known My ways. Unto whom I swore in My wrath, that they should not enter into My rest."

Let there be no delay. Today Jehovah calls us. Tomorrow our ears may be incapable to hear. Let us use every means to melt and soften our obdurate hearts. If they are hardened, we shall love error and hate truth.

The case of the children of Israel gives dreadful warning. We know how they tempted and provoked their God. We know how His word went forth that they should not enter into the rest of the promised land. The home of faith is open to us, where we may calmly rest from all our works. The rest of heaven is also promised. By faith may we now rest in Christ, and pass from this present rest to the eternal rest of heaven. We marvel at the mad rebellion of Israel's sons. We condemn their hearts as harder than the nether millstone. It seems incredible that through their long pilgrimage they would not see the leading hand of God. While we blame them, let us look inward. If we should similarly err, can we escape their doom?

PSALM 96

Again we are loudly called to magnify the Lord in joyful song. Thoughts are directed to the extension of Christ's kingdom. He is proclaimed as coming to consummate salvation. May our souls respond, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

1-3. "O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people."

Praise never can be too exuberant. Everything that has breath should live to praise the Lord. In this work there never should be weariness. Causes of praise are ever fresh, and fresh should be the responding notes. Let us sing a new song. New thoughts, new motives should enliven the soul. Our hearts should ever seek renewal, and be looking onward to the new heavens and the new earth, where He

shall reign who has made all things new. Hence new should be our song. As day succeeds to day, so let praise succeed to praise. Let too our diligent efforts convey to the poor and ignorant of every climate the tidings of redeeming love. Let the heathen learn through us the glories of Christ's salvation.

4-6. "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."

Behold the greatness, the supremacy, the glory of our God. Heathen idols are utter vanity. Let us call the poor heathen to cease to bow down to stocks and stones. Let us teach them to worship Him who has made heaven and earth. This worship is mighty to enliven and sanctify. It is beautified with all the radiance of heaven's glory.

7-9. "Give to the Lord, O you kindreds of the people, give to the Lord glory and strength. Give to the Lord the glory due to His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him, all the earth."

Who can describe the pure delight of spiritual worship! Let us draw near to Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth. Let it be our choice joy, to magnify His holy name, to ascribe to Him the glory which is so greatly His, and to acknowledge the omnipotence with which He is invested. Let it be our delight to consecrate to Him all the resources with which we are endowed; to present to Him ourselves, our bodies, souls, and spirits, which are His by every right of creation, redemption, conquest, and our own surrender. Let us reverently seek His hallowed courts, and offer holy service. There is no beauty to be compared with holiness, which is the reflection of our God.

10-13. "Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigns; the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved; He shall judge the

people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness. Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it; then shall all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord; for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."

Nothing quickens praise more than constant expectation of the coming of the Lord. Yet a little while and He who shall come will come and will not tarry. Behold He comes leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. Oh thrice blessed, thrice glorious day! The heavens and the earth, with their ten thousand tongues, shall rejoice and sing. Righteous shall be His reign. Truth shall be exalted, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men. Should not this prospect warm our hearts to spread abroad His glorious name! Surely the very stones would rebuke our silence.

PSALM 97

Faith is encouraged to joyfully contemplate Christ's kingdom. It may be hidden from the world; but it is dreadful to all adversaries. Exhortations follow to abound in holy joy.

1. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."

The Lord reigns. This is the Gospel's note. It is a truth prolific of holy joy. All events obey His scepter. In every circumstance, therefore, joy should wave its tranquil wand throughout the heart. Every occurrence should whisper, It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him. Events may sometimes show a frowning aspect, but happy believers receive them as blessings in disguise.

2. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."

Faith may not always discern the intent of God's rule. To the ungodly His will is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. They do not know the mighty Ruler. They do not understand the workings of His hand. Solemn lessons are embodied in the word. If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But His throne is established high on the pinnacle of righteousness and justice. All the decrees of His tribunal are offsprings of these attributes, and shine as reflections of His glory. Happy, indeed, are those in whose hearts the Lord God reigns righteously.

3-6. "A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory."

Thoughts here recall Sinai's terrors. When the fiery law was promulgated, dreadful manifestations announced that vengeance would destroy opponents. In Christ's kingdom, holy indignation is also against all unrighteousness. Here strong images are employed to show that wrath will scrutinize and rightly execute its tremendous work. Tribulation and anguish must be the rebel's doom. Blessed are those who are delivered from this wrath, and are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

7-9. "Confounded be all those who serve engraved images, that boast themselves of idols; worship Him, all you gods. Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of Your judgments, O Lord. For You, Lord, are high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods."

Let no fond dream suggest that idolatry is not an abomination in God's sight. Truth has denounced its sure destruction, and destruction will surely come. Let all who hear take warning, and meekly bow before the King of kings. The ear of faith hears God's

resolve, and rejoices in the thought that homage and worship shall be rendered to Him to whom it is so justly due.

10-12. "You who love the Lord, hate evil; He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

Believers are here pointedly described. Their conspicuous feature is love of their Lord. It is a true address, 'O You Whom my soul loves!' He demands our hearts. Let them be His in every pulse, at every moment. The best proof of this love will be hatred of all that is adverse to Him. Those who love Him will nestle in His heart, and His power will screen them from all harm. As seed sown springs from the bosom of the earth, so light and gladness are laid up for the happy flock, and assuredly will be their portion. They have all cause to rejoice, to be glad, and to give thanks. God's holiness frightens the wicked. The thought is terror to them. His servants ponder this attribute with delight. They turn not from the precept, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'

PSALM 98

Exhortations to sing praises are here prolonged. Views of Christ's kingdom suggest ample topics. May they kindle holy warmth in our hearts!

1. "O sing to the Lord a new song; for He has done marvelous things; His right hand, and His holy arm, has gotten Him the victory."

Praise can never be exhausted. The more we contemplate the exploits of our Lord, the more we are moved to uplift adoration. The lessons of yesterday are expanded by the lessons of today. Fresh

discoveries awaken new songs. But still no words can fully sing the wondrous works of God. Wonder is inscribed on Creation in its every part, and on Providence in its perpetual evolutions.

But the wonders of Redeeming Love shine with the brightest blaze. Here Christ appears the mighty conqueror. Hell and its legion had usurped dominion over man. Many chains enthralled him. He was bound in irons of captivity. Jesus undertakes the rescue. He leads captivity captive, and saves His people from the cruel grasp. Alone He does the work. He by Himself purges our sins. Alone He hangs upon the accursed tree. Alone He tramples Satan beneath His feet. To Him be all the praise. In Him salvation triumphs.

2-3. "The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness has He openly shown in the sight of the heathen. He has remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."

His glorious victory is proclaimed throughout earth's length and breadth. Those who dwell in heathen darkness shall hear the wondrous tidings. All the gracious promises to Israel's sons shall be abundantly fulfilled. Is mercy pledged? Mercy to the uttermost shall be given. Every word of eternal truth shall be established. Salvation shall be adored, wherever man draws breath.

4-6. "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing to the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets, and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord the King."

The claims of the Lord upon resounding praise are here exhibited in emphatic terms. When the heart and affections are thoroughly engaged, every power will be used. Not only will the lips be loud in their utterance, but everything which art can supply and instruments contribute will be thus hallowed. Nothing will be withheld, which can with reverence give aid.

7-9. "Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; the world, and those who dwell in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He comes to judge the earth; with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity."

Universal nature is next addressed. Everything which the Lord made should in some sense be handmaid to His praise. Let us hear in the roaring of the billows the acknowledgment of His Being. Let us see in the forests and the hills evidence of His greatness. Above all let us praise Him for the glories of His coming kingdom. Blessed be His holy name, He comes, He surely comes, He quickly comes. He shall take to Himself His great power and reign, and His kingdom shall be righteousness. Then earth will be one wide expanse of universal joy. Nature will put on her renovated dress. The sea in all its amplitude, the earth with all who occupy its space, the floods, the hills, with joyful tongues will swell the triumph. Let us by glad anticipation learn to take our part.

PSALM 99

Attention is again called to the greatness and glory of Christ's kingdom. Exhortations to worship Him suitably follow. May the Spirit write them on our hearts!

1. "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble; He sits between the cherubims; let the earth be moved."

The Gospel-note here sounds again. The Holy Spirit delights to proclaim Jesus seated supreme upon His throne. This thought is an overflowing cup of joy. It presents strong consolation. Oh! that He might reign in us, and make our hearts His chosen home. But with this comfort awe should be intermixed. We should tremble lest any rebel passion should dispute His rule. This fear should keep us lowly in submission. His high seat too is a throne of grace. It is foreshadowed by the mercy-seat, over which the cherubim spread

their wings. Let us adore Him as our King. Let the whole earth be one activity of service.

2-3. "The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the people. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; for it is holy."

The greatness of our King exceeds all thought. His might is truly omnipotent. His will is irresistible. Therefore His name is awesome, and no foe can stand against Him. If He speaks, opponents crumble into very dust. But holiness reigns simultaneously with His greatness. He is holy in working salvation for His people. He is holy in executing vengeance on His adversaries.

4-5. "The King's strength also loves judgment; You establish equity, You execute judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; for He is holy."

Our mighty King, the strength of His people, takes especial delight in vindicating the cause of the oppressed. In His kingdom righteous dealings are the rule. Mighty motives urge us to fall low before Him, and to adore Him as the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts.

6-7. "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them. He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar; they kept His testimonies, and the ordinance that He gave them."

We are encouraged to worship by the example of the holiest saints of old. Consider Moses and Aaron. They were servants who ministered to Him. Regard Samuel. His life was consecrated to render service. It was their delight, also, to pour out their hearts in prayer. Did they pray in vain? That could not be. The Lord's ears were ever open to their cry, and ready answers flew on the wings of love. He was ever near to hold communion with them. Out of the overshadowing cloud His, commands were heard, and reverence hastened to obey.

8-9. "You answered them, O Lord our God; You were a God that forgave them, though You took vengeance on their inventions. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy."

But still the favored people were but men. In sin they were conceived. Therefore they often started aside as a broken bow. Thus they were brought into grievous straits, and God's displeasure could not be withheld. But still He was a God ready to pardon. Where sin abounded forgiving mercy abounded much more. Can we refrain to adore, to worship, and to praise! We rob our souls of their most hallowed joy when we are slow to revel in this exercise. It is Godlike condescension that His ears are open to our feeble strains of worship. Shall He be willing to accept our worthless tribute, and shall we reluctantly present it? Forbid it, every feeling of our hearts!

PSALM 100

This hymn has been, and still is, the delight of Christian hearts. Its pervading note is a call to adoring praise. Praise is due to our God, because of His sovereignty, and His tender care. May praise ever fill our hearts and dwell on our lips!

1-2. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing."

Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the praises of God should be the joyful sound. The feeling should be mighty in our hearts, and should swell in no feeble strain. It should be our chief joy to render service to the Lord. His people are called to dwell in realms of happiness. Their whole existence should give a good report of His gracious dealings. His worship should be their constant pleasure-ground; it should resound with notes of melody and thanksgiving. Eternity will be too short fully to recount His praise. Let us not shorten our joy by neglecting to begin on earth.

3. "Know that the Lord is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

It is good to call others to the knowledge of the Lord. This is a wondrous theme, and well demands our utmost powers. In the first place we should commend His glorious supremacy. But who can tell His essence as God! His name is opened out to us in His blessed attributes. Each calls us to proclaim Him in varied terms. We live on earth; wondrous is the thought! Where did we acquire our being? His will called us from nothingness to be living souls. The breath of life is entirely His gift. Let us never forget that we are His by creative power. But we are His forever by His covenant-engagements. He has chosen us to be His favored flock. He has selected us to be the sheep of His pasture. It is through His distinguishing grace that we are brought to revel in the rich pastures of Gospel-truth, and to draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation.

4-5. "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations."

Shall we not then throng His courts with praise, and cause His sanctuary to resound with adorations! Again and again topics of praise abound around us. With joyful lips let us speak of all His goodness. It is *unsearchable, unmerited, infinite, everlasting*. Let us here begin the testimony which can never end. From age to age His truth shall live; from age to age let joyful lips proclaim it! Amen.

PSALM 101

Rules are prescribed for godly government. Advice is given to those who exercise authority. May all take heed; for to each some influence belongs.

1-2. "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto You, O Lord, will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will You come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

Praise is the inhabitant of the godly heart. The Psalmist engages that songs to the Lord shall be his glad employ. Mercy and judgment compose the happy theme. To think of God's mercy is the delight of delights. To utter its praise is a foretaste of heaven. Judgment, also, claims its place. The Lord is not slow to vindicate what is the right. His righteous dealings should be magnified continually.

But the mercy and the judgment, which are the attributes of the Lord, should also be the characteristics of magisterial rulers. Those who are invested with the exercise of authority should realize that they are ordained by God to represent Him. Therefore His mode of governing should be their studied pattern. But left to themselves men are poor and ignorant and weak. Every man in his best estate is altogether vanity. Hence our prayer for the teaching and indwelling of the Spirit should be earnest and incessant. Oh, when will You come unto me? His presence is light and strength and power. It never is denied to those who truly serve and seek Him.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and We will come to him, and take up Our abode with him. Thus the pious man looks up for heavenly aid, and resolves that he will act with wisdom and discretion. He will diligently watch that no flaw shall stain his godly walk. His heart shall be wholly given to the Lord; and the heart is the rudder of all conduct.

3. "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

He will guard the portal of every sense. If evil is before him, he will close his eyes, lest some pollution should gain entrance. He will

utterly abhor the works of those who deviate from the path of piety. Their work shall be shunned with disgust.

4. "A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person."

The world abounds with self-willed and perverse rebels. They submit to no righteous rule. These shall be banished from the sight of the righteous. No wicked man shall be among their friends. Their joy shall be in the select company of the godly.

5-8. "Whoever privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off; he who has a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that he may dwell with me who walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; he who tells lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord."

Truth and uprightness shall adorn their attendants. The faithful and the holy shall have office in their house. Wickedness shall be utterly expelled. Surely here is a picture of the blessed household of the King of kings. It is written, Your people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. If earthly rulers should be surrounded by a godly retinue, surely this rule will order the celestial court. Have we by faith put on the garment of salvation, the spotless robe of Christ's obedience? Have we received the Spirit to sanctify each movement of our hearts? Such is the glorious company of the celestial home.

PSALM 102

The soul trembling under God's displeasure is in extreme anguish. Its misery pours out a multitude of complaints. Various images lend their aid. Hope is found only in God and His unchanging love.

1-2. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto You. Hide not Your face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline Your ear unto me; in the day when I call answer me speedily."

An inviting hand is always beckoning us to the mercy-seat. Its gates are widely open. Tender compassion calls us. Abundant promises insure success. We may draw near boldly and plead the all-atoning blood. Especially in times of distress we are encouraged to utter the desires of our hearts. We may use holy violence, and wrestle with our God. We may refuse to give Him rest until responses come. It is not presumption to be urgent for immediate answers, and to pray that God would speedily cause His smile to dissipate our trouble.

3-5. "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forgot to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

Prayer should be more importunate when sorrows press with overwhelming weight. The effects of such distress are soon apparent. The strength of the frame quickly declines. It vanishes like the curling smoke, which rises to evaporate in air. The bones grow feeble, and crumble to decay as fuel on the burning hearth. Mourning withers all energy. The grass when cut soon becomes dry and sapless, in like manner the smitten heart loses all freshness. The appetite declines. There is no desire for food, no relish for the customary sustenance. Misery finds vent in moans and sighs, so that the flesh is wasted, and the form moves as a living skeleton.

6-7. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop."

Images from nature aid the portrait of this misery. The afflicted shuns all companionship. He retires as the lonely pelican, seeking the solitude of the wilderness, or, as the owl, hiding in the recesses of the desert. Alone he utters wails to heaven, as a solitary sparrow moping on the summits of the house.

8-11. "My enemies reproach me all the day; and those who are mad against me have sworn against me. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up, and cast me down. My days are like a shadow that declines; and I am withered like grass."

Misery is enhanced by the cruel mockery of the ungodly. No compassion melts their hearts. They rather rejoice to aggravate the sufferer's woe. No comfort is found in natural refreshment. Bread is rejected, as unpalatable ashes, and tears are mingled with the cup. Again we hear that the days are as a fleeting shadow, and as the withered grass. The cause of this misery is the withdrawal of God's presence. The mercies once so dear are hidden in displeasure.

12. "But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and Your remembrance unto all *generations*."

But let the fear never intrude that there is variableness with God. He is unchangeable in all His attributes. There may be change in outward manifestations, but He ever lives, the eternal and immutable One. Let this thought be cherished constantly. Let it be as a companion ever walking by our side. Let our delighted gaze dwell on the eternal oneness of our God. His power and love endure forever. All generations shall give this testimony.

13-14. "You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

Apparently the scene now changes. A sorrowing individual disappears. An afflicted people becomes prominent. It is a sound conclusion, that the Psalmist was thus inspired, when signs announced Israel's near deliverance from distress. Her children had long wept under oppression's heavy hand; but now the set time of sorrow reached its close, and the set time of deliverance dawned. It is a blessed truth, that God works all things after the counsel of His own will. When He decrees the rescue, the tyrant's hand can no more fetter. Ardent longings had arisen that the temple should again be built. God who has power to move all hearts now awakened this desire. We know, also, that Israel's sons shall be recalled from their long dispersion. When we see growing anxiety to hasten their return, we trust that this awakening is heaven-born, and indicates that the set time is drawing near.

15-16. "So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."

The return of Israel, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the rising again of God's temple were grand events; and attracted worldwide attention. It was seen that the Lord's power was put forth to accomplish restoration. Heathen nations acknowledged God's hand, and viewed with awe His majesty. So again when Israel's glory is revived, it shall be admiration through the world. 17-22. *"He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the Lord beheld the earth. To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those who are appointed to death. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in*

Jerusalem. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."

At the appointed time, redoubled cries for aid were heard. Mercy spread rapid wings. Again the time draws near when the groanings of the dispersed shall grow more deep. Heaven will open wide to help, and God's praises shall again resound throughout Jerusalem.

23-24. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations."

This deliverance is wholly the Lord's work. Man's innate strength is as cradled infancy. The feeble pilgrim totters if not upheld. Appeal is made unto God. His never-failing power pervades all time. To trust in self is to lean on emptiness. To trust in the Lord is sure support. As He was in the beginning, so will He be forevermore.

25-28. "Of old You have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure; yes, all of them shall grow old like a garment; as a vesture You shall change them, and they shall be changed. But You are the same, and Your years shall have no end. The children of Your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You."

Bright and glorious is this conclusion. The Spirit teaches that this splendid picture exhibits the blessed Jesus. In the beginning the heavens and the earth were His work. When the consummation is complete, the scaffold shall be taken down, and this framework shall be laid aside as a decayed vest. But to Him no age shall come. Throughout eternity His redeemed shall praise Him and magnify His glorious name. Let us now learn the happy art. Let us go forth in lowly contemplation of dissolving nature, and hasten the day when Jesus shall appear arrayed in never-ending glory, and admired in all those who believe.

PSALM 103

As in the firmament one star differs from another star in glory, so this hymn shines with surpassing luster. Through a long course of years it has been especial comfort to the Church. May it be especial comfort to our hearts!

1-2. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits."

Praise is a plant of heavenly growth. It is the saint's choice garden of delights. Drowsy souls should be stirred up, and every faculty quickened to expend its language. Heaven is opened wide to pour down benefits. Every benefit should be received with adoration. Abundant crops of praise should spring from this abundant seed.

3-5. "Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

A throng of mercies crowd upon our view. Each presents large themes of praise. Who can bless God enough that He is ever ready to pardon—that He has provided a fountain in His dear Son's blood to wash out every iniquity. It is a soul-transporting truth that those who hide in the Savior's wounds are screened forever from His wrath. But the believer, though heir of forgiveness, is ever prone to fall into unhealthy malady. It is a true description, The whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint—from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is nothing in us but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. Can these diseases be all healed? Jesus is full remedy. He gives health and a cure. He is Jehovah-Rophi. To Him, also, we may bring every malady of our sickly frames. During His earthly ministry diseases fled before Him. As many as touched Him

were made perfectly whole. What an encouragement to bring all sickness to Him! He is Jesus still. Who can give thanks enough for redemption's wonders! It rescues us from destruction's grasp. It cries, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. Lovingkindness, also, and tender mercies exalt the believer to grand eminence. A crown is set upon his head, sparkling with glory. Rich supplies too of sustenance are abundantly provided. All things necessary to cheer and to invigorate enrich his board. Thus, though at times he may appear to droop, he revives, as an eagle, rising from its languishing to the freshness and vigor of its youth.

6-7. "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel."

He especially befriends His children, when oppressed by cruel foes. He stretches forth His hand to vindicate their cause. In His dealings with Moses and the children of Israel, He draws a chart in which His watchful guidance may be ever traced.

8-10. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

The Lord's tender dealings are here portrayed. It is Scripture's frequent testimony that He is rich in mercy, and that His mercy endures forever. Mercy looks upon our misery and flies to give alleviation. Grace, also, is its close comrade. It compassionates demerits. It brings the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover our unworthiness. We are quick to sin. But our God is long-suffering. He pauses and restrains due vengeance. The plenitude of His goodness outweighs the plenitude of our guilt. When He chides it is His strange work. The scourge is soon checked, and smiles of love dispel the frowns of wrath. Who can regard our mountains of mountains of iniquity, and not confess, We are undone. If God

should dispense strict justice to our sins, we perish. But in Christ Jesus free grace triumphs.

11-12. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Infinitude is borrowed to exemplify God's mercy. Immeasurable distance parts the heaven from earth, so God's mercy exceeds all bounds. Thought cannot conceive it. Words cannot express it. Ransomed souls are its main recipients. They are aptly described as filled with the reverential grace of fear. Infinite space again expresses the removal of our sins. No traversing steps can join the east to west. As we advance from the one the other constantly recedes. Let us bless the Holy Spirit for employing this image to teach how utterly the guilt of sin is cancelled.

13-14. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."

Sweet is the picture of paternal love. Compassion melts a father's breast. He speaks and acts in constant tenderness. But what is earthly feeling compared to the benevolence of a heavenly Father's heart! He knows, also, our every infirmity. By fellow-feeling Jesus sympathizes with weak humanity.

15-18. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and its place shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them."

This picture shows the frailty and instability of man. Enduring strength is not his property. Behold the grass of the meadow! The Word cries, "All flesh is grass." For a little moment it is green and

vigorous. But in a speck of time it is dried up and withered. Behold, also, the flower of the field! It presents a lovely form. But evanescent is its beauty! A biting wind arises. Its bright hues all fade. It disappears and leaves no trace. Its place is vacant. We may search, but it is gone. View now in contrast the mercy of our God! It is from everlasting to everlasting. It endures forever. No age can change its loveliness, or dim its beautiful smiles. So, also, His righteousness beams from generation to generation. Covenant love blesses His faithful people, whose delight is to be steadfast in His ways, and in whose thoughts His commandments have perpetual sway.

19. "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all."

Faith is invigorated by contemplating the sovereignty of God. In heaven He sits as King. His rule is unbounded over all the inhabitants of earth. What thought can be more cheering! What truth can give more solid support! How safe are they who shelter beneath His wings. They are kept as the very apple of His eye. Who can harm them? His sheep shall never perish, for who can pluck them out of His hands?

20-22. "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all His hosts; you ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul."

Let universal praise pervade all heaven and earth. Let all the angelic hosts, whose life is uninterrupted service, shout aloud. Marvelous powers are their inheritance. Let all be consecrated to one work. Theirs is the joy of hearkening to His voice. Let theirs be the joy of rendering blessing. Let all creation swell the strain. Throughout His realm let silence be unknown. O my soul, let noblest rapture emanate from you. Let loudest notes attest your love.

PSALM 104

A splendid picture is here exhibited of the greatness of God in creation and providence. Vows follow that the praises which are due shall be devoutly rendered.

1. "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honor and majesty."

A noble opening is herald to this hymn. Let us awaken our souls to render blessings unto Him whose blessing rests on all His works. Is He not worthy? Truly His greatness is unsearchable. What thought can estimate the honor and majesty which clothe Him!

2-3. "Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain; who lays the beams of His chambers in the waters; who makes the clouds His chariot; who walks upon the wings of the wind."

What mortal eye can look upon His glory! His robe is light. The sun in all its splendor pales in His presence. When He uplifts the light of His countenance the darkness of sin and ignorance and impurity flee away. Who can proclaim the habitation of His glory! The heavens enwrap it as a curtain. His chambers rest upon the waters above the firmament. When He comes forth as a mighty potentate, the rolling clouds are represented as His car of state. The mighty winds expand their wings to be His seat. Let the image be pondered. Enlargement only weakens.

4. "Who makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire."

Angels are intelligences created by His will. They are marvelously formed as spirits without outward frame. Swiftly do they fly to execute His purpose; brightly do they shine as kindled flames. Let

us give thanks that they are all created to do His pleasure, and to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.

5-9. "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hurried away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys to the place which You have founded for them. You have set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth."

Behold the earth, which is the work of His hands! He makes it to rest on solid foundations. No power can change its form or bring it to decay. Behold, also, the sea! It is His, and He made it. Imagination is encouraged to go forth and view all the waters at His command rushing into the basin prepared for them, and forming ocean's wide expanse. View, also, the boundaries by which it is encircled. His mighty voice curbs the wild billows, and says, "Thus far and no further."

10-18. "He sends the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man that He may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that makes glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted; where the birds make their nests; as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies."

Marvelous is the adaptation of all things to man's comfort. All who breathe the breath of life are objects of God's care. Do they thirst?

Springs of water give refreshing supply. Do they hunger? The earth is a table of sufficient food. Creatures untamed by man have also full provision. Branches are supplied on which the songsters of the air give melody. Pre-eminently man's comfort is the main care. There is provision made that his strength should be recruited, and that joy and gladness should sparkle on his brow. The Psalm commenced with, "Bless the Lord," and let us here pause, reiterating, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

19-22. "He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows his going down. You make darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God. The sun arises, they gather themselves together, and lay down in their dens."

The devout mind finds rich meal in reading nature's volume. The construction and maintenance of the world is a large field for thought to traverse. The firmament claims foremost admiration. In it two grand luminaries shine. The sun and moon rule the hours of work and rest. They know their appointed times. They move with regularity, ordering the division of day and night. The light restores recruited powers to toil. Darkness calls the wild beasts to their prey. The inhabitants of the forest are thus heaven's care. They rove in darkness, and in light seek rest.

23-24. "Man goes forth unto his work, and to his labor, until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are Your works! in wisdom have You made them all; the earth is full of Your riches."

Man is pre-eminent in heaven's plans. Creation's order subserves his needs and comforts. Who can ponder the arrangement without adoring the wisdom of God. High thought ordains nature's revolving course.

25-30. "So is this great and wide sea wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there

is that leviathan, whom You have made to play therein. These all wait upon You, that You may give them their food in due season. That You give them they gather; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth."

Not less marvelous are the provisions of the sea. On its bosom ships ride, transporting men and commerce from climate to climate. Within its depths innumerable creatures roam. Some boast gigantic form; others show the tiniest mold. All receive being from God. He wills, they live. He wills, they disappear. During their brief career all their nourishment is His bountiful gift. Abundance is the offspring of His power. In His open hand all support finds birth. Life and the means of living result from His sovereign will.

31-32. "The glory of the Lord shall endure forever; the Lord shall rejoice in His works. He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke."

These works have a loud voice proclaiming His glory, which shall last forever. But in addition to His love and tender care, they moreover prove that His power can frown terribly. At His bidding the trembling earth strikes the inhabitants with awe. The roar and flames of the volcano show that destructions move at His command.

33-35. "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord."

Heaven-kindled piety sums up the whole. The devout soul resolves that sweet meditation shall be its employ, and that joy in the Lord's work shall captivate the inner man. It looks onward to the time when sin shall no more mar the beauties of creation. Enraptured with the

thought, it again stirs up the soul to sing, and bless, and praise. But many view with unconcern these all-instructive scenes. The loveliness enchant not. The skill produces no amaze. They are as little moved as if they saw some random work or freaks of undirected change. Alas! what streams of joy flow by them untasted by their lips. They do not hear all nature's chorus hymning the Creator's praise. To them the new heavens and the new earth would bring no charms. Where did this blinded state come from? They do not know God. To know Him is to love His Word, His will, and all the wonders of His hand.

PSALM 105

An earnest call invites to universal praise. The story of God's dealings with His ancient people is used to quicken this hymn.

1-4. "O give thanks to the Lord; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the people. Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and His strength; seek His face evermore."

It is a blessed task to seek the Lord rejoicingly in praise. Supplications should be intermixed. Prayer should awaken praise, and praise enliven prayer. God's mighty deeds afford large scope. It should be incessant joy to recall His wonders, and to encircle them with outbursts of adoring hymns. Thus let us seek the Lord, and magnify His strength, and come into His presence.

5-7. "Remember His marvelous works that He has done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth; O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob His chosen. He is the Lord our God; His judgments are in all the earth."

Memory is a precious gift. It places past events in vivid light. Let our minds be as a well-written narrative of Israel's story. The especial call here is to the lineal seed of Abraham. But if we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. In His dealings with the fathers of the Church we may trace our interest in His care.

8-12. "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; which covenant He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant; saying, To you will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; when they were but a few men in number; yes, very few, and strangers in it."

In the plenitude of His grace He called Abraham from the land of idolatry to be the progenitor of a mighty nation. He blessed him with rich and large promises, and He solemnly confirmed the same to the son in whom his seed was called. He decreed that His covenant should endure from age to age. He especially declared that a lovely portion of this earth should be their abode; Free grace alone was the moving motive of this favor. At that time Abraham's household was but a little band, small and homeless. In the promised Canaan we may behold our heavenly rest. Let faith clasp the assurance that in due time this rest shall be our everlasting portion.

13-15. "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no man to do them wrong; yes, He reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm."

The early story shows them strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They wandered from place to place. They were regarded with jealousy by the potentates of this world. Constant perils threatened their destruction. But God was their shield. He permitted no violence to injure.

16-22. "Moreover, He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron; until the time that His word came; the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom."

They were cradled and nurtured in perilous providences. Famine oppressed them. A favorite son was carried as a slave to Egypt. He was immured in prison and shackled in galling chains. But he emerged to sit beside the monarch on his throne, and to guide the rulers with wise counsels. At every point in this story let us pause and marvel; but at no pause let praise be silent. For love to His chosen is preeminently shown. The sun at times might be obscured; but soon the rays resumed their power. Let, then, the truth delight our hearts, I have loved you with an everlasting love therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.

23-24. "Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies."

Constraining circumstances brought Jacob and his household into Egypt. Here God's smile crowned them with prosperity. Their numbers rapidly increased. The surrounding natives witnessed their growing power. Jealousy was quick to see where strength resided.

25. "He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants."

God allowed the vile passions to intensify. The king's heart was hardened and his eyes were blinded. He did not see the all-directing hand of God. Crafty schemes were devised to extirpate. Impiety strove by subtle arts to keep them low.

26. "He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen."

When God has a purpose to accomplish He raises suitable instruments. His work can never fail because means are insufficient. Is it not written, that of the very stones He can raise up children unto Abraham! So He called Moses and Aaron to their destined posts. They came forth fearless of the tyrant, and exhibited credentials that they were sent of heaven.

27-36. "They showed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against His word. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance in the chambers of their kings. He spoke, and there came different sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig-trees, and broke the trees of their coasts. He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and them without number, and ate up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength."

Terrible plagues afflicted the persecuting land. With appalling deeds God showed His wrath. The sun concealed its light. Darkness spread its thickest pall around. The trembling people sat in more than midnight gloom. The waters of their noble river flowed in blood and poison. All nature warred against them, and encircled them in hopeless ruin. Noisome reptiles filled their houses with distress. There was no escape. Herbage withered. The fruits of the field were blasted. Death entered into every dwelling, and loud cries bewailed the smitten first-born. God, who never lacks means to save, now sent forth instruments to destroy.

37-38. "He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them."

His chosen people left their bondage enriched with treasures and invigorated with health. Egypt, which had exulted in oppression, was more delighted to witness their departure.

39-45. "He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night. The people asked, and He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant. And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness; and gave them the lands of the heathen; and they inherited the labor of the people; that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws. Praise the Lord."

It is sweet profit to contemplate God's gracious care of Israel in the wilderness, and the power with which He planted them triumphant in the promised land. There can be no limits to the praise thus swelling in the heart. By day a cloudy covering was their screen; by night it brightened into a vast luminary. At their request fowls fell in abundance round the camp. Water from the smitten rock flowed for them. Not one word of promise failed.

Goodness and mercy followed their advancing steps, until they reaped the plenty of their promised home. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

PSALM 106

Praise opens and concludes this instructive Psalm. The context is dark in frightful displays of the rebellion and ingratitude of God's people. Bright manifestations of sparing and forgiving grace finally appear.

1-2. "Praise the Lord. O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all His praise?"

By precept and by example we should strive to awaken songs of thanksgiving. A glorious theme animates our minds. Goodness and mercy invite attention. This goodness is unsearchable. This mercy swells as an ocean without shore. Vain, then, are our utmost efforts to lift up adequate strains. If we possessed all the powers of all the angelic hosts, and all the tongues of all who ever breathed, and if they were expanded in one perpetual utterance, they could not measure the due expanse. But the more we strive the more we shall succeed.

3. "Blessed are those who keep judgment, and he who does righteousness at all times."

There is no blessedness apart from walking in the fear of God. Let our feet ever traverse this righteous path.

4-5. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear to Your people; O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance."

This aspiration is offspring of heaven. Let us ever look to God to raise us to this height of blessedness. The terms exhort us to fix our delighted gaze on the happiness of God's chosen. Salvation is their property. They realize the pledged enjoyment. But still the blessedness and glory of this inheritance exceed all thought. God, who gave the heirs of salvation to His dear Son, and who gave His Son for them, will with Him also freely give them all things. They are the true inheritors of earth. They soon shall be the inhabitants of celestial homes, and eternity will not exhaust their bliss.

6-7. "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."

This salvation springs from grace. No merit wins it. We are poor sinners, even as our fathers were. Look back to the deliverance from Egypt. All the tokens of love and tender compassion destroyed not the seeds of iniquity in the favored nation. Marvelously brought through the Red Sea, they showed proofs that evil still rankled in their hearts.

8-11. "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left."

Patience still endured. Mercy held back the arm of vengeance. Support and deliverance still magnified His glorious name. They were led safely through the depths of the sea. They were rescued from the cruelty of their enemies, while the returning waters overwhelmed the foes. Every child of Israel was saved; every child of Egypt died.

12-15. "Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

Such lovingkindness for a moment melted them; hymns of praise resounded. But their goodness was like the morning cloud, as the early dew it passed away. In the wilderness they murmured, because their lust for food was not indulged. They impiously tempted God.

He granted their desire, but the food in their mouths was impoverishment in their hearts.

16-18. "They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked."

They treated their appointed leaders with contempt, and scoffed at their authority. Terrible punishment ensued. The gaping earth swallowed up the rebels. Devouring flames consumed their substance.

19-22. "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea."

At Horeb they dethroned Jehovah, and exalted as their god the image of a calf. Their hearts relapsed into the idolatry of Egypt. The mighty wonders which marked their deliverance from that tyrannic sway were as a forgotten tale. Let us chide our souls to treasure up the memory of all His benefits.

23. "Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them."

God's patience had been tried to the extremest point. Just vengeance reared its head. But Moses interposed. He sought the Lord. He humbled himself in dust and ashes, and prayed that mercy might still be glorified. The prayer of faith is heard, and longer space is given to the rebellious host. Let us learn in faith to cry for others. Such sympathy is welcomed in the courts above. God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.

24-27. "Yes, they despised the pleasant land; they believed not His word; but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not to the voice of the Lord. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness; to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands."

Reports were brought of the luxuriant beauty of their future home. But incredulity derided, and haughty scoffs sneered. The promise which secured this great inheritance was treated as an empty word. We see an dreadful picture of the terrible evil which by nature depraves man's heart.

28-31. "They joined themselves also to Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions; and the plague broke in upon them. Then Phinehas stood up, and executed judgment; and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted to him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore."

The filthy pleasures of idolatry enticed them. They reveled in guilty scenes of impurity, and feasted on the idol-offerings. Unblushing iniquity shunned not the light. Phinehas in holy zeal rushed to vindicate God's honor. He hastened to deal extraordinary punishment. Thus he gave evidence that faith was the inhabitant of his heart. By this righteous act he obtained acknowledgment that he was a Spirit-taught believer. Let us be diligent to give evidence that faith is our living principle.

32-33. "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips."

When water failed again their provocation so exceeded that even the meek spirit of Moses was ruffled. He spoke in petulance, and for a moment yielded to temptation. Sin in God's most faithful servants is sin still, and calls for tokens of displeasure. Moses suffered keenly.

The decree went forth that his feet should never tread the longed-for Canaan.

34-39. "They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them; but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols; which were a snare to them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions."

Surely when they rested in all the comforts of their desired abode their walk would be undeviating obedience. Surely happiness and love would be the inhabitants of their dwellings. Alas! what is man? They spared the idolaters whom they were commanded to destroy. They intermingled with their services, and adopted their abominable vices. They devoted their own children to accursed devils. The blood of impious sacrifices stained their hands. No sin appalled them.

40-46. "Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

Many times He delivered them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry; and He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives."

Extraordinary judgments followed. Invaders subjugated their land. Oppressed, they cried again, and were delivered only to sin more.

47-48. "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks to Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise the Lord."

The result should stimulate us to be more diligent in prayer and praise. Let all within us cry, Save us, good Lord, and we will bless Your name. Dangers are always near. Sacred records warn us. Our experience confirms the truth. It is madness to hope for safety from our own vigilance or strength. They fall who trust in such unstable ground. Let our eyes be ever on the Lord, so shall we triumph in His praise.

PSALM 107

Exhortation to thanksgiving is the first note of this Psalm. Various motives follow. Man is exhibited in diverse straits and difficulties, and God appears in the plenitude of His grace.

1. "O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures forever."

Calls to thanksgiving cannot be too frequently renewed. Overflowing streams of mercy follow the redeemed during all their days. Each instance has a voice loudly crying, Give thanks, give praise. Let our heartstrings be strained to the utmost to lift up adoration.

2-3. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south."

Surely this will be the constant note of all who realize redemption. They once were in bondage to the power of darkness, but are

rescued by the mighty arm of Jesus. The Savior has shattered the scepter of their arch-enemy. He has opened their prison-doors, and has translated them into the kingdom of their God. Loud should be their present song. Soon shall they be gathered safely to their eternal home; and the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues shall upraise the universal Hallelujah!

4-9. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

This is a graphic description of wanderers and exiles. In it we see the children of Israel in their tedious journeyings; but it especially portrays the outcast condition in which the redeemed often mourn. Their souls are tossed on restless billows. They wander and stray. They long for repose, but they find it not. They are exposed to every peril. They require support, and know not how to obtain it. At last they turn to God, and direct their cries to Him. He speedily arises, and their difficulties vanish. Oh that the saints would feel that He is guiding them aright, and that soon their end will be welcome admission to the heaven of heavens! A new chorus follows; Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. All desires are satisfied. Goodness meets all cravings. God's wonder-working hand has strewn blessings around.

10-16. "Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High; Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there were

none to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder."

Forgetful of all God's goodness, His people are prone to scorn His counsels, and to rebel against His gracious authority. The sure consequence is due chastisement. The rejection of His easy yoke leads to the darkness of the prison-house, and to the shackles of the iron chains. But still there is hope. God lives, mighty to deliver; to Him they cry, and deliverance comes on speedy wings. Let the chorus sound again; Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. His people rejoice in liberty; the prison-gates are burst asunder; the bars of iron are shattered.

17-22. "Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted; their soul abhors all manner of food; and they draw near to the gates of death. Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing."

Senseless men will rush into transgression. Many afflictions follow. The wasted body rejects all nourishment. At last prayer revives, and prayer is a prevailing power. God's word, which commanded sickness, commands the return of health. Again the chorus sounds—again thanksgivings multiply; Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing. Let His altar be laden with utterances of adoring love. Thus let merited misery vanish in incense of pious joy.

23-27. "Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts its waves. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end."

One of nature's most astounding scenes here meets us. The sea is lashed into terrific fury. The staggering mariners are bewildered. Where did this terror come from? What is the cause of this dismay? The Lord sent forth His voice. The obedient billows reflect His will. They raise gigantic heads; they threaten to invade the highest heights of heaven. Again they descend, as if to search the lowest depths, and to penetrate into its deepest caverns. The affrighted mariners no longer can retain firm step. They tremble with the trembling ship, and no resources give relief.

28-32. "Then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm, so that its waves are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them to their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders."

God sits above the tempest's rage. To Him in their terror the shipmen cry. He never turns from prayer. He hears, and lulls the storm. Behold His mighty power! His will softens the raging lion into the gentle lamb. We are reminded of our Jesus in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He rebuked the winds and waves, and perfect calm ensued. The rejoicing mariners see God's wondrous hand, and reach in safety the haven which they sought. A sea of perils often threatens to engulf believers. But let them pray and trust. Their souls need fear no shipwreck. The glad chorus again sounds rapturously; Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in

the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of elders. Let them praise Him in the secret of their chambers; let them praise Him when His assembled people celebrate holy worship.

33-41. "He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of those who dwell there. He turns the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs. And there He makes the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; and sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. He blesses them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and does not allow their cattle to decrease. Again, they are diminished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. He pours contempt upon princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. Yet sets He the poor on high from affliction, and makes his families like a flock."

The earth sees vicissitudes of fertility and famine. The waters of the rivers cease. The verdant fields become a barren waste. Again the wilderness is fertilized by springs. The fields receive the seed. The grapes hang in clusters. The mightiest princes are brought low. The poor and needy are crowned with plenty. These wonders are wrought by God's hand. All things obey His word. They are recorded for our admonition.

42-43. "The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Whoever is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

God's people ponder these wondrous works. With joy and gladness they recognize His hand; while the wicked must hang down their heads in silence. Let God's dealings be our constant study. They give marvelous instruction. The crowning lesson is, that God is loving, faithful, true.

PSALM 108

The Psalmist professes immovable resolve to make praise his incessant joy. He prays for support against all opponents, and avows his confidence in full reply.

1-2. "O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early."

By nature the heart is fickle, roving, inconstant. What it seeks today, it shuns tomorrow. But grace brings a blessed change. All the affections are then firmly fixed on God. We love Him because He has first loved us. Love in the heart cannot but be praise on the lips. The tongue, which is man's glory, as his distinction from the brute creation, will be consecrated to Him. It is our glory when it gives glory to the Lord. Not the tongue only, but all means within our reach will be pressed into this service. From the earliest dawn praise will be heard. Returning consciousness shall resume the work.

3-4. "I will praise You, O Lord, among the people and I will sing praises to You among the nations. For Your mercy is great above the heavens, and Your truth reaches to the clouds."

Praise will not be limited to the retirement of the closet. It will sound aloud when pious congregations meet. From the lips of missionaries it will traverse distant lands. The theme is ever grand. Never can it weary. It tells of mercy which is higher than the heights above, and of truth which is as unassailable as the pinnacles of heaven.

5-6. "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; and Your glory above all the earth; that Your beloved may be delivered; save with Your right hand, and answer me."

No efforts can sufficiently exalt our God. When we have striven to our utmost power we have scarcely reached the borders of our theme. Let prayer, also, be intermingled. We should supplicate deliverance from every foe, and answers to our every cry.

7-10. "God has spoken in His holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?"

Faith remembers that a holy God has dealt out holy promises. These give abundance of unwavering assurance. The Psalmist looks around and sees what conquests he has obtained over surrounding cities and peoples. Thus he fears not though strong cities may yet remain in open defiance. He will reign in triumph over mightiest potentates.

11-13. "Will not You, O God, who have cast us off? and will not You, O God, go forth with our hosts? 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."

No fears should weaken. Faith is assured that God, who has given help, will help to the end. For a little time the enemy may seem to succeed. Brief is the appearance. Final victory is sure. But let there be no trust in an arm of flesh. Human policy and resolves are slender props. Man in his best estate is the shadow of a shade. But if God upholds, strong and valiant will be the arm, and triumphs will be near. Shall we not praise, and pray, and trust, knowing that the Lord of hosts is with us, and that omnipotence is our sword? Let faith go forth and behold the servants of the Lord doing valiant exploits in the Christian warfare, and marching over the necks of their enemies to the triumphant throne of glory.

PSALM 109

A terrible train of miseries awaits the enemies of our heavenly King. As each sorrow passes in review may we draw nearer to our blessed Lord, in whom alone there is shelter and peace.

1-5. "Hold not Your peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful, are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself to prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love."

We cannot doubt that the sufferings of Jesus are conspicuous in this psalm. The Holy Spirit distinctly exhibits Judas as the antitype of this dreadful description. We should regard it, moreover, as prophetic of the doom of all who raise the voice, and contrive plots against the gracious Savior. He appeals to His heavenly Father. He calls Him to observe the iniquity which encompassed Him. He complained of the cruel requital which His tender love experienced. He meekly adds, that while hatred was their life, His life was uninterrupted prayer. May every trial drive us to the mercy-seat!

6-20. "Set a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he has; and let the strangers spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy to him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be

blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that He may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his affections like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be to him as the garment which covers him, and for a belt by which he is girded continually. Let this be the reward of my adversaries from the Lord, and of those who speak evil against my soul."

It is fearful to contemplate these enumerated miseries! They terribly exhibit what sin deserves, and what just vengeance will inflict. Can we bless God enough if we have been rescued from such dreadful doom, and if the heart of enmity has been taken from us, and the heart of love and praise bestowed?

Such mercy is the gift of free and sovereign grace. Let us adore and praise.

21-29. "But do for me, O God the Lord, for Your name's sake; because Your mercy is good, deliver me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declines; I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh fails of fatness. I became also a reproach to them; when they looked upon me they shook their heads. Help me, O Lord my God; O save me according to Your mercy; that they may know that this is Your hand; that You, Lord, have done it. Let them curse, but bless You; when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let Your servant rejoice. Let my adversaries be clothed with shame; and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle."

The believer is deeply conscious of his weakness, misery, and need. All His strength resides in God. Unto God, therefore, incessant

prayer should speed. Saving grace puts forth its energy, and shows violent agony at the mercy-seat.

30-31. "I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yes, I will praise Him among the multitude. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

It is sweet relief to close this appalling psalm with the melody of thanksgiving. The presence of God is proclaimed as the heritage of His children. He ever stands at their right hand to deliver them from every foe. Blessed are the children of the blessed and ever blessing God.

PSALM 110

A magnificent display of the exaltation and sovereignty of Christ as High Priest of the Church is exhibited. It is delightful to study this glorious office. The contemplation tends to sanctify. May it mold us into heavenly likeness!

1. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool."

Let us give thanks for every revelation of Christ. We can only see Him as the Father by the Spirit shall withdraw the veil. But here we are invited to contemplate His glorious session at the right hand of all preeminence. There He wields the scepter of universal supremacy. In mad rebellion many foes defy; but they must lie prostrate at His feet. The word is everlasting truth. Those My enemies that do not want Me to reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me. When His chariot-wheels of triumph shall crush the enemies, may we shout loyally, Lo! this is our God; we have waited for Him; He will save us!

2. "The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion; rule You in the midst of Your enemies."

The all-conquering instrument of this triumph is the proclamation of His truth from Zion, the type of His Church. This word when applied by the Spirit rides gloriously. No sophistry of man can gainsay. The rock is softened, and the heart of enmity melts into love. Thus in the midst of enemies the omnipotence of His kingdom rules. May this weapon beat down every hostile feeling of rebellious nature. Let our constant desire be, 'Come in, You to whom we vow allegiance. Take to Yourself Your great power, and reign within us as ruler of every thought.'

3. "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; You have the dew of Your youth."

The Lord well knows His own. "They were Yours, and You gave them to Me." When He utters His attractive call they flock to Him on delighted wings. They swiftly fly as doves to their windows. Shining in the beauties of holiness, He attracts and captivates. His converts are innumerable, as the morning dewdrops of the lawn. They shall be multiplied as the sparkling gems which descend at dawn from heaven.

4. "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Endless glories adorn our blessed Lord. As He is our King, so, also, He is our Priest. The Father's oath invests Him as successor of Melchizedek. As our Priest He brings Himself the all-atoning victim to the altar of the cross. As our Priest He enters the Holy of Holies, and sprinkles the expiating blood. As our Priest He bears our names upon His heart. As our Priest He blesses us with all the blessings which heaven can bestow. Jesus, we adore You as our High Priest forever.

5-7. "The Lord at Your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up the head."

All the powers of heaven encircle His banner. Throughout the world His triumphs shall be known. Those who have raised the rebel-arm shall be ground to powder. In His all-glorious work sustaining refreshment shall cheer Him. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God. What brook can more invigorate the thirsty traveler? Streams of reviving joy are flowing by our side. The invitation has gone forth, Drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved!

PSALM 111

Praise is the one theme of this enrapturing Psalm. Various motives call to this homage. May they all excite response in our adoring hearts!

1. "Praise the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."

Praise is the tribute which never can be fully paid. Beginning in time, it will swell throughout eternity. Not only should our lips rejoice in this grace; we should exhort others to the godly exercise. Precept should enforce the duty; example should mark out the path. This praise should issue from hearts overflowing with grateful love. Shame on all meager utterance and all cold expression! The whole heart, with every affection, should be rapturously engaged. We should thus testify our love, not only in seasons of retirement, but publicly in the assemblies of the sanctuary.

2-4. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out by all those who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and glorious; and His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion."

Calls to praise exceed all number. The works of His hands ever supply matter. They are a treasure-house of wonders. They are worthy of our constant study. The more we discover, the more we shall find fullness of delight. As our pleasure expands, the more praise should blaze as a flaming torch. His works, also, are all worthy of Himself. They reflect the glory of His righteousness. This feature is indelibly stamped on all. As time rolls on these works endure. The remembrance of them has immortal life. From generation to generation they declare His essence, and testify that grace and tenderness ever flow from His throne.

5-6. "He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He has shown His people the power of His works, that He may give them the heritage of the heathen."

Ample provision satisfies the needs of His people. Tender care watches over them. In all this marvelous arrangement, these gracious dealings proclaim Him as our faithful Father. The everlasting covenant in Christ secures unfailing blessings. This covenant never can be broken. Therefore the stream of blessings never can be stopped. Special wonders were exhibited to His chosen people of old. The heathen were driven out, that His people might occupy the promised inheritance.

7-8. "The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."

The works of the Lord are echoes to the glories of His word. They are the accomplishment of His sure promises. They are bright mirrors in which we may read His verity and judgment. No power of

opposing foes can contravene His decrees. While we read His truth in all the wonders of His hand, let us abound more in grateful thanksgiving.

9-10. "He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; holy and reverend is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever."

The bright crown of His works is the redemption of His people. This is the substance of His everlasting covenant. It is our wisdom to regard with awe the marvels of His dealings. Let us fear and love. Let us love and praise.

PSALM 112

An exhortation to praise is the herald of this Psalm. The blessedness of God's children is then set forth. May its bright colors reveal more of the happiness of those who by the faith of Jesus compose this family!

1. "Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments."

Let it be our hearts' constant effort to revel in thanksgivings. The matter can never be exhausted. It is the seed of a luxuriant crop. Let its measure be commensurate. Let us praise God that He is the Father of a blessed family. The main lineaments are the same in every child. Filial fear is the common feature. They love their Father, and they tremble lest they should offend. They love their Father, and therefore they delight greatly in obedience to His word.

2-3. "His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endures forever."

The godly seed truly inherit the earth. It may be that gold and silver may not sparkle in their homes; but they are endowed with the treasures of peace and joy, compared with which earthly possessions are an empty show. The world may scorn them, but they are kings and priests unto God. Godliness is true greatness, which rust and moth destroy not, and spoilers cannot touch.

4-5. "Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness; He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man shows favor, and lends; he will guide his affairs with discretion."

The heirs of heaven are not exempt from days of gloom. Shadows come over them, and bright rays fade. Such discipline is often needed. It restrains the erring steps. It draws to God's presence. It quickens faith and prayer. But transient are these seasons. Light soon breaks forth, and God's love brightly reappears. Every grace, also, is the inhabitant of the believer's heart. Especially he regards tenderly the need of others, and is ever ready, as his means enable, to extend aid. His heart, also, is the abode of the truest wisdom. They are the fools who neither seek nor serve the Lord. This wisdom is conspicuous in every transaction. He who serves God will not err in his daily matters.

6-8. "Surely he shall not be moved forever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his enemies."

He stands immovable as a rock. His confidence is firmly settled on his God. He trembles not lest messengers should announce calamities. He knows that all events are ordered by his heavenly Father, and therefore that all things must work together for his good. He fears not lest his foes should gain advantage, and extinguish his remembrance upon earth.

9-10. "He has dispersed, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn shall be exalted with honor. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish."

While the righteous are thus blessed and exalted and glorified, there is a fearful counterpart. The ungodly see the issue. They writhe in anguish. Lord, give us our portion in the happy family of faith!

PSALM 113

Praise continues to be the happy theme. Contemplation of God's majesty and greatness and goodness tend largely to kindle this flame. Let us meditate until warmth glows and praise blazes within!

1-2. "Praise the Lord. Praise, O you servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore."

The servants of the Lord are addressed. They are called to their richest enjoyment. Those who serve the Lord prove how they love His service by ever telling the glories of His name. It is the constellation of His attributes, and each attribute presents a boundless ocean of delight. Praise, also, must be endless. Through endless being those who know and love Him will never cease to revel in this joy. Praise is as eternal as the love which kindles it.

3. "From the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised."

Is there a spot on earth which is not witness of God's goodness? Is there a region of the globe in which this homage should not abound? Is there a living being who is not a partaker of His tender mercies? Is there a mother's son who should not testify thanksgiving? From

east to west, from pole to pole, the constant sound should be adoring praise.

4-6. "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, who dwells on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!"

What is all the pride, and pomp, and pageantry of earth! All nations and all nations' greatness is a mere bauble when placed beside Him. What property is there which is not the gift of His sovereign hand? Behold His throne. It is high in the heaven of heavens. From it He looks down in condescension on angels and on men. The more we wonder that He thus should stoop, the more we should exalt Him with extolling lips.

7-9. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash-heap; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord."

God's gracious eye regards even the lowliest of men with providential care. Joseph rises from the dungeon to sit beside the King. David is exalted from the sheepfold to the throne of Israel. Sarah rejoices as the mother of him in whom the promised seed should come. Rachel and Hannah are filled with maternal joy. There is nothing too hard for our Lord to do. No gift is too good for His bounty to impart. "Praise the Lord" was the first note. "Praise the Lord" is now the last. "Praise the Lord" should be our utterance first, midst, and last in time and throughout eternity.

PSALM 114

The greatness and the glory of God are shown in His dealings with Israel. Let us joyfully remember that this God is our God forever and ever.

1-2. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion."

Grievous was Israel's slavery in the land of Egypt. They were oppressed by tyrants, aliens in blood and speech. Their history should remind us that when we were lost by sin God sent redemption through His beloved Son, and called us into the kingdom of liberty and grace. Israel thus delivered was raised to be a peculiar people. They were consecrated to the service of the Lord. They had His sanctuary and His laws, His temple and His ordinances. The priestly office solemnized its rites, and God was acknowledged as their King. So, also, we are no more our own. We are ransomed, that we may delight in His ordinances and serve Him as our rightful Lord.

3-4. "The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs."

When the set time of deliverance comes, no obstacles can check. The waters of the Red Sea seem to forbid escape from Egypt. The waters of Jordan seem to forbid entrance into Canaan. But at God's word they parted, and there was a dry passage for the hosts. Thus departure from perils was effected; thus entrance into the promised land was gained. Let faith take courage. The same power still works. The chosen seed shall depart in triumph from the captivity of Satan, and in triumph enter their eternal home. In Israel's march, also, astounding prodigies were shown. The strongest mountains trembled at God's presence and the gaping earth obeyed His mandates.

Mighty powers are arrayed in opposition to God's people; but when the Lord speaks, trembling and quaking shake their might. "Who are you, O great mountain; before Zerubbabel, you shall become a plain."

5-8. "What ailed you, O sea, that you fled? Jordan, that you were driven back? mountains, that you skipped like rams; and little hills, like lambs? Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; who turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters."

These marvelous interpositions were the direct acts of God. No natural causes produced these prodigies. This truth is enforced by lively questions addressed to inanimate objects. The presence of the Lord effected all. We next are reminded that providential care supplied their needs in the wilderness; the flinty rock melted, and streams in abundance flowed. These emblems teach that God's people shall have every need relieved. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Jacob will not forsake them." O Lord, be it unto us according to Your gracious word! Supply all our need, according to Your riches in glory by Christ Jesus!

PSALM 115

Man's utter nothingness is here acknowledged. In God alone all power resides. The idols of the heathen are the vanity of vanities. Let all confidence be placed in God!

1. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake."

Piety shudders at the thought of the assumption of any power by man. We cannot sink too low. We cannot raise our God too high. There is no depth from which we may not look up to Him. Let the

assurance be always ours that His mercy and His truth will certainly befriend.

2-3. "Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens; He has done whatever He has pleased."

Israel was often brought into heathen bondage. Insulting foes derided them as helpless, and tauntingly inquired, Where is their God? The reply was indisputable. God reigns on high. Heaven is His throne. His overruling hand moves everywhere. He works all things after the counsel of His own will.

4-8. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them."

What can be more contemptible than the idols of the heathen world! These images may be cased in silver and in gold. They may shine dazzlingly in the sight of prostrate crowds. But emptiness is their only property. Blind, deaf, motionless, speechless, they are less than nothing. Their worshipers are scarcely better. Where are the minds of those who kneel before the workmanship of their own hands? But while we pity such degraded folly, let us never forget that creature-worship is nature's religion. The love of silver and gold is innate idolatry of heart.

9-11. "O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield."

From a view of worthless idols, the exhortation gains force to trust in the ever-living God, who has all power in heaven and in earth. Let

all His people trust Him. Let all who fear Him trust Him. Especially let the ministers of His word be foremost in this holy confidence. The standard-bearers should precede the host. They have all cause to trust. He is ever ready and ever able to give help. His sure protection can never fail.

12-15. "The Lord has been mindful of us, He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great. The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children. You are blessed of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

The review of the past testifies of the ever-mindful hand of God. Each Ebenezer gives assurance that blessings will still incessantly descend. Though appearances may sometimes have an adverse look, yet from age to age generations of men shall rejoice under His gracious care. He has delivered us, and still delivers, and we trust that He will yet deliver us.

16-18. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth has He given to the children of men. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord."

While we continue inhabitants of earth our lips may praise the Lord, and lift up adorations to the heavens. But our life here may be very brief. Our opportunities may quickly pass. Lips mute in the grave can no more be heard on earth. Let us bear in mind, also, that dead souls on earth cannot have spiritual usefulness. Let us then pray, Quicken us, good Lord, more and more. The tribute of praise shall then respond in louder and holier notes.

PSALM 116

The heart of the Psalmist overflows with gratitude for extraordinary mercies. They all demand devoted praise. May the effect on us be increase of heavenlymindedness!

1-2. "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.

Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live."

Senseless is he who ever disregards the answer to the voice of prayer. These answers sweetly constrain us to love the gracious Lord, whose ears are never closed. Moreover, we are thus encouraged to grow more diligent in supplicating cries. The more we pray, the more we gain. The more we gain, the more should we love and adore.

3-4. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech you, deliver my soul."

Believers are often brought into the lowest depths of distress. Life seems as a flickering spark; but in all extremities prayer can seek aid and never seeks in vain.

5-6. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He helped me."

The God to whom we thus draw near is full of grace. Tender compassion is ever warm within Him. Experience of this truth is the believer's firmest prop. In frequent need he has never found that help to fail.

7-9. "Return to your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

Troubles may tend to bring anxiety; but the knowledge of near deliverance keeps peace undisturbed. Under Christ's shadow the soul delights in sweet repose. "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You." Can he be tossed with fears and doubts who rests in Christ as his ark? Where is the fear of death? It has vanished. A gracious hand, also, wipes away all tears from the eye; the feet, also, no longer totter, but walk firmly in the way of life.

10-14. "I believed, therefore have I spoken. I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people."

Faith is no silent grace. When it is lively in the heart the mouth will celebrate God's praise. Severity of affliction awakens its powers. It is not slow to confess that when it slumbered, hastiness and unseemly utterances found vent. In disregard of all assurances, pettishness prevailed; but the Psalmist in dark hours had thought that fulfillment would not come. But now he felt shame for such distrust. He remembers the holy rites; he vows that he will gladly drink the cup of blessing, and publicly redeem his promises of holy service.

15. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Persecution may wildly rage against God's servants. Their lives may be regarded as mere chaff; but different is God's estimate! They are precious in His sight and the high value placed upon them will be evidenced by the signal retribution which will overtake the cruel murderers.

16-19. "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord."

Happy is the profession, O Lord, truly I am Your servant! Consecration to God's service is perfect freedom. It is the very happiness of happiness, and raises to angelic life. But to abound in this occupation, Satan's chains must be broken. This only can be effected by the might of Jesus. We are born slaves. He only can set us free. This devotion, also, is a theme of praise and of holy vows. Let us surrender ourselves to this one work. We shall find that we obey a blessed Master, who will pay wages now of abundant happiness and of eternal life hereafter.

PSALM 117

This Psalm is brief, but who can estimate its unbounded preciousness? It was given by inspiration of God. May the Spirit use it to invigorate our grace!

1. "O praise the Lord, all you nations; praise Him, all you people."

Warm desire should swell in every heart that due praise to God should be as the surrounding atmosphere. Throughout the world no creature lives who is not daily laden with blessings from the Creator's hand. Sad it is that the blinded eye sees not the gracious Giver, and the silent lips give no acknowledgment. This thought should quicken missionary zeal. Warm should be our efforts to send the messengers of truth throughout the length and breadth of earth. The constant desire should be to tell of God's love in Jesus, and to invite to the cross. Hearty praise will then sound loudly from ransomed souls.

2. "For His merciful kindness is great toward us and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord."

The merciful kindness of the Lord is a boundless theme. We see it inscribed on all the works of creation. We see it shining in the glories of redemption. What could have been done more for His people that the Lord has not done for us? The great God, even Jesus, is our full salvation. There is pardon in His precious blood for every sin. There is a covering robe in His righteousness for every transgression. There is sanctification and renewal in His Spirit for our cold hearts. The cup of grace, of mercy, and of love truly overflows. It could scarcely hold another drop. The promises of the covenant are all yes and amen in Christ. Could God give more? Let, then, our grateful cry ever swell, Praise the Lord.

PSALM 118

A song of praise is here added to our stores. Motives to this exercise claim attention. In many portions Christ is distinctly seen. May He thus become dearer to our hearts!

1-4. "O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good; because His mercy endures forever. Let Israel now say, that His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that His mercy endures forever. Let those now who fear the Lord say, that His mercy endures forever."

Our sluggish hearts cannot be too thankful for exhortations to sing of mercy. All classes, all ranks should be incessantly earnest in this duty. Let God's ministering servants lead the hymn. Let all the company of believers respond, "His mercy endures forever."

5-7. "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do to me? The Lord takes my part with those who help me; therefore shall I see my desire upon those who hate me."

Faith hears Christ in these professions. He speaks not in His own person only, but as representing all His people. Let us, then, cast away all fear. God in Him and He in us is triumph over every foe.

8-12. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. All nations compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They surrounded me; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them."

To trust in the Lord is help and victory. To trust in man is to walk on a quicksand. May the Lord raise us above such folly! Our great Head here testifies for Himself and for His followers, that though His enemies might be countless in number and terrible in sting, they must vanish before the presence of the Lord.

13-16. "You have thrust sore at me, that I might fall; but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and has become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

We should be grateful for these precious assurances. Mighty, indeed, is our main adversary, but he is as nothing before the Lord. In our God we have all strength and all salvation. His right hand will fight mightily and triumphantly in our behalf. Thus the voice of thanksgiving shall be heard in our homes.

17-21. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sore; but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord; this gate of the Lord, into which the

righteous shall enter. I will praise You; for You have heard me, and have become my salvation."

We are again warned that, though our feet stand on the rock of salvation, we are not beyond the reach of trials. But let nothing shake our confidence. The praises of the Lord shall yet be our song.

22-24. "The stone which the builders refused has become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Christ is again manifest. He has been, and He still is, the despised and rejected of men. But He is the foundation on which His Church rests, and the ornament of the beautiful fabric. It was a glorious day when, rising from the dead, He was displayed as the Son of God. It is indeed to each believer a glorious day when He shines in their hearts as all their salvation.

25-29. "Save now, I beseech You, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech You, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord, who has shown us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures forever."

Shall we not bless Him who comes in the name of the Lord? Shall we not bring our hearts and souls as a willing sacrifice to Him? While we live let us bless and serve Him. This will be our glad occupation throughout eternity. Let the song now begin which never can conclude, "His mercy endures forever."

PSALM 119

1. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

Here is a glowing picture of the pious heart. Here is the inner life of those who sit on the high eminence of blessedness, and rank among the blessed of the Lord. The question cannot be repressed, Who are they to whom such dignity belongs? The clear reply here meets us, They are the undefiled in the way; they walk in the law of the Lord. It is a solemn truth, that the path of life is through a miry road. Our steps are in pollution's land. How, then, can our feet be undefiled! How can our garments be unsullied! We cannot guide ourselves. Unaided, we stumble into sloughs of defilement. But all help is near. Jesus is at hand to keep us by His mighty power. Let us lean on His supporting arm at every step, and when we fall let us rise and wash our robes in His all-cleansing blood. So may we ever be among the undefiled in the way; and let the law of the Lord, lovely in purity, glorious in holiness, perfect in love, be the path in which our feet advance. Jesus is our model and our all. God's law was in His heart; He was its living portrait.

2. "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, and who seek Him with the whole heart."

Again, we learn that holiness is blessedness. Let our constant prayer grow stronger, Lord, what will You have us to do? The reply is, Study the testimonies. They speak from heaven, loud as the thunder, clear as the light, sweet as the celestial songs. Let us thus seek His will, with our whole hearts united in the one pursuit.

3. "They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways."

The blessed cannot consent to evil. They flee the downward path. They shun it with extreme abhorrence. Their hearts entirely love the

heavenward way. They cling to it with undeviating tread. Their onward progress is always upward. Thus they advance in happiness towards heaven.

4. "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently."

He who desires our good at all times issues with authority His sovereign commands. They enjoin us to adhere with diligence to the tract which His Word marks out. In strict obedience is real and unfailing happiness. To obey is heaven begun.

5. "Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!"

But when the heart is willing the flesh is weak. Proneness to err still threatens to mislead. Hence incessant desires besiege Heaven that directing grace may ever guide aright.

6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all Your commandments."

Shame and confusion are the wages of those who disregard God's will. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. If our hearts condemn us not, we shall lift up our heads in joy.

7. "I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments."

The blessed man is ever a pupil in God's school. He desires to learn the ways of righteousness. Thus upright praises will ever flow from his lips.

8. "I will keep Your statutes; O forsake me not utterly."

Firm are his resolves, but he well knows that utter weakness may consist with strong desires. Experience has taught that when we

would do good evil is present. He knows that real strength is heaven-born; therefore earnest cries implore that God at all times would uphold graciously. He hates putting away.

9. "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word."

Peculiar temptations plot against the young. Passions are strong; experience is weak. Satan assails with unremitting ardor. But still there is escape. Abundant records speak of holy youths. They have pursued one course. God's Word has been their compass. By this guidance they have diligently steered through all the waves of peril.

10. "With my whole heart have I sought You; O let me not wander from Your commandments."

Sincerity is here avowed. Blessed are those who can thus truly appeal to God. May our conscience ever bear witness that no portion of the heart has been given to ungodly ways! But still God's help is asked, that the way may be so hedged up that no outlet to forbidden paths may be found. We may run well and yet may stumble.

11. "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

It is a precious truth that God's Word is a sure antidote to sin. If this is treasured in the heart, if it stands as a guard before the portals, evil cannot enter. May we ever be thus garrisoned!

12. "Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes."

The blessed man will ever bless and ever pray. His constant cry will be, Send out Your light and Your truth, that they may lead me.

13. "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth."

He will learn that he may teach. His heart, filled with the Word, will overflow and fertilize all who are within his reach.

14. "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches."

The Word is a bright sunbeam in the soul. Riches do not so much exhilarate the worldling as the revelation of God's ways delight and gladden the blessed man.

1. "*I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect to Your ways.*" Holy meditation exalts above the world. The precepts are a perpetual feast.
2. "*I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.*"

Do we seek happiness? It is to be found in constantly pondering the Word and will of God. It is a blessed resolve; Your Word shall not depart out of the precincts of my memory.

1. "*Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.*" We may humbly ask continuance of earthly life, if our desire is that as mirrors we may reflect the Word. Oh that we might live as a transcript of the heavenly will, and thus be followers of God as dear children!
2. "*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.*"

Lovely light may beam upon us, and wondrous scenes surround; but the gain is none if sightless eyes survey. By nature we are thus blind; unless God grants sight, we cannot behold the wonders which His law contains. Let us weary heaven with cries for enlightening grace. When the command goes forth, Let there be light, there will be light.

19. "*I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Your commandments from me.*" Here we are pilgrims in a foreign land. As such we need guidance. God's

Word will show the right path and keep us in it. Let us pray that this word may brightly illumine our way. If we walk in darkness, it is because we do not see the light.

20. "My soul breaks for the longing that it has for Your judgments at all times."

Weak and wavering desires should be utterly eschewed. The true child of God so longs for the precious Word, that his soul seems scarcely able to contain the swelling feeling. Unless the presence of God's Word relieves, he can scarcely live.

21. "You have rebuked the proud who are cursed, who err from Your commandments."

We have heard who are the blessed. We have now the portrait of the cursed. They proudly wander from the everlasting way. Their straying feet rush to destruction. God's rebuke descends, and the rebuke is ruin.

22. "Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Your testimonies."

The pious are generally regarded with scorn in this fallen world. It is a grievous trial. When we are conscious that contempt is incurred by adhering to God's Word, we may humbly pray for its removal.

23. "Princes also sat and spoke against me; but Your servant meditated on Your statutes."

Men of exalted rank too often slander the servants of the Lord. But a sweet refuge is always near in meditation on the glorious law. They will not hear nor heed whose souls are thus engaged.

24. "Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors."

Such meditation is most precious. It is a boundless expanse of happiness. It is a treasury of counsels to guide throughout life's course. May we be thus happy and thus wise!

25. "My soul cleaves to the dust; quicken me according to Your word."

The soul by nature rises not to heaven; unaided from on high it grovels in the mire of earth. Hence the wisdom of constant prayer, that spiritual life may expand wings for upward flight. Many promises give prospect of success.

26. "I have declared my ways, and You heard me; teach me Your statutes."

Having deep experience of the success of prayer, let us keep nothing back from God. He will hear, and heavenly lessons will be granted.

27. "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I talk of Your wondrous works."

Our desire for intelligence in God's precepts cannot be too earnest. When thus enlightened we shall not be mute. Delighted converse will tell the dealings of Him whose name is Wonderful.

28. "My soul melts for heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word."

Periods recur when the soul is heavy laden. When thus powerless, strength should be implored in accordance with the sure promises of God.

29. "Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me Your law graciously."

Grievous evidence of the fall is seen in the tendency to misrepresent and to deceive. The devil was a liar from the beginning; and his progeny inherits his propensities. Let us strive to be the followers of Him who is emphatically the truth. For this purpose let us pray that God would write His law of uprightness on our hearts.

30. "I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments have I laid before me."

False ways will indeed be eschewed by the blessed man. The way of truth will be his deliberate choice. God's judgments will be the desired path. Let us not, however, forget that in ourselves we are weak to execute these good resolves.

1. "*I have stuck to Your testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame.*"
2. "*I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.*"

With clinging hands the testimonies will be grasped. The disgrace of straying will be dreaded. Prayer will be made for deliverance from such shame.

The narrowness of the contracted heart forbids expanse. Encumbered affections cannot mount; therefore earnest prayer is made that the entangling chains may be removed, and freedom granted to run nimbly up the blessed road.

33. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end."

The believer, conscious of ignorance, ever seeks divine instruction. He knows that the page of Scripture is obscure unless heavenly light shines on it. Therefore constant is his prayer, and constant his resolve to persevere unto the end.

34. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Repeated prayer wrestles for an understanding heart. Resolution is declared that the law shall be cherished with undivided affection.

35. "Make me to go in the path of Your commandments; for therein do I delight."

Prayer again wrestles for strict adherence to the holy path. It is the way of pleasantness; every step abounds in delights.

36. "Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness."

Without a restraining hand the heart is prone to turn aside into the byways of petty love of self. The remedy must be from above. Heavenly aid is therefore sought.

37. "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."

The world abounds with sights of emptiness, frivolity, and folly. Eyes are enticed to gaze; there is danger in the very sight. Let prayer be made that the eyes may not behold, and that quickened steps may ascend Zion's hill.

38. "Establish Your word to Your servant, who is devoted to Your fear."

It is happiness to have the Word firmly rooted in the heart. This blessed state will be the desire of those who are jealously apprehensive of straying from the gospel-rule.

39. "Turn away my reproach which I fear; for Your judgments are good."

It is a reproach to wander. The godly man will dread this shame. He knows how excellent the ways of God are, and he prays that he may never incur the dishonor of disobedience.

40. "Behold, I have longed for Your precepts; quicken me in Your righteousness."

Deep desire for entire sanctification is here expressed; prayer is made that the Spirit of the Lord would animate the pursuit of righteousness. May we thus ever strive! We shall succeed, and great will be our gain.

41. "Let Your mercies come also to me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your word."

This prayer is a cup filled to the brim. A multitude of tender mercies stand always ready to issue from the courts above. These mercies assure of salvation from the penalties and power of sin, and of welcome to the joys of heaven. These mercies are our promised heritage. How should we wrestle until they fill us to overflowing!

42. "So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me; for I trust in Your word."

When the heart realizes assured salvation, it is supplied with abundant answers to those who sneer at the delights of faith.

43. "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in Your judgments."

Assurance only lives while God maintains it. Fears will intrude lest the truth should languish on our lips. Hope sees the declarations of the Lord, and looks upward.

44. "So shall I keep Your law continually, forever and ever."

There is rich comfort in the confidence that divine grace will enable us to persevere. The end is seen. Bright is the deliverance.

45. "And I will walk at liberty; for I seek Your precepts."

All restraining shackles shall be cast off. The believer will freely walk in diligent pursuit of truth.

46. "I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

No array of earthly power will intimidate the man of God. Strong in the Lord, he will boldly wave the standard of salvation.

47. "And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I have loved."

Who can fail to see the believer's happy state? The paths of holiness are pleasantness and peace. The law reigns in the heart, and love delights in sanctified obedience.

48. "My hands also will I lift up to Your commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in Your statutes."

He will give open testimony of his entire surrender to the ways of the Lord, and his mind will revel in holy meditation. Here the soul finds repose. This is the ecstasy of life.

49. "Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."

The Spirit in tender love sometimes applies a word of Scripture with especial power to the heart. Hope grasps it, feasts upon it, and sweetly reposes. We may in faith bring such texts unto the mercy-seat, and crave their fulfillment. "Do as You have said."

50. "This is my comfort in my affliction; for Your word has quickened me."

Many are the afflictions of the righteous; many, also, are their consolations. Especially sweet are the comforts flowing from the Word. Life thus quickened will be sustained.

51. "The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from Your law."

Haughty men may scorn and deride. Ridicule shakes not the confidence which the Word has inspired. Can man pull down what God has built up?

52. "I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself."

It is a profitable lesson to ponder God's righteous dealings. The history of the Church is a precious volume. It shows the overthrow of the wicked and constant security of the righteous. Deep streams of comfort flow in these channels.

53. "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked who forsake Your law."

How frightful is the sight of the ungodly trampling on God's precious Word! Who can contemplate the issue without fearful trembling!

54. "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Zion's pilgrims are not always downcast. They realize absence from home; but in the cheering prospect of return they know joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

55. "I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your law."

If in the night sleepless hours are appointed, let memory be alert to ponder the wonders involved in the Lord's name. The resolve will thus be quickened to cling tightly to His law.

56. "This I had, because I kept Your precepts."

This rich gain springs from keeping His commandments. May they ever be the treasure of our hearts, the path of our steps, and our exceeding comfort!

57. "You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words."

Rich, indeed, is the believer. He has the Lord for his portion. He can say, All things are mine, for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's. The kingdom into which he is translated has statutes. He loves them, and delights to cleave most closely to them.

58. "I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word."

With earnest sincerity the heart seeks that heavenly favor may never cease to bless. Mercy is abundantly promised, and mercy may be sought with undoubting confidence that it will smile abundantly.

59. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies."

No inconsiderate step should ever be allowed; a rash movement may plunge into inextricable straits. The feet should be diligently turned to the narrow way of life. Vigilance should never be relaxed.

60. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments."

Loitering in the Christian course is perilous. Onward, onward should be the constant cry. Lot's wife paused, and then looked back, and perished. Let us lay aside every weight and run unweariedly in the way which love and wisdom have enjoined.

61. "The bands of the wicked have robbed me; but I have not forgotten Your law."

The godly may be called to bear the spoiling of their temporal goods. But they have riches which no robber's hands can touch. The Word is a treasure in which they daily meditate, with no fear of loss.

62. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous judgments."

When sleep fast locked the eyes of others, the Psalmist leaves his bed. He is intent to utter praises. God's righteous judgments call for joyful notice. Thanksgiving is repose of the heart.

63. "I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts."

The sincerity of grace is evidenced by the choice of associates. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Light has no fellowship with darkness. The feet cannot at the same time be set in the narrow and in the broad way. Those who fear God delight in pious fellowship.

64. "The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy; teach me Your statutes."

The whole creation has a voice loudly proclaiming that good and gracious is the Lord. Every object reflects tender care. Let us seek enlarged knowledge of His works, so will His ways be our delight. Increased illumination will gladden the meditating heart. Advance in knowledge will be advance in joy.

65. "You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according unto Your word."

Where is the believer who can restrain this rapturous acknowledgment! Touched by divine grace he feels that God's goodness baffles all thought. He knows that our God has given largely like a God. All the provisions of the Covenant are bountifully poured into his lap.

66. "Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed Your commandments."

The soul is athirst for brighter rays of light and knowledge. Faith is confessed to be the happy inhabitant of the heart; and the constant cry is, Give large increase. Faith has sweet skill in pleading.

67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Your word."

Afflictions are often charged to do good work. Their commission is mercy. A thin disguise conceals a friendly form. They check the wanderers and bring them back. In the time of suffering they may be bitter, but in retrospect they are sweet. They lead to holiness, and holiness is joy.

68. "You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes."

The believer delights in contemplation of his God. Every view discovers goodness. This is inscribed on all His dealings. Hence the

longing desire for more acquaintance with His statutes. To know His law is to know Himself.

69. "The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart."

Lying witnesses were obtained to bring false charges against Jesus. If the Head was thus slandered, shall the members escape? But these arch devices are all vain. They lead to closer adherence to God's Word.

70. "Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in Your law."

Their heart swells with pride, and becomes impervious to tender impression. Prosperity often exerts benumbing influence. No sense of sin—no self-abhorrence is its fruit. But there is a lovely contrast. In the believer the contrite heart loathes self-satisfaction, and finds no joy but in clinging to the law of God.

71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes."

Corrupt nature needs the frequent scourge. The present smart may be severe, but the resulting benefit is more than compensation for the pain. Satisfaction makes rich amends for the sorrows which preceded it. Let not our frowns then meet affliction.

72. "The law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

True is the testimony that the Word of the Lord is more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold. This treasure is in our hands. May the Spirit write its contents on our hearts! God's law inscribed there is everlasting wealth.

73. "Your hands have made me, and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments."

Appeal is made to God as our Creator. Every faculty of mind and body is the offspring of His sovereign will. Therefore He who gives our every power is implored to increase spiritual intelligence. In His school blessed lessons are learned.

74. "Those who do not fear will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your word."

Our course should be so free from ambiguity that it may be evident on what foundation our hopes are built. When those who fear the Lord distinctly see that all our expectations are from Him, they will rejoice in our godly communion.

75. "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me."

When afflictions oppress us it is well to remember the smiting hand. Correction is ordered in the Covenant for us. God in these trials acts in accordance with most holy righteousness.

76. "Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant."

We often need strong consolation. A rich store is laid up for us in our God. To Him let us draw near and pray that all His promises to us in Christ Jesus may be our rich enjoyment.

77. "Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight."

Tender mercy can prolong our days; but continued life should only be desired in submission to God's will, and for the furtherance of His

glory. Such will be our desire when our delight is to follow His law as our one rule.

78. "Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause; but I will meditate on Your precepts."

Confusion will overwhelm the perverse adversaries. Their persecution is without cause. Harmless will be all their rage when the mind retires into the secret places of holy meditation.

79. "Let those who do not fear turn to me, and those who have known Your testimonies."

The man of God delights only in the fellowship of those who are fellow-servants of His God. They are described as fearing God and intelligently keeping His testimonies. Prayer is made that such may cheer him by their company.

80. "Let my heart be sound in Your statutes, that I may not be ashamed."

Let us ever be watchful over the treachery of our hearts. They are prone to nurture unwholesome desires. But deviation from God's law brings shame. Let us shun it as sure misery. Holiness may boldly raise the head.

1. *"My soul faints for Your salvation; but I hope in Your word."* Intense was the Psalmist's desire to realize an interest in God's salvation. Through anxiety he fails in strength, as a deer panting for the waterbrooks. But in weakness hope cheered him. Let us strive for an increase of this precious grace. It will gladden and sustain us.
2. *"My eyes fail for Your word, saying, When will You comfort me?"*

If comforts seem to tarry long, the eye strained by constant looking becomes weak. Earnest cries wrestle with God for His restoring presence. The sigh is heard, How long shall trouble last? When will Your comforts again revive me?

83. "I am shriveled like a wineskin in the smoke, exhausted with waiting. But I cling to your principles and obey them"

Under the grievous pressure of this trial, the bodily appearance manifests distress. The shriveled skin loses all sign of moisture. It is dried like a leather vessel in the smoke. But grace still lives and feasts on the banquet of God's word.

84. "How many are the days of Your servant? when will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?"

It is sad when impatient peevishness frets. May the gracious Lord preserve us from such weakness. Under its influence cessation of life is desired; vengeance calls for wrath on the head of persecutors. This is our infirmity. May the Lord pardon it and tear it from our hearts.

85. "The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your law."

Haughty persecutors may plot evil against the Lord's followers. Such conduct is enmity to His law. Assuredly it will end in misery.

86. "All Your commandments are faithful; they persecute me wrongfully; help me."

In such trial it is sweet relief to remember that God is true. According to the faithful Word, help will be given, and the persecutors perish in their wickedness.

87. "They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts."

At times their cruel plans seem to border on success. Let not the righteous be dismayed. Let the Word be remembered which can never fail.

88. "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth."

Let prayer be made that God, in the multitude of His lovingkindness, would infuse new life into our drooping hearts. Then upright walking in the Lord's ways will not flag.

89. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven."

Before the foundations of the world, the purposes of God were firmly settled. As He is stable and immutable, so they cannot change. Therefore floods of peace and trust pervade the believer's heart. Every event flies on the winds of eternal decree.

90. "Your faithfulness is to all generations; You have established the earth, and it abides."

From age to age God's faithfulness shines in unfading brightness. The earth abides in accordance with original design. There is no interruption in its progress. It pursues the course of immutability.

91. "They continue this day according to your ordinances; for all are Your servants."

The course of nature undergoes no departure from primeval will. All things act out the great Creator's plan. His word commands perpetual obedience.

92. "Unless Your law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction."

Afflictions often threaten to overwhelm. Billows upon billows go over the sinking head. But the immutable Word is grasped, and it is found to be a never-failing plank.

93. "I will never forget Your precepts; for with them You have quickened me."

It is our highest wisdom tightly to grasp the Word. Let us set its precepts continually before our eyes. They are life-giving and life-sustaining. Let us enshrine them in our memories.

94. "I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts."

It is a happy moment when the believer can appeal to God, I am Yours. You have called me, and I have obeyed. You have quickened me, and I live to You. All my desire is to know and obey Your will. Therefore I cry to You for aid; save me, for I am Your servant.

95. "The wicked have waited for me to destroy me but I will consider Your testimonies."

I have indeed many foes. Plots are laid for my destruction. But I will not fear. The assurances of Your Word sustain me.

96. "I have seen an end of all perfection; but Your commandment is exceeding broad."

Many objects are full of wonder. They excite admiration. But their beauty is not durable; it quickly fades away. But the glory of God's law suffers no eclipse. The more we ponder, the more cause shall we find for trust and praise.

97. "O how I love Your law! it is my meditation all the day."

Mark the profession of the blessed man. Every affection goes forth in admiration of the law. It is his constant delight. At every moment of the day his heart lovingly feasts on it.

98. "You, through Your commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me."

Where can true wisdom be found but in the counsels of the all-wise and only-wise God! His name and His word are emphatic wisdom. They are the perfection of intelligence. They ever fill the believer's heart. Thus his foes appear as fools before him.

99. "I have more understanding than all my teachers for Your testimonies are my meditation."

The world professes to have schools of sage instruction; but the poorest believer, enlightened by the Spirit, is wiser than this boasted wisdom. God's testimonies are his meditation. Here he derives celestial understanding.

100. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts."

The lowliest man who has the Bible in his heart knows more than the sage philosophers of old. True wisdom is acquired in the path of heavenly precepts.

101. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your word."

The blessed man maintains an undeviating course of godliness. Let us diligently mark the perilous way of evil. Let us flee from it as from a pitfall. So shall we keep the path of safety and pure joy.

102. "I have not departed from Your judgments; for You have taught me."

Unless we are apt pupils in God's school we shall not clearly see the heavenward road, and quickly shall we be beguiled by error's snares. It is a happy profession, You have taught me. It may be added, Therefore I am above the reach of harm.

103. "How sweet are Your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Those who make the law their constant feast find in it delicious relish. The heart is more refreshed than the palate can be by the sweetest luxury that nature knows.

104. "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."

It is a solid truth that understanding is obtained by diligent adherence to God's precepts. The sure result is hatred of all false ways. May the Lord teach us, and cause us to walk in truth!

105. "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Our path is often through a cloudy land. Safe guidance is provided in the Word. Those who hold this lamp shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. It will lead to the home in which there is no need of the sun or of the moon to lighten, but the Lord is the light thereof.

106. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments."

All means should be employed to bind us to unbroken obedience. The vows by which we are consecrated to God's service should stand as a barrier against every straying step. God's covenant of grace is confirmed by oath. Thus, also, should our holy walk be ratified.

107. "I am afflicted very much; quicken me, O Lord, according to Your word."

When afflictions press heavily, the surest relief arises from earnest prayer. Let our petition be for insight into the life-imparting Word.

108. "Accept, I beseech You, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me Your judgments."

We should present ourselves, our every faculty and power as a whole burnt-offering to the Lord. But especially, we should bring the calves of our lips. The sacrifice of prayer and praise should never cease. May the Lord of His free grace accept our service! May it be perfumed by the incense of Christ's blood! In this exercise may we advance in heavenly knowledge!

109. "My soul is continually in my hand; yet I do not forget Your law."

The believer counts not his life dear to himself, so that he may finish his course with joy. He is always in the very jaws of death. He lives with wings outstretched to fly away. Paul testified; I die daily. In the extremity of persecution, the fervent desire was to know what God would have him to do.

110. "The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from Your precepts."

No plots of the ungodly can compel deviation from God's law. The right way may seem to be beset with perils, but let it be resolutely chosen. Its end is happiness and peace.

111. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart."

The possession of God's truth is an inalienable treasure. It enriches with possessions which never can decay, and which no spoiler can remove. It fills with joy unspeakable. It leads to endless glory.

112. "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even to the end."

It is true that God only can incline the heart, but when He works converting change, adherence to God's will seems to be easy service. It becomes the spontaneous effort of the mind. May we thus find that obedience is our ready pathway to the glorious end, which has no end.

113. "I hate vain thoughts; but I love Your law."

Universal is the corruption implanted by the fall. Every imagination is prone to evil continually. The believer is conscious of this, and deeply bewails. The vanity of his thoughts is regarded with intense hatred. His real love is given to the pure Word.

114. "You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word."

The believer has a high fortress in his God. He flees to this hiding-place, and is safe. When the arrows of the foe unsparingly assail, he finds protection under the shield of God. He faints not, for his hope in God is firm.

115. "Depart from me, you evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

The presence of evil men gives intense distress. The believer strives to keep far apart, and to give himself wholly to the works of godliness.

116. "Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope."

Our natural strength is utter feebleness. Unless upheld by a heavenly arm, we cannot but fall. But we may plead the promises. In this way we continue in lively frame. Thus the head looks up in holy confidence.

117. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect to Your statutes continually."

There is no safety unless the Lord extends support. May our strength be thus supplied! This help will secure adherence to God's statutes.

118. "You have trodden down all those who err from Your statutes; for their deceit is falsehood."

They cannot escape ruin who wander in devious paths. Divine vengeance is in their rear. They will soon be trampled into perdition. Deceit and falsehood have been their course. The end is misery.

119. "You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love Your testimonies."

Utterly worthless are the wicked. They are lighter than the worthless chaff. The Lord will drive them away. They will no more be seen. They are the blessed who take His testimonies for their enriching treasure.

120. "My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments."

Who can think of the majesty and glory of God, and not lie low in reverential awe! The contemplation of His righteous judgments is an appalling sight, for an angry God is a consuming fire. Blessed are those who are sheltered in Christ Jesus.

1. "*I have done judgment and justice; leave me not to my oppressors.*" Happy is the conscience which can testify of

sincere effort to act uprightly. Such walk leads to protection. Divine grace will uphold. Then the prayer may truly go forth, Leave me not to oppression, I have striven never to oppress.

2. *"Be surety for Your servant for good; let not the proud oppress me."*

In the provisions of grace God is engaged to uphold His servants, to avert evil, and to rescue them from oppression. Let the humble go forth pleading, Deal with me according to the everlasting Covenant.

123. "My eyes fail for Your salvation, and for the word of Your righteousness."

Believers long with intense desire to realize the joys of salvation. Their eyes are strained in looking for the shining of God's righteous word upon their hearts.

124. "Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes."

In deep confession of misery, faith looks for help only from God's mercy. This mercy never fails. It has no bounds. It never can be sought in vain. Its work is to guide safely in the way of heavenly statutes.

125. "I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies."

It is happiness to draw near to God with humble profession, that He is the Lord to whose service we are willingly consecrated. This is a good plea for light from heaven to direct our paths.

126. "It is time for You, Lord, to work; for they have made void Your law."

When iniquity abounds, and God's law is utterly despised, the time has come for God to arise, and to maintain His own cause. Let us give Him no rest until He banishes all evil.

127. "Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold."

What are all the treasures of earth, compared with the precious Word of God!

The believer knows its value, and he regards all earth's wealth as worthless in comparison.

128. "Therefore I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

Admiration of God's law should be universal. Every precept should be regarded as a direct voice from heaven. Every opposing word should be rejected as falsehood and deception. May this be the mold in which our hearts are framed!

129. "Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them."

Wonderful, indeed, are the revelations of Scripture. They proclaim Him whose name is Wonderful, and who only does wondrous things. The more this Word is studied the stronger will be the effort that the whole life should be framed after its sacred model.

130. "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

The fall extinguished spiritual light. Gross darkness beclouded the mind. But when the rays of the Word illuminate, bright understanding sees God and the way of life. How earnest should be

the prayer, "Send out Your light and Your truth, that they may lead me!" Thus the simple obtain wisdom.

131. "I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for Your commandments."

Man gasping by toil and heat is pictured. He pants for the refreshing breeze. Thus the believer thirsts for the reviving comfort of God's Word.

132. "Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as Your custom is toward those who love Your name."

God's tender mercies ever beam on those who love Him. The Psalmist professes that such is his state, and prays to be remembered in the household of the saints.

133. "Order my steps in Your word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

It is the believer's constant desire that God would guide his footsteps. He hates iniquity, and prays to be delivered from its thraldom.

134. "Deliver me from the oppression of man; so will I keep Your precepts."

Unless the Lord sends help, cruel men will terribly oppress the godly. But upheld by Him, they will persevere in the righteous precepts.

135. "Make Your face to shine upon Your servant; and teach me Your statutes."

Blessed is the state when heavenly smiles shine sweetly on the heart. This is the very foretaste of the heaven of heavens. Those who enjoy these cheering rays will always long to profit in God's school.

136. "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not Your law."

Keen is the pain when the godly see God's name profaned, His Word despised, His glory trampled beneath scornful feet. Pious feeling mourns. Streams of sorrow show the intense anguish. Love of God awakens grief when He is despised. May we know this holy sorrow.

137. "Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments."

It is supreme delight to contemplate the glories of holiness, which, as a halo, shine around our Lord. God is holy in all His attributes and works.

138. "Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful."

Every commandment is the essence of holiness. His every word is the splendor of truth. Let the Scriptures be our constant guide. They will sanctify, and mold the inner man in righteousness.

139. "My zeal has consumed me; because my enemies have forgotten Your words."

Strong feelings are excited in the godly breast when disregard of God's Word is seen. It is the actuating principle of His enemies. The righteous burn with zeal to stop it.

140. "Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it."

The lovely purity of God's Word is wondrous to attract. The godly feel this influence, and delight in it with their whole hearts.

141. "I am small and despised; yet do not I forget Your precepts."

The godly know well their poverty. They often feel that the world regards them with contempt. But these feelings excite warmer desire to be conformed to the Word of God.

142. "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is the truth."

God's righteousness is exact conformity to His law. The blessed Jesus, in man's nature upon earth, exhibited this righteousness. It is the robe which secures admission into heaven. It is everlasting, and incapable of change or decay.

143. "Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me; yet Your commandments are my delights."

Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward; but no affliction drives the believer from the law which he intensely loves.

144. "The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live."

God's law is immutable. No age brings change. Fully persuaded of this truth, the believer prays to be kept in its knowledge. It leads to eternal life. May it be our chosen guide!

145. "I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I will keep Your statutes."

Prayer and profession are here combined. Sweet is the union. May they ever be conjoined in us! *True prayer is an exercise in which the whole heart puts forth its utmost energy.* Prayers should be heartfelt vows.

146. "I cried to You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies."

Faith looks back hopefully on the hours in which prayer has been urgent. It supplicates anew for God's saving hand. It resolves to render faithful service in return.

147. "I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words."

Faith is impatient to reach the mercy-seat. Before the first rays enlighten the east, it hastens to its morning work of prayer. Its hope rests on the promises of the Word.

148. "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises."

Before the evening shadows darken, it hastens again to the glad employ of holy meditation. Stillness aids the calm delight.

149. "Hear my voice according unto Your lovingkindness; O Lord, quicken me according to Your judgment."

The views of God's lovingkindness are incessant joy. Faith expects much. Its hopes are large, according to the measure of God's goodness.

150. "Those draw near who follow after mischief; they are far from Your law."

Plotters of mischief against God's servants are always near. They hate God's law. We here read the complaint of Jesus. But all malice came to nothing.

151. "You are near, O Lord; and all Your commandments are truth."

The workers of mischief are indeed near, but God is far nearer. His presence is granted according to His promises.

152. "Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever."

It is the immovable persuasion of faith that no word of God's mouth can ever fail. The soul is happy which reposes on this rock. May it be our settled resting place!

153. "Consider my affliction, and deliver me; for I do not forget Your law."

It is our privilege to bring afflictions to the mercy-seat. God is always ready to give ear. Relief will not long tarry. Happy is it when we can add the plea that His law rules within us.

154. "Plead my cause, and deliver me; quicken me according to Your word."

All our adversaries are silenced, when our great Advocate appears on our behalf. We may boldly pray, when we seek only the fulfillment of the Covenant of grace.

155. "Salvation is far from the wicked; for they do not seek Your statutes."

Sure is the destruction of the ungodly. Vengeance, righteously denounced, will righteously be executed. Where can hope be found? God's statutes are rejected. Self-willed rebellion fights only that it may fall.

156. "Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord; quicken me according to Your judgments."

The tender mercies of our God exceed all powers to estimate and praise. We need more love in our hearts. Our affections should more warmly burn. Let earnest prayers invigorate our souls. He gives more grace.

157. "Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from Your testimonies."

Vain is all the rage and malice of the ungodly when God extends His protecting shield. When the enemy comes in like a flood, may we adhere more steadfastly to the rock of our salvation!

158. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your word."

An ungodly man is the saddest sight on earth. His course is unmixed evil. None gain profit from him. He passes to endless misery. Who can behold and suppress sorrow? This misery results from neglect of God's Word.

159. "Consider how I love Your precepts; quicken me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness."

Happy are those who with pure conscience can call on God to behold their devoted attachment to His Word. But still they bewail their dull and lifeless state, and pray for quickening power.

160. "Your word is true from the beginning; and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."

Truth reigns in every word of Scripture. Its first utterance was true. Truth will pervade it to the end. Let this thought quicken our delight in it. It never can mislead. It will continue to be God's truth through everlasting ages.

161. "Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of Your word."

Exaltation to earth's greatness cannot raise the soul to sanctity. The kings of the earth have often been among the foremost to take counsel against the Lord, and against His Anointed. Such conduct is

extreme infatuation. But the godly fear not. Those who stand in awe of God can lightly regard man.

162. "I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great treasure."

The Word of God is the treasure of treasures. It makes wise unto salvation. It enriches with imperishable wealth. Shall the man rejoice who discovers earthly treasures, and shall he not rejoice who finds the pearl of great price?

1. "*I hate and abhor lying; but I love Your law.*" Truth is a pure and lovely grace. Let us regard with detestation every deviation from the paths of truth. Let us give our hearts to the law, which is God's truth in the highest.
2. "*Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments.*"

No praise can suffice to give due adoration to the Lord. Let His praises ever be on our lips. In His righteous judgments we shall find unending theme.

165. "Great peace have those who love Your law; and nothing shall offend them."

What can disturb the calm tranquility of those whose affections revel in the Word of God? They proceed on earth's journey safely; nothing can cause them to fall fatally.

166. "Lord, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments."

Here we have the sweet profession of established faith. It rejoices in the full assurance of hope, that God's salvation is its possession. In this glad persuasion the life is conformed to strictest obedience.

167. "My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly."

The path of godliness is exceeding joy. The more we walk in it the more will delight abound.

168. "I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies for all my ways are before You."

The believer ever realizes that God sees him. He does not want any word or work hidden from his Heavenly Father. May we ever walk in the bright sunshine of His light! Let us call Him to be our constant witness.

169. "Let my cry come near before You, O Lord; give me understanding according to Your word."

The believer's life is prayer. His faith assures him that every supplication will be heard. He feels especially his ignorance. Hence he seeks wisdom from God, who gives liberally and upbraids not.

170. "Let my supplication come before You; deliver me according to Your word."

The prayer is often repeated that in gracious answer deliverance may come. He trusts in the Covenant of grace.

171. "My lips shall utter praise, when You have taught me Your statutes."

Strong is the desire that due praises may be rendered. Hence the constant prayer that heavenly understanding may be given.

172. "My tongue shall speak of Your word; for all Your commandments are *righteousness*."

Sweet is the conversation when God's Word is the theme. How worthless in comparison are the chatterings of earthly folly!

173. "Let Your hand help me; for I have chosen Your precepts."

Strong is the plea; Lord, You know that deliberately I choose Your way. We may then boldly ask for help, and help will quickly fly to our side.

174. "I have longed for Your salvation, O Lord; and Your law is my delight."

Happy is Jacob's testimony, "I have waited for Your salvation." David similarly professed, "I have longed for Your salvation." Such saints have great delights. Their joy flows from the Word of God.

175. "Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; and let Your judgments help me."

Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding praises.

176. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments."

The experienced saint is always conscious of his frequent errings. Unless the Good Shepherd seeks the straying sheep, it will wander farther from the fold. Therefore prayer is made to God to restore the soul from devious paths. This prayer is enforced by the profession that God's commandments abide in the heart.

PSALM 120

This Psalm depicts the unhappy condition when slanders assail, and the soul is tossed on billows of disquietude. Prayer is the unfailing refuge.

1. "In my distress I cried to the Lord, and He heard me."

Scripture faithfully proclaims that much tribulation is the believer's lot in this world. But it stops not with a mournful note. It also reveals the remedy in every period of distress. The remedy is prayer. This exercise never fails to bring relief. A distinct example stands before us. The Psalmist, mourning in the depths of trouble, lifts up a supplicating voice. God's ears are graciously open. We shall have sorrow. Let us similarly cry, and we shall find that sorrow leads to joy.

2. "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."

A particular distress is now named. The exact petition is adjoined. Slander and untruthful reports constitute the trial. The believer is often called to this endurance. If David is the speaker, we hear him mourning the cruel charge of Doeg. If the blessed Jesus is the prominent personage, we know that things were laid to His charge which He knew not of. But whenever such cruelty occurs, God is a sure refuge. No bitter arrow wounds when His shield shelters.

3-4. "What shall be given to you? or what shall be done to you, you false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."

Admonition is made with the slandering accuser. He is warned that he cannot expect immunity. God will vindicate His children. He will bring fierce destruction on malignant slanderers. Images vividly express the terrible aspect of this punishment. Miseries shall pierce

false hearts, as arrows flying from a mighty bow. Fire shall consume them, as the fierce coals of juniper.

5. "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!"

Here is a lamentation that abode so long continues in the midst of the cruel and idolatrous. Let us seek more the sweet communion of saints. Let us long more for the fellowship of heaven, where love shall be the pervading atmosphere, and praise the never-ending song.

6-7. "My soul has long dwelt with him who hates peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war."

If the blessed Jesus found such to be His case, can His followers expect a better state! But let us never be provoked to render evil for evil, but on the contrary, blessing. Let us pray that the God of peace may give us peace, always and by all means.

Psalm 121 True safety is from God alone. His protecting care is portrayed in attractive colors. May they win us to place all confidence in Him!

1-2. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

The pious child of Israel turned in devotion to the hill on which the Temple stood. He saw in it a type of Jehovah's presence. The lesson is here taught that all protection comes directly from our Heavenly Father. With confidence let us uplift our eyes to Him. He is the fountain of all grace. He, whose omnipotent word called heaven and earth into existence, can by the same word make all providences to promote His people's good.

3-4. "He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

The believer often moves on slippery ground. Various enemies, also, dash against him. Left to himself, how quickly will he fall! But the Lord upholds him, so he stands as a rock against the lashing billows. The care which preserves him never relaxes its watchful guardianship. The eyes of the Lord, through day and night, from the opening to the closing of the year, are fixed immovably on His waiting people.

5-6. "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade upon your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night."

Volumes are contained in the words, The Lord is your keeper. It is re-echoed by the Apostle—We are kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal life. They are indeed securely kept who are encircled by their omnipotent God. In their Zionward march they are exposed to scorching rays. But as the pillar of cloud spread sweet refreshment over Israel's hosts, so the Lord wards off the adversary's piercing darts. To His people He is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

7. "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul."

All strength and joy are included in the promise that God shall preserve us from all evil. The believer may exult in the assurance that all the assaults of Satan and the powers of darkness shall inflict no deadly wound. The soul shall live unharmed. It shall be brought in safety to the heavenly home.

8. "The Lord shall preserve your going out, and your coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore."

The pilgrimage may seem tedious. We may have many changes. We may be emptied from vessel to vessel. But final rest is secured. Through God's protection, heaven shall be attained. Let us lift up our heads with joy, and shout thanksgivings.

PSALM 122

The beauty and the glory of the Church of Christ are here typically represented. Let prayer be fervent for the Church.

1-2. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem!"

Joy gladdened the Israelite's heart when invited to proceed in happy company to the appointed worship at Jerusalem. He would rejoice in the hope of seeing the royal city and the Temple of his God. His spirit would exult in prospect of joining in the prayers and praises of the sanctuary. Gladness would largely revel when he exclaimed, Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem! Similar is the pious joy with which every true believer hastens to the Church's festivities. It is celestial happiness to join in common prayer, to lift up the voice in common praise, and to hear the proclamation of the glorious truths of Christ's gospel. But what lips can tell the joy of entering the New Jerusalem; and seeing our God face to face, and joining in the everlasting hallelujahs? With this bright prospect gladdening our souls may we go on our way rejoicing!

3. "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together."

Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the city of God. It abounded with all that art and wealth could contribute. Thus it stood the admiration of the world. Its perfect arrangements present a faint image of the glory of the New Jerusalem. The Spirit, by the pen of the enraptured John, describes the glorious scene. But splendid images cannot reach the reality. *To know what heaven is, heaven*

must be entered. May we rejoice in the thought that each day brings us nearer to it!

4-5. "Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David."

Three times each year the males of the house of Israel were enjoined to attend the solemn feasts, to enter the Temple, which contained the testimony of the Lord, and there to bless His holy name. The day approaches when all who have rejoiced in Christ shall meet in the New Jerusalem. They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, with joy and gladness, with thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Let us see to it that we, also, shall have our place in this innumerable multitude. Believers are kings and priests now unto God. Then shall the promise be fulfilled, I say unto you, That you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 6-7. *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those shall prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces."*

We are exhorted to be constant in our prayers, that God's choicest blessings may descend upon the Church and make it fit for the inheritance of glory. Prayers for others are true prayers for ourselves. When we seek mercy on the Church in general, mercy will be given to us, as to all the members of it.

8-9, "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good."

Two grand motives are assigned for these prayers, the love of our brethren and our delight in the glory of God. May these motives ever swell in our hearts. Asking peace for others, we shall enjoy peace ourselves. If we honor God, He will honor us.

PSALM 123

Contempt and derision should quicken our flight to the mercy-seat.

1. "Unto You lift I up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens."

The Psalmist holds in his hand a cup overflowing with bitter waters of distress. But he knows from whom relief can be obtained. He looks away—He looks aloft—He looks on high—He looks to the heaven of heavens—He looks to his God and Father in Christ Jesus. High indeed is His glorious throne, but the eye of faith can reach it. It sees seated thereon His Father invested with all abundance of power, and beaming with all smiles of love. Let us fear no trouble, which brings us to this light.

2. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He has mercy upon us."

A homely similitude shows the intense and patient watchings of faith. The devoted servant diligently observes his master. He studies to learn his will. His desire is to execute his wishes. So faith is ever studious to ascertain what God would have us to do. It looks upward, not doubting that God will guide with His eye. Faith, also, is very patient. It humbly waits until mercy is given. He who thus watches will surely find that mercy in due time will radiantly shine forth.

3-4. "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those who are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."

The cry for mercy is strong and importunate. It will not cease until mercy's wings flutter around. It is especially urged by the contemptuous bearing of the ungodly. They scornfully deride the humble followers of the Lamb. But great will be the change, when the proud are cast into outer darkness, and the lowly raised to their eternal thrones. Let us be the true followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, that we may dwell with Him forever.

PSALM 124

All deliverance is freely given by the hand of God. To Him let grateful blessings ever be ascribed.

1-5. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they would have swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul; then the proud waters would have gone over our soul."

Many are the adversaries of God's children. They are headed by the archenemy, the devil. He is depicted as a lion for strength, a serpent for subtlety, a dragon for fierceness. He is aided by followers who are a legion for multitude. Tender feeling is a stranger to such foes. Like the waters of an overwhelming flood, they would work utter desolation. Their malice must succeed, if One mightier than the strong one interposed not. But the Lord is ever near to support His people. Vain is all hostility. His aid is perfect victory.

6. "Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth."

The soul is represented as a defenseless lamb trembling in the fangs of a ravenous beast, ready to mangle, eager to devour. But rescue

intervenes. So our Heavenly Father delivers from the teeth of the devouring lion. Let grateful thanks be devoutly given.

7. "Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare has broken, and we have escaped."

Another image represents the soul entangled in the fowler's net. A kind hand brings escape. When the case seems to be hopeless, mercy gives freedom. Again let praises shout aloud.

8. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Surely we must perish if earth only rendered aid. But the great Creator who sits on the throne of omnipotence puts forth His might in our defense. This power is an impregnable fortress of defense. Let us thank Him, bless Him, and adore.

PSALM 125

This ode sings a blessed description of God's children. Earnest prayer is the fitting conclusion.

1. "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever."

It is the blessing of blessings to put all trust in God. Those who thus cling to Him shall never be cast off. Perils may surround them, but hostile might shall not prevail. As easily might puny man cast down the loftiest mountains as adverse power shake the firm stability of this faith. May this trust nerve us in the Christian warfare!

2. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even forever."

Jerusalem was guarded by natural barriers. Surrounding mountains spread protecting arms. This image shows the safety of God's people. On all sides He stands their sure protection. He must be removed or vanquished before an adversary can touch them. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. Can safety be more safe?

3. "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity."

Hostile might may often rage against the righteous. Foes may threaten to trample them beneath their feet. But God will check the overbearing enmity. If trials should long prevail there might be peril, lest the spirits of the righteous should faint. Fear of desertion might open the door to many doubts. But all such danger is averted by the hand of God. His ready help restores confiding hope.

4. "Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts."

Believers are described as good. The name is explained by the Spirit as implying the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and of faith. It is proof that no deception is harbored in their hearts. Prayer is made that God would visit them with goodness. This prayer indited by the Spirit amounts to a heavenly promise that they shall receive such honor.

5. "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel."

Transition of scene shows the deceitful followers of evil led forth by God to merited execution, while the true Israel rejoice in abundant peace. May this happy state be our glad portion! Grant it, Heavenly Father, for Your love's sake, in Christ Jesus.

PSALM 126

Restoration from captivity is the Lord's gracious work. In due time the sorrow of the righteous shall be swallowed up in joy.

1. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream."

When the days of Babylonish bondage were fully run, what transports of joy thrilled through Israel's sons! Their minds were almost bewildered by the grand event. The good tidings seemed almost as the mocking of an illusive vision of the night. So when deliverance from Satan's yoke is realized, what floods of delight overpower the soul! We were born captives in the devil's prison-house, his shackles held us tightly bound. We were slaves toiling under a cruel tyrant. But when Jesus comes and grants liberty we awake to a new world of happiness. We breathe the air of freedom. We exult with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We are tempted to exclaim, "Can this be real?"

2. "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them."

Their homeward march was lively with exuberant thanksgiving. The voice of pious melody was heard around. The heathen beheld the marvelous return. At once they exclaimed that One mightier than man had come forth for their rescue. May we ever ascribe our redemption to free grace!

3. "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

The Lord, indeed, has done great things for us. Omnipotence has mightily come forth to save us from the grasp of Satan. Jesus, the incarnate God, has grappled with our deadly foe. He has snatched us

from his thraldom. The great God brings salvation. Shall we not rejoice and sing!

4. "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south."

When the heat of summer burns, many torrents show dry channels. The cattle, thirsting for refreshing waters, are mocked with empty beds. But when the rains return, their channels are again replenished, and gladness smiles beside their banks. So when the days of banishment are passed, the captives move homeward with delight. May the Lord speedily bring this joy to those who groan beneath Satan's cruel yoke!

5-6. "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

An image from rustic life gives comfort. The husbandman in hopeful toil casts the seed into the furrows. Months pass and there is no sign of life. In due season spring returns. The fields again are clad with verdure. Summer glows with ripening rays. The harvest is gathered in amid full shouts of joy. So a long period of dreary waiting may depress the soul; but the promised deliverance comes, and sorrow flees in shouts of fervent joy. May this be speedily our glad experience.

PSALM 127

Safety and success can only come from God. Pious families are multiplied by His blessing.

1. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain."

It is a blessed lesson in the Spirit's school that God's all-ordering hand and all-controlling power direct events. He sits upon the throne of universal sway. Prosperity abounds only as furthered by His will. Failure undermines all efforts which rest not on His sovereign desire. All labor is but nothingness except He commands the blessing. Without Him workmen toil to gain vanity. Guards may surround the city with much show of force, but if the Lord is absent their weapons and vigilance end in defeat. Jesus comforts with the assurance that all power is His in heaven and in earth. Let us flee to Him and cling to Him. Then we shall surely prosper. Adversity can never frown when Jesus smiles.

2. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep."

It is sad when men consume their time and energies in fruitless toil. If God is forgotten, and His aid unsought, the midnight hours and the early dawn are vainly spent in labors. Profitless is all exercise of mind and body if He is excluded who alone dispenses blessings. Shut out the sun, and there is no light. Omit the ball, and empty is the cannon's sound. Let His servants make Him their all, and He will cause them to repose in peace. Tranquil confidence will trust events to His guardian care, and thus sweet calm will soothe the breast.

3-5. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

It is a lovely scene when pious parents sit surrounded by a pious progeny. The happy circle gives evidence that God's favoring smile beams on the family. Heavenly feeling pervades the house. Love of God, faith in the redeeming blood and covering righteousness of Christ, are ruling principles. There is joy in present communion and in anticipation of eternal fellowship. The godly union, also, is

strength. No enemies can resist the arrows aimed by a giant hand. Thus foes prevail not over this holy company. No shame or confusion depresses their heads. They boldly meet all adversaries. Who will not serve the blessed Lord, and delight in the heritage which is His people's crown!

PSALM 128

Manifold blessings belong to those who fear the Lord. May we gaze on the display until it is our own realized enjoyment!

1. "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord; who walks in His ways."

The fear of the Lord is an inestimable gift. Let it be sought with our whole hearts. Let it be diligently nurtured. It comes from above. It is the Spirit's work. It is the herald of a train of countless blessings. It is evidenced by close adherence to the Gospel-rule. Those who fear God will dread the slightest wandering from His path.

2. "For you shall eat the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you."

The grace of fear will work diligence in all appointed works. Indolence is a mark of gracelessness. Abundant fruit follows Christian toil. No good thing shall be withheld. True happiness fills the hearts which tremble at the Word. God will cause the sunshine of prosperity to brighten in their homes. Who will not pray, Lord, give us this blessed fear! As heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy towards those who fear Him.

3. "Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house; your children like olive-plants round about your table."

Not only shall prosperity attend the customary employ of the hands, but domestic joys shall be dispensed as the Lord thinks well. His blessing will fill the cup of family happiness to overflowing.

4-6. "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that fears the Lord. The Lord shall bless you out of Zion; and you shall see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Yes, you shall see your children's children, and peace upon Israel."

Spiritual blessings shall especially be multiplied. The prosperity of the Church shall be seen, and shall augment the bliss. Converts shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. They shall fly as doves to their windows. Lord grant these blessings, and may our eyes behold the peace of Your children! So shall we love and praise You more and more! Let us ever bless the Holy Spirit for thus alluring us to Gospel-walk. The picture is enchanting. The real enjoyment exceeds description.

PSALM 129

Incessant were the troubles of Israel. But they destroyed them not. A prophetic voice here sounds, foretelling evil's final woe.

1-2. "Many time they have afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say; Many times they have afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me."

The burning bush is a fit type of God's servants in this evil world. The flames encompassed every branch and leaf, but still the verdure bloomed. The devouring blaze was powerless to reduce to ashes. Thus the Church is in constant peril, but still it lives beautiful in freshness and in unfading vigor.

Each page of its history recites fearful attacks, but still the inward life survives and no decay appears. The story of each individual

believer is similarly the record of trials, troubles, persecutions, and distresses. But still the raging billows engulf not the little bark. It maintains its course. It finally reaches the peaceful haven.

3. "The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows."

This image shows the cruel malice of relentless foes. As the plough urged by much strength deeply penetrates the ground, so scourges and vindictive blows have mangled suffering saints. We here especially see the suffering Jesus. Hear His piteous cry; "I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to those who plucked off the hair." See His afflicted form; "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." While we behold, let adoration swell more warmly, for by His stripes we are healed.

4. "The Lord is righteous; He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked."

Vain are the cruelties of the wicked. Their shackles cannot detain. The Lord wills deliverance. The chains are broken, and His people are free. So Jesus was bound in vain. He rises conqueror over Satan and the grave. He mounts victorious to the courts of heaven.

5-8. "Let them all be confounded and turned back who hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withers afore it grows up. With which the mower fills not his hand, nor he that binds sheaves his bosom. Neither do those who go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord."

A graphic image shows the worthless and ignominious state of the wicked. Grass on the dry house-top has no root. It appears only to wither. No mower gathers it. No reaper adds it to his sheaves. It yields no good. So the wicked are seen only to be scorned. Soon they pass away. No benefit results from them. No blessing cheers

them. Shall we have portion with them? Forbid it, gracious Lord! We receive You as all our hope and our salvation.

PSALM 130

The essence of the Gospel pervades this hymn. Sin is seen in its odious character. Its due penalties are acknowledged. But forgiveness is proclaimed as leading to reverential sense of God's holiness. The soul waits for the Lord, who is rich in mercy and redeeming love, and ready to blot out every iniquity.

1-2. "Out of the depths have I cried to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

The speaker cries in deep sense of sin. Convinced by the Spirit of the appalling evil, he lies in the lowest depths of misery. All the billows of wrath seem to be passing over him. There is no shadow of help but in God. With earnest cries he lifts up the supplianting voice.

3. "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

Confession is made of utter ruin. Our natural state is a mass of evil. Thus in ourselves we stand justly exposed to all wrath. Let us continually pray, Enter not into judgment with your servant, O Lord, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.

4. "But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

The mercy of mercies here shines forth. God appears glorious on redemption's throne. He has provided forgiveness in the cross of Calvary. Christ's precious blood washes out every stain of guilt. His righteousness covers all our transgressions. Who will not love and bless God! Those who love Him cannot but love His holy ways, and dread nothing more than to stray from the Gospel-rule.

5-6. "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning."

The Lord has promised never to leave or forsake or forget His people. He will visit them with the plenitude of His lovingkindness. He will bless them with the multitude of His tender mercies. For these sweet manifestations the believer continually waits. He looks out from His watchtower as one watching for the morning, who knows that in the appointed time the welcome rays will illumine the eastern sky.

7-8. "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

In great mercy we are called to the full assurance, that our hope in God shall never be disappointed. Reality will surpass all expectation. Mercy sits beside Him on His throne, and ever loves to visit and cheer the ransomed people. The redemption decreed and accomplished is a cup which ever overflows. We cannot exhaust it. It is more than sufficient for all our need. Every sin shall disappear, and we shall be presented before the throne, holy and pure as our Lord is holy and pure. Happy are those who know the Gospel's joyful sound!

PSALM 131

The Psalmist avows his deep humility. Exhortation to hope in God is added.

1-2. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child."

Humility is a lovely grace. When the God-man trod this earth this was His robe. No ostentation marked His lowly walk. Hear His enchanting words; "I am meek and lowly in heart." Hear the Apostle's appeal; "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." If Jesus thus trampled upon pride, shall we, poor dust and ashes, lift up haughty heads?

Take, also, the example of the noble Paul. Early in his career he professes that he was the least of the Apostles, not worthy to be enrolled in their company. As he grew in grace he deepened in knowledge of unworthiness. He declared that he was less than the least of all saints. Just before he receives the crown of martyrdom we hear his bewailing voice; Sinners, of whom I am chief. If we had like grace, we should similarly despise self. He who is deeply instructed in the treachery and corruption of his own heart, will always esteem others better than himself. His soul will be deeply conscious of its utter need. Like a helpless babe it will look for support from a parent's care.

3. "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever."

No hope may repose on self, yet all hope is the believer's portion. He can look up to God, whose tender sympathy feels with our every woe. Let us pray that our hope may never fail, but daily strengthen more and more. It will soon end in glorious reality. Israel's hope will soon be Israel's glory. The lovely prospect will soon be actual possession. Expectation will be more than satisfied.

PSALM 132

The Ark foreshadowed the Church. As such it was the object of pious care. This ode proceeds to enumerate God's promises.

1. "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions."

It is a gracious privilege to be permitted to be God's remembrancers. Faith is encouraged to remind Him of His covenant and of His precious promises. There is, indeed, no forgetfulness with Him. The past, as also the future, is a present page before His eye. But by this exercise we impress on our own minds invaluable lessons. Thus God is implored to bear in mind the story of the suffering David. In him we have a type of the blessed Jesus. Thus the deep import of this prayer awakens God's attention to the expiatory sufferings of the Lamb of God.

David was especially a man of sorrows. All believers drink the same cup. The afflictions of Christ's followers are salutary discipline. They wean from the world and quicken the growth of grace. We shall pray God to accomplish His purposes. The furnace of affliction should never be heated in vain.

2-5. "How he swore to the Lord, and vowed to the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."

The especial object of this prayer is that David's zeal for the Ark should not be forgotten. Deep and fervent was this zeal. It was the constant inhabitant of his heart. He longed to conduct the Ark to its resting place in Zion. He cast away all thought of rest and quiet, until success should crown his efforts. We should learn therefore that zeal for the prosperity of God's Church should be foremost among our desires. For this we should incessantly toil. For this we should regard all sacrifices as light. Can we truly say, each one, The zeal of Your house has eaten me up?

6. "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood."

The Church is often in depressed condition. The Ark was carried into the Philistines' country, and after its return, it remained obscure and unnoticed. At Bethlehem David could only gather some reports concerning it. At last he found it in the fields of Kirjath-jearim. The Church can never be hidden for long. The sun reappears after a short eclipse.

7-9. "We will go into His tabernacles; we will worship at His footstool. Arise, O Lord, into Your rest; You, and the ark of Your strength. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Your saints shout for joy."

It is the joy of joys to join the company of true worshipers. Prayer should be earnest that God would manifest Himself in His sanctuary and cause His presence to diffuse hallowed delight. Especially should we pray that His ministers be conspicuous for holiness and pre-eminent as men of God. Then exuberant gladness will fill God's courts with praise.

10. "For Your servant David's sake turn not away the face of Your anointed."

The idea is not a vain fancy that Solomon, now established as Israel's anointed king, thus prayed. He beseeches God not to forget the promises to David. In faith of their performance the youthful king is encouraged to persevere in prayer. Let us therefore gather cheering support. Believers may thus personally supplicate. By the Spirit's unction they are priests unto God. They may implore, for the sake of the true David, that they may be welcomed at the mercy-seat. May we persist in prayer, looking upwards in the name of Jesus!

11-14. "The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it; of the fruit of your body will I set upon Your throne. If your children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon Your throne forevermore. For

the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Remembrance is called to a notable prediction. The throne of David descends in unbroken line to his offspring. The suppliant pleads for its fulfillment with undoubting faith. It is precious thus to grasp the promises of God. God chose Zion as a type of His Church. He gives assurance that He will maintain forever the seed of grace. We may rejoice that this God is our God forever and ever. He will uphold His people to the end. He will rest in His love. He will make the Church the abode of His continual presence.

15-16. "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."

Glorious promises enrich the treasures of the Church. No good thing shall be withheld. All mercies shall abound. Her faithful ministers shall shine brightly in the robes of salvation. Her true servants shall testify their joy with exuberant thanksgiving. Can we give sufficient thanks if we have been called to fellowship with this blessed company?

17-18. "There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

The power of the Lord shall be displayed in the perpetual preservation of the Church. It shall be armed with might as the strongest animals are endued with power. Heavenly rays shall be its unfading lamp. While shame will bring contempt upon their enemies, the crown of glory shall rest on the true sons of David. May we study these abundant promises! May we embrace them with thanksgiving! May we live undoubtingly relying on their fulfillment! May we lift up the head as faithful citizens of Zion!

PSALM 133

The blessings of peace and concord are commended. May they be sought and enjoyed by us!

1-3. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

Countless blessings gladden and enrich the pilgrims whose feet happily climb the hill of life. True joy is the companion of a close walk with God. These pilgrims are dressed in a lovely robe. Their garment is love of the brethren in the faith. This is the evidence of real union with Christ. This grace was the admiration of the heathen of old. It was the well-known testimony, See how these Christians love one another. This precious hymn exhibits this union as good, and pleasant, and fragrant, and fertilizing. It is good, as it is in accordance with the character of our Heavenly Father, of whom it is sublimely said, God is love. It is good, as those who exhibit it show the lineaments and features of the first-born among many brethren. It is pleasant. What can be more charming than to see the smile of love, to listen to the words of love, and to feel assurance that we are encircled by those whose hearts are knit with ours! It is fragrant, for it sheds around the perfume of true happiness. Ointment poured forth cannot refresh the home more than the constant sweetness of harmonious feeling. It is fertilizing as leading to the growth of grace, and as uniting hearts in every holy word and work. Thus it is figured by the holy oil which, poured upon the head of Aaron, ran in fragrant streams to the lowest portion of the priestly robes. It is fruitful as the dew which moistened the summits of Hermon and softened the heights of Zion's range. Let us seek this grace, so blessed in itself, so blessed to all with whom there is communion.

But this unity implies not tolerance of error. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed. Light can have no fellowship with darkness. Those who thus walk together must first have met in Christ. Oneness with Him is the only true bond of union.

PSALM 134

The ministers of the sanctuary are exhorted to bless the Lord. In response blessings are invoked on the speaker.

1-2. "Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord."

Public worship is a perpetual ordinance. From age to age God's faithful servants will frequent His house and join in common prayer and praise. It will be their delight meekly to listen to the proclamation of His truth. Those who lead in the outward form should precede, also, in inward grace. Those who conduct the hymns of praise should be foremost in offering heartfelt thanksgivings. In the early Church the lighted sanctuary was not a silent place during the hours of night. We have a sweet emblem here of the white-robed congregation, from whose lips unceasing hallelujahs sound. May we soon join the hallowed service!

3. "The Lord, who made heaven and earth, bless you out of Zion."

The ministers of the sanctuary are supposed to give response. The grateful reply is, May He, whom we are thus exhorted to bless, pour blessings upon you. How vast must be the blessings which descend from Him who is the omnipotent Creator of the universe! Infinity is the measure of His goodness. All mercies surely come in accordance with His heavenly decree. But it is from Zion that His blessings go forth. Zion typifies the Church of which the blessed Jesus is the High Priest. In Him God blesses His people with all blessings in

heavenly places. He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Heavenly Father, we bless You for Jesus; evermore bless us in Him!

PSALM 135

Exhortations to praise the Lord are reiterated. Motives to this exercise are boundless, and are piously set forth.

1-3. "Praise the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord; praise Him, O you servants of the Lord, you who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, praise the Lord; for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name; for it is pleasant."

Fervor never should relax in awakening others to give praise. Every faculty should burn in efforts to promote this duty. Let ministering servants lead the van and wave the standard. It is most true that no praises can adequately extol God's goodness. Think of His mercies and overflowing love. The infinitude of His love is shown in the gift of His dear Son to accomplish salvation, to endure our curse, to bring us safely to the heaven of heavens, to present us faultless before the presence of His glory. Can we reflect on such grace and not exclaim, The Lord is good! This exercise of praise fills the soul with exquisite delight. It is the joy of joys. It is the foretaste of heaven. Let us then call upon all that is within us and around us to bless His holy name.

4. "For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

No height of praise can measure the wondrous grace of God in setting His love on sinful sons of men. Everything in them is calculated to excite alienation. Justice, holiness, and truth seem terribly to frown. Still He loves. The gift of Jesus for them is the

main evidence. In this love He regards them as His peculiar treasure. He honors them as the riches of His kingdom, as the brightest jewels in His crown.

5-6. "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

We cannot too often ponder the almighty ness of God. Every view awakens admiration. The gods of the heathen are vanity, and less than dust and chaff. His will is power in the highest. His decrees prevail in every part of His dominions, in all the earth, in all above it, in all beneath it. His power rules unlimited and supreme.

7. "He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries."

The wild elements seem to unenlightened observation to act capriciously and without control. But His power holds them fast bound in His hands. No vapors arise, no lightning flashes, no rain descends, no wind blows furiously, but in accordance with His sovereign will. Let us bless God for His unbounded rule.

8-9. "Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants."

Memory should review the manifestations of His power, when with mighty arm He rescued His people from the iron furnace of Egypt. Then wailing filled every house, for the first-born was stretched among the dead. Then terrible plagues swept the whole land with the broom of destruction. O God, who will not reverence Your glorious power!

10-12. "Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan; and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage to Israel His people."

He who rescued His children from Egypt left them not in the perils of the wilderness. Many foes confronted them, but their heavenly Lord raised them above all perils. Mighty potentates with powerful armies opposed their progress, but resistance opposed in vain. The victorious host marched in triumph into the promised land. But they entered not without a struggle. The kings of Canaan mustered all their forces to repel the invaders. But they vanished as the chaff of the summer threshing floor. The whole land fell prostrate before their feet.

In this sustaining and enabling help, we have a precious picture of God's unfailing care of His people. He who begins a good work in them performs it to the end. They are kept by the power of God through faith to eternal life. He never leaves them nor forsakes them until they sit as conquerors on their thrones of glory. Let us bless God for His converting grace. Let us bless Him not less for His guardian arm and for His ever-watchful aid.

13-14. "Your name, O Lord, endures forever; your fame, O Lord, is known to every generation. For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants."

From everlasting to everlasting the name of the Lord shall be magnified. His wondrous works shall be the theme of never-ending praise. He will never fail to vindicate His people. If for a little season He may seem to be regardless of their trials, the purpose is to strengthen their grace. In due time it shall be apparent that His love failed not.

15-18. "The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they,

but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; so is every one that trusts in them."

The infatuation of those who form material images and call them gods is astonishing. Alas! multitudes as senseless as these idols still throng the benighted regions of this earth. Shall we remit our efforts to send to them the knowledge of the true and only God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent?

19-21. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel; bless the Lord, O house of Aaron; bless the Lord, O house of Levi; you who fear the Lord, bless the Lord. Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, who dwells at Jerusalem. Praise the Lord."

Blessings should ever sound from the lips of the ministers of His truth. His faithful servants should re-echo His praise. Who should bless Him more than ourselves? Let us loudly shout and never end our grateful hallelujahs.

PSALM 136

The mercy of the Lord is largely illustrated, and due praises are invoked.

1-3. "O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the God of gods; for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of Lords, for His mercy endures forever."

In every name, under every title, in every attribute let our God be magnified, honored, glorified; and let the constant chorus exalt His ever-enduring mercy.

4-9. "To Him who alone does great wonders; for His mercy endures forever. To Him who by wisdom made the heavens; for His mercy endures forever. To Him who stretched out the earth above the waters; for His mercy endures forever. To Him who made great lights; for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day; for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night; for His mercy endures forever."

His works of creation excite incessant praise. Infinite wisdom orders the whole plan. Behold the earth with all its wonders rearing its head above the waters. Behold the skies glorious by day, by night studded with lovely orbs. Surely every object bids the chorus to magnify ever-enduring mercy.

10-16. "To Him who smote Egypt in their firstborn; for His mercy endures forever. And brought out Israel from among them; for His mercy endures forever. With a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm; for His mercy endures forever. To Him who divided the Red Sea into parts; for His mercy endures forever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; for His mercy endures forever. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for His mercy endures forever. To Him who led His people through the wilderness; for His mercy endures forever."

Review again His terrific judgments in Egypt. The firstborn lie dead, and mighty deliverance rescues His chosen people. The sea divides to present a dry path. Pharaoh is overwhelmed. Every incident in the story awakens again a tribute to ever-enduring mercy.

17-22. "To Him who smote great kings; for His mercy endures forever. And slew famous kings; for His mercy endures forever. Sihon king of the Amorites; for His mercy endures forever. And Og the king of Bashan; for His mercy endures forever. And gave their land for an heritage; for His mercy endures forever."

Even an heritage unto Israel His servant; for His mercy endures forever."

Mark the victorious march of the beloved people. Mighty kings resist in vain. They lick the dust and perish. Their fair borders become the abode of the victorious host. Again every circumstance prompts the acknowledgment that His mercy endures forever.

23-26. "Who remembered us in our low estate; for His mercy endures forever; and has redeemed us from our enemies; for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh; for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven; for His mercy endures forever."

But the signal mercies given unto ourselves especially awaken this chorus. Redemption is ours from all our enemies. Glory is ours forever and ever. Who will not shout aloud, We give thanks unto You, O God of heaven; we gratefully acknowledge, Your mercy endures forever!

PSALM 137

A plaintive ode bewails the misery of the captive Jews. Their devotion to their country is avowed. Woe on their enemies is called down in language of prediction.

1. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

A pensive group is pictured. We see the mourning captives seated by the banks of the waters of Babylon. Fast flowing tears betoken the anguish of their wounded hearts. Where does this pitiful grief come from? They are removed from their beloved Zion. Their thoughts uncaptured wander through their early haunts. Can reflection fail to weep? Hard are the hearts which mourn not when

parted from their native land and the loved ordinances of God's house.

2. "We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof."

The harps once used in public service, and as the solace of their homes, now bring no joy. Their sight awakens pangs of regret. Therefore they hang untouched upon the neighboring trees.

3. "For there those who carried us away captive required of us a song; and those who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

Their insulting captors mocked their misery. In derision they bade them tune again their harps, and for amusement to sing as in the happy days of Zion. Tender feeling is a stranger to the hearts of the enemies of God.

4. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

A sad response checks the taunting wish. The pensive captives reply that no melody could proceed from them. They are far distant from their much-loved Zion; and sounds of woe can be their only utterance.

5-6. "If I forget You, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember You, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

The claims of Jerusalem on the warmest affections are forcibly expressed. It is desired that all intelligence may decline, if Jerusalem ever ceased to be the much-loved object of the heart. Forgetfulness of skill and silent lips should be the lot of those who could prefer any happiness to that of thought of Jerusalem. We should, indeed, rank as unworthy of any blessing, if ever we failed to exalt You, O blessed Jesus, as chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.

7-9. "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to its foundations. O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed; happy shall he be, who rewards you as you have served us. Happy shall he be, who takes and dashes your little ones against the stones."

If the final issue be brought into view, it will be seen how happy are the captives as contrasted with their subjugators. The former suffer anguish for a brief period, the latter are doomed to everlasting destruction. Let us bless God that shelter is provided in Christ Jesus from the indignation and wrath ready to fall on mystic Babylon.

PSALM 138

Praise is vowed to the Lord. This debt should be devoutly paid. The Lord is worthy to be trusted.

1-2. "I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness, and for Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name."

No joy can surpass the delight of thanksgiving. It is a thrice blessed exercise. It brings down heaven into the heart. It should engage all the affection of the inner man. Cold praise is an insulting mockery. No fear of man should check this utterance. Before earth's highest potentates timidity should not bring silence. But especially should we take pleasure in the praises of holy ordinances. God's love and truth should have the loudest notes. His faithful performance of His precious promises demand acknowledgment. There is no brighter jewel in the crown of His attributes.

3. "In the day when I cried You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul."

Experience is a grand encouragement in holy duties. The soul is lively and hopeful, when it can point to promises all fully redeemed. It is delight to know that when in Christ's name we seek spiritual strength we offer petitions which will surely have response, because in accordance with God's mind.

4-5. "All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; for great is the glory of the Lord."

The day shall surely come when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the blessed Jesus, and He shall reign forever and ever. Let us by constant prayer hasten this happy time.

6. "Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knows afar off."

Our Heavenly Father humbles Himself to behold the things which are in heaven and earth; but His eyes regard the lowly with especial favor. Let us be clothed with humility, thus shall we be fit for robes of glory.

7. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me."

In our heavenward course troubles will beset us on the right hand and on the left. But let no fears depress us. The Lord will strengthen and refresh us. He will cause our graces to blossom like the rose. His mighty power shall be manifested in our behalf, and we shall stride victorious over all hindrances.

8. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; forsake not the works of Your own hands."

May the Lord give us grace to clasp to our hearts the truths of this most precious verse! He who has begun the work will surely bring it to perfection. If the foundation be truly laid, the topstone will be brought forth with shouts of, Grace to it, Grace to it! Desertion is unknown in the kingdom of the blessed Jesus.

PSALM 139

All things are naked and open to the omniscience of God. His presence is all-pervading. Suitable prayer concludes the hymn.

1-5. "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my down-sitting and my uprising; You understand my thought afar off. You compass my path, and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me."

God's all-seeing eye and all-pervading presence are indisputable. His thorough knowledge of all the events in which we are intermixed, His close reading of every movement of the inner man, His observation of the characters, His distinct perception of every thought, of every word and deed, of every step taken, of every wish conceived, are acknowledged truths. Never do we come in or go out, never do we rise or sit down, but His eye marks us. Our lips never open, no utterance ever sounds, but His all-hearing ear discerns the significance. A recording book is written. We are always surrounded by His power, and never can escape His hand.

6. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

This knowledge is quite infinite, and therefore cannot be comprehended by finite mind. We can only ponder, wonder, and adore. But when duly pondered, what comfort springs to the

believer! Amid all his countless transgressions, he knows that he desires to walk at each moment in the faith and fear of God, and his constant prayer is, Lord, what will You have me do? Thus he thinks on God, and peace is his soft pillow.

7-12. "Where shall I go from Your Spirit? or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You."

No terms can fully describe God's omnipotence. There is no spot in heaven or earth which He does not fill. There is no covert which affords concealment. He sits above the highest heavens. He descends below the lowest depths.

Alas! the folly of poor blinded man, who deceives himself by hopes that he can elude discovery. His every step is in the clear light of God's countenance. The day is near when all shall be proclaimed. Oh! that the Holy Spirit would write this truth with power on our minds! The thought would operate as a strong warning against sin. The check would constantly operate, "how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

13-16. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, our eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

God's thorough knowledge of us and all our ways is patent from His creative power. Before we breathed, His will arranged our incipient being. What mechanism can be more exquisite in all its parts than the formation of our bodies! Divine skill is manifested in the design of its innumerable members. Wonder is exhausted in the contemplation. Select any part, it proclaims that infinite wisdom devised the plan, and infinite power brought it to perfection. Can this great Creator not have most intimate acquaintance with the beings which He thus formed?

17-18. "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You."

There is much transport in the knowledge that God thinks on us. If we cannot escape His observant eye, so too we cannot be hidden from His vigilant love. He loved His people before their bodies were framed, and never has His love relaxed. The value of this knowledge is inestimable, even as the multitude of His thoughts exceed enumeration. The child of God delightedly ponders this truth throughout his waking hours. They attend him until he closes his eyes in nightly repose, and when perception again returns, and the mind resumes its exercise, the same truth continues to gladden.

19-22. "Surely You will slay the wicked, O God; depart from me therefore, you bloody men. For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those, O Lord, who hate You? and am not I grieved with those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies."

When we remember how great is God's love, and how countless His fatherly thoughts, the mind mournfully turns to those who have no part in this precious portion. Alas! there are many who must be reckoned as haters of God. Terrible, indeed, is their doom. It is denounced, "Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want

me to reign over them, and slay them before me." If their steps are in the way of destruction, surely we shall refuse to walk with them. Love to God will estrange from all who hate Him.

23-24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Faith boldly calls upon God to thoroughly investigate the heart, and to search its recesses with the lamp of divine truth. The desire glows, that every detected error may be slain, and that the feet may be guided into the way of eternal life. May this be our constant prayer, and may the outcome of our walk through life be the heavenly home and the joys at God's right hand forevermore!

PSALM 140

In times of extreme distress deliverance is sought from God. He is extolled as the protector of His people. Faith looks to Him as the destroyer of all adversaries.

1-3. "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man; who imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips."

Since sin defiled this earth, enmity has existed between the seed of the serpent and the children of the promised Savior. This wickedness has been displayed in every form of outward persecution. Schemes of secret malice have been its fruit. Violent assaults are made. Venomous slanders are circulated. Unaided strength is vain to escape.

But God is ever near, ready to protect. To Him should application be made. Earnest and incessant prayer should plead. Fruitless will be all efforts to destroy, if God in answer arises to give help.

4-5. "Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man, who has purposed to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me."

As long as persecution rages heaven must be besieged. The resolve to destroy the godly is not always openly avowed. Frequently traps are set to ensnare unwary feet. This was the experience of David. But the knowledge of these acts was salutary discipline, and led to close communion with a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.

6. "I said to the Lord, You are my God; hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord."

Blessed, indeed, are the prayerful moments when we can appeal to the Lord that He is our God. Who can conceive all that is contained in the name of God? But all that God is, He is to the happy people. Can we desire more?

Happy indeed is our case, if we have the Lord for our God.

7. "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle."

What must that salvation be which has omnipotence for its strength! Who can injure those who are thus saved by the Lord? They may be called to fight the good fight of faith. Fiery darts may fly around, but none can inflict mortal wound. God, who is the helmet, must be pierced before the head can be reached.

8-13. "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. As for the head of those

that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth; evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence."

Let peace ever reign in the believer's heart. The Lord on His side will crush His foes. The mischief plotted by them will be the pit which shall overwhelm them. The cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor shall gloriously be established. Dwelling in the constant light of God's smile, the righteous shall give everlasting thanks. Happiness now and forever is their portion.

PSALM 141

This hymn commences with a general prayer for acceptance. It then branches into diverse petitions. Thus it stands a tree of solid stem bearing variety of fruit.

1-2. "Lord, I cry to You; make haste to me; give ear to my voice, when I cry to You. Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

Free access to the throne of grace is an inestimable privilege. No words can duly show the condescension of our God in permitting us to wrestle with Him, and not relax our grasp until responses come. May we delight in roaming in this field! When we draw near in the name of Jesus, heaven is fragrant with the perfume of His merits. Such prayer gains audience. It claims acceptance as the appointed evening service.

3. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

That the words of our mouth may be always acceptable in His sight, let us pray that the Spirit may ever guard its portals. No unadvised word will thus escape our lips, or come unwelcome to the bar of heaven.

4. "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity; and let me not eat of their dainties."

There is contagion in surrounding evil. The atmosphere is pestilential. Hence let us pray that our hearts may not be beguiled into evil compliance, or fascinated by the miscalled pleasures of sin. False are the allurements. To be thus captivated is to sip poison's cup.

5. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

Life is happy when we are surrounded with godly friends. Their precious counsels guide from evil. Their pious admonitions are fragrant as balmy oil. They never inflict a rankling wound. We may claim such kindness when it is our resolve to pray for mercies on our adversaries. Let us know no other revenge.

6. "When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet."

Calamities to the wicked are portended under a graphic image. This shall be the season of tender admonition from the righteous, and gentle words should strive to win from evil. 7-10. *"Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth. But my eyes are unto You, O God the Lord; in You is my trust; leave not my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape."*

Heartless is the persecutor's rage. They would hew to pieces the followers of the Lord with the indifference of a woodman scattering chips by his ax. But the saints in their utmost distress look to their God, and so obtain comfort and deliverance. Especially they seek guidance to keep them safe from the snares so craftily laid in their path. It is just that those who plot such mischief should themselves be entrapped. With such pleas to present at the mercy-seat, with God so ready to support, let us fear no evil. Let us fly with eager wings to spread our need before our heavenly Lord.

PSALM 142

The Psalmist is beset with trouble on every side. All refuge failed him but his God. To God he has instant recourse.

1-2. "I cried to the Lord with my voice; with my voice to the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble."

Troubles will surely meet us in our upward march. Let there be no vain attempt to endure in our own strength. We are weak to bear the crushing load. Let us rather bring all to the mercy-seat. Let us cast them at the feet of Him who cares for us. Who ever looked to heaven and failed to find relief? If God gives His presence, all burdens will be light.

3. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path; in the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me."

When troubles come in like a flood, Omniscience marks our every step. It is good when we can call God to witness that our true desire is to walk closely by His side. But the cruel enemy will strive to fill this path with snares.

4-5. "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man who would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried to You, O Lord; I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living."

Vain is the help of man. Worldly friends soon vanish when the trouble is adverse. Such desertion is grievous aggravation of distress.

To this the blessed Jesus was most exposed. They all forsook Him and fled.

Such, also, is the common lot of His true disciples. Paul mourned, Know you not that all who are in Asia have turned away from me. But God is still near, and full of compassion. We can approach His ready smile. We shall ever find in Him a sufficiency which no creatures could supply. Safe are those who can say, "You are my refuge." Rich are those who can add, "You are my portion." Let us flee to this fortress. Let us rejoice in this portion. Loneliness dwells not in this climate.

6-7. "Attend to my cry; for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name; the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me."

There are no depths of fear, which prevent a cry to the throne of God. Mercy hears and flies to give relief. Strong may be the persecutors. They may bring us very low. Strong is the arch-enemy of our salvation, but omnipotence is the attribute of our Deliverer. Let us trust, then, and not be afraid. Often are our souls enthralled by the shackles of unbelief and sin and weakness. God can open every prison-cell, and remove every detaining chain. Grateful lips will then ascribe deliverance entirely to Him. The righteous shall see God's gracious dealings, and flock to our fellowship. Good Lord, increase our faith, animate our prayers, strengthen our every grace,

that our glad experience may set our hand to the acknowledgment that You have dealt bountifully with us.

PSALM 143

This hymn commences with a general petition, and then expands into a large field of supplication.

1. "Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications; in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness."

David was pre-eminently a man of prayer. His constant abode was at the mercy-seat. He invokes the aid of those attributes of God which shine most brightly in His crown. *Faith brings God and all that God is to render help.*

2. "And enter not into judgment with Your servant; for in Your sight shall no man living be justified."

The thought of appearing before the tribunal of the law is full of terrors. The law exacts undeviating obedience to the rule of perfect love of God and perfect love to man. A curse is denounced on every transgression. The law allows not the plea of penitence or reformation. It listens not to cries for pardon. Its severe code admits no mitigation.

Let us flee to the covenant of grace. There free favor reigns. A Surety appears who pays in His own blood the penalty of our every sin, and robes us in His perfect obedience. Oh! precious Gospel, worthy of the God who gives! Worthy of all men to be received in faith and adoration! May we clasp the glad tidings to our heart of hearts!

3-4. "For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has smitten my life down to the ground; He has made me to dwell in darkness, as those

that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate."

The cruelty of persecutors cannot soften. David endured distress and sorrow in every shape. He keenly felt the misery, and his heart often mourned in lonely destitution. Jesus trod this path. His followers should advance without a repining sigh.

5. "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands."

There is sweet consolation in pious meditation. Let this be our chosen pleasure-ground. Let all God's mercies pass before our adoring eyes. Especially let His wondrous exploits in accomplishing salvation for us in the redeeming sufferings of Christ fix our happy gaze.

6-7. "I stretch forth my hands to You; my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit fails; hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto those who go down into the pit."

The dry clods gaping for refreshing showers are a picture of the soul athirst for God. It is happy to experience this keen craving, and to spread it before the mercy-seat.

8-9. "Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; for in You do I trust; cause me to know the way in which I should walk; for I lift up my soul to You. Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I flee to You to hide me."

How precious when morning dawns and perceptive powers are restored to hear the whispers of God's love. Such joy fills the cup of all who trust in Him. How sweet is the assurance that if in faith and prayer we commit our way to the Lord, He will safely guide us and preserve us from all the cruelty and plots of designing men!

10-12. "Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God; Your Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for Your name's sake; for Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. And of Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all those who afflict my soul; for I am Your servant."

Here are important prayers. Let us adopt them as heaven-taught models. Let us faithfully present them. He who gave them will recognize His own voice. Gracious answers will abound.

PSALM 144

Blessings are ascribed to God for great success and victories. Continuance of such mercies is implored. The happiness of God's people is depicted in glowing colors.

1-2. "Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust; who subdues my people under me."

The royal Psalmist sat undisturbed on the throne. He looked back and surveyed the many conflicts and the hard-won triumphs. He knew that God was the author of all his success. To Him he ascribes the praise and glory. Pictures are largely selected from scenes of war. They vividly describe the help and might of God. Whenever we prevail over sin and Satan and temptation, let us remember God, who is all our strength and deliverance. Let us magnify His holy name, with all the energies of our hearts.

3-4. "Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him, or the son of man, that You make account of him? Man is like vanity; his days are as a shadow that passes away."

Wondrous is God's condescending love. While we ponder let us adore. Though we are nothing, and less than nothing, the very vanity of vanities, the shadow of a shade, yet from the high throne of His glory His eye of compassion ever tenderly rests on us.

5-8. "Bow Your heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them; shoot out Your arrows, and destroy them. Send Your hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaks vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood."

To realize God's wondrous goodness is a great encouragement in prayer. Let us take courage and flee to Him in every strait, and seek His aid against all our foes.

9-11. "I will sing a new song to You, O God upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings, will I sing praises unto You. It is He who gives salvation unto kings; who delivers David His servant from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood."

The mercies so freely and so largely given should awaken fervent praise. It was so with David; let it be so with us. While he acknowledged that God was all his strength and salvation, he continues to wrestle in entreaties. The more we receive the more we should desire. Let us never cease to encircle the mercy-seat with cries from our adoring souls.

12-15. "That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace; that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen may be strong to labor; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our

streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Prayer will obtain floods upon floods of blessings. The prayerful monarch will reign over a happy, prosperous, glorious people. The subjects will shine in the beauties of holiness, and plenty will super-abound in their garners. Let us have confidence that our prayers will call down blessings, and that many will rejoice because we frequent the throne of grace. If there be happiness on earth, it is the happiness of those who live in the service of the God of their salvation.

PSALM 145

Praise pervades this hymn. God's various claims are duly expounded. May they so influence our hearts that much fruit may ripen!

1-2. "I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever."

Such is the hearty resolve of faith. May it in truth be our very life. Happily will flow the days which are preparation for the home in which praises never ebb.

3. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable."

Who can measure the infinitude of the Lord! But as we praise, the topic will delightfully expand. Eternity will not exhaust it.

4. "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

The praise of God endures with earth's continuance. The Lord's seed shall never be extinct, and the work of praise will be their ever living joy.

5-7. "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts; and I will declare Your greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness."

The theme exceeds all utterance. Let all efforts be made to do justice to it; still the greatness, the majesty, the goodness, the righteousness of the Lord, will scarcely be touched in their outlines.

8. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."

The believer's experience testifies to this precious truth. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. Our need and misery awaken constant compassion. If provocations roused just wrath, we would speedily be cast off. Every moment proves that God is rich in forbearing mercy.

9. "The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works."

Surely goodness and mercy follow us each day. All things show His tender love.

10-12. "All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom."

The saints delight in extolling the name of their glorious King. Superabundant is the theme presented by His dominion. His throne is universal empire. His scepter is unbounded sway.

13. "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations."

From everlasting to everlasting He sits upon the throne of unlimited sovereignty. From everlasting to everlasting His praises shall resound.

14. "The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down."

Let us pursue our heavenward path leaning on our Beloved. When we stumble He will uphold; when we fall He will upraise us.

15-18. "The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The Lord is near to all those who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."

All sustenance comes from His bountiful goodness. His open hand pours down plenteousness on earth. Holiness is His glorious attribute. Holiness is stamped on all His works. May the impress on our brow be, Holiness to the Lord!

Precious is the thought that the ear nearest to us is the ear of our God, ever waiting to hear and to relieve our need.

19-21. "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserves all those who love Him; but all the wicked will He destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord; and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever."

Precious indeed is the promise that the desire of His servants shall be fulfilled. Salvation shall be their heritage. No harm shall injure those who love Him. But the wicked shall be utterly consumed. May the concluding resolve be the inhabitant of our hearts! Let universal blessings be ascribed to our Heavenly Father in Christ Jesus.

PSALM 146

Praise is the Psalmist's sweet employ. God's claims to praise are stated. May they attune our hearts to sing the heavenly theme!

1-2. "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being."

Gratitude demands that praise should be our untiring exercise. Its performance brings delight. Happy are the hours thus consecrated. Thus earth assimilates to heaven, where Hallelujahs are the constant sound.

3-4. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

It is a natural tendency to be influenced by external facade. Hence it is a common fault to court the favor of the rich and great. We are prone to lean on their support, and to look to them for help. But every man in his best estate is empty worthlessness. The Lord speaks, and thrones crumble. The Lord speaks, and the palace is exchanged for the grave. Tibni dies—Omri reigns. The grandest prince is but dust; and to dust he must return.

5-7. "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; who made heaven and earth, the sea,

and all that therein is; who keeps truth forever. Who executes judgment for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry."

While men are emptiness, sufficiency abounds in God. Happy are those who find safe shelter in His covering wings. Think of His boundless power. The heavens, the earth, and all therein are the creation of His will. Precious is His treasury of promises. Not one of them shall ever fail. Their payment may be desired at the mercy-seat, and surely they will be redeemed. Many foes oppress His servants, but their efforts are impotent. The cause of the righteous is vindicated. None prevail against them. All their need, also, is supplied. They lie down in green pastures; beside still waters they repose.

8-10. "The Lord frees the prisoners; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord preserves the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down. The Lord shall reign forever, even your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord."

Precious lessons are learned from contemplating God's gracious dealings. His people are born in the prison-house of Satan. God removes the shackles; they go forth free. They are blind by nature. He opens their eyes to see all the wonders of redeeming love. Heavy burdens often oppress them. He enables them to lay aside every weight so as to run with patience the heavenward road. He delights to cheer them with manifestations of His love. They are strangers and pilgrims in an enemy's land. He is their constant guardian. In family destitution He brings relief. But just wrath burns fiercely against His adversaries forever and forever. God shall reign inhabiting the praises of His people. Bless the Lord, O our souls. Amen.

PSALM 147

Exhortations call to praise our God. Let our grateful hearts rejoicingly obey.

1. "Praise the Lord; for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is lovely."

It cannot be too earnestly enforced that praise is our duty, our joy, and our becoming exercise. Let happy experience testify this truth.

2-3. "The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds."

He brought the captive Jews from Babylon. Thus He showed by expressive type that He will not permit the enemy to hold the Church in enduring bondage. Sorrow and mourning may be long their lot, but at His bidding, joy will bud forth, and every wound be healed.

4. "He tells the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names."

We are thus taught that nothing can surpass His knowledge. The starry firmament sparkles with innumerable orbs. All are known to Him. So we, our persons, our matters, are all unmistakable to His omniscient eye.

5-6. "Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite. The Lord lifts up the meek; He casts the wicked down to the ground."

In His wisdom He reads every character. He knows the meek and exalts them. He knows the wicked and debases them.

7-9. "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise on the harp to our God; who covers the heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."

We cannot too frequently exhort to praise. The merciful dealings in nature are a fruitful topic. Behold the heavens robed in their clothing of clouds, the rain descending to fertilize the earth, the summits of the hills clad in verdure, and praise the hand which thus dispenses plenteousness. Behold the beasts of the forests and the ravens in their lofty nests. His hand provides their food. Let then His hand be praised.

10-11. "He delights not in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy."

The Lord has no delight in animal or bodily strength of frame. He looks to the inner man, and smiles on faith and fear. May such graces ever appear in us.

12-13. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you."

The Church cannot be too fervent in praise. The strength of protecting bulwarks, the happiness of the inhabitants within, all call for grateful adoration.

14-20. "He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His commandment upon earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes. He casts forth His ice like morsels; who can stand before His cold? He sends out His word, and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He shows His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt so

with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the Lord."

All blessings come from the bountiful hand of God and merit praise. His will pervades the length and breadth of the earth, ordering all things and enforcing obedience. But the blessing of blessings is His revealed Word. This is now circulated in almost all the languages of the world. We are abundantly favored with the inestimable boon. Let us gratefully use it, and adore the gracious Giver. Praise the Lord.

PSALM 148

Praise to God is invoked because of His glory in all things, animate and inanimate. Especially His saints call for adoration. 1-2. *"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts."*

Praise is due not from men only, but from all the angelic hosts. There is, however, a solemn difference. We are slow to this holy exercise, and need the constant quickening of the Spirit. They find it their incessant delight, and praise is their most willing utterance.

3-5. "Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light. Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for He commanded, and they were created."

Lift up your eyes to the shining firmament. Mark the glorious sun, daily proceeding on its brilliant way, and filling the world with light and beauty. Behold the countless stars bespangling the canopy on high. No vocal sound, indeed, is uttered; but still they have a voice which calls forth praise to Him who willed their being. As they shine they seem to cry, "Praise the Lord who thus created us."

6. "He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which shall not pass."

If praise be due for *creative* powers, so also for *sustaining* care. If we praise God because of the original birth of the orbs of heaven, let our praise resound while they continue their brightness. The Word that made them cannot be repealed. Your Word, O God, is settled forever in heaven.

7-10. "Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea creatures, and all deeps; Fire and hail; snow and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling His word; Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl."

The earth teems with animated beings, with things, also, that are inanimate. But they all proceed from God. They all subserve His purposes. They all call for His praise. From the monarch of the forest—from the eagle soaring in the skies to the tiniest insect—from the mountain to the valley—one acclamation is evoked, Let the great Creator—let the unfailing Preserver—receive praise.

11-13. "Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; old men and children; Let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is excellent His glory is above the earth and heaven."

From the occupier of lofty estates to the inhabitant of the lowest hut, from the hoary head to the infant in the cradle, let one sound be elicited. All they are, and all they have, is the free gift of God. For all they are and all they have, let praise be given.

14. "He also exalts the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the Lord."

Pre-eminently, praise is due from the saints of the Lord, whom He has redeemed by the blood of His Son, and sanctified by His Spirit. From their inmost souls let them shout, "Praise the Lord."

PSALM 149

Continual is the call to praise our God. May the call never fail to warm our hearts!

1. "Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints."

Those who can become weary of God's praise would find heaven's work a tedious task. Let us praise Him in our closets, in our private hours. Let us praise Him, also, when we frequent the congregation of public worshipers. Thus, when we leave earth, we shall change our place, but not our work.

2, 3. "Let Israel rejoice in Him who made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance; let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp."

Can we restrain praises to our God when we remember that He gave us being, and faculties to conceive His goodness and laud His name? Let us remember, also, that as King of kings and Lord of lords He reigns for us, and should reign in us. When this joy swells warmly in our hearts, it will be manifested by all our powers, and throughout all our time.

4. "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation."

It is the wonder of wonders that the great and glorious God should stoop to regard such creatures as we are. But wonder is immeasurably magnified when we are taught that thoughts of us, are

pleasure to Him. Let gratitude constrain our hearts to praise without measure and without end. Not only does He take pleasure in His people, He beautifies the meek with salvation! Meekness is their lovely characteristic. This grace proves them to be followers of Him who avows Himself as meek and lowly in heart. Beautiful robes of salvation are prepared for them. These garments are heavenly in structure, fit for the Bride, the Lamb's wife, suited to adorn the palace of our God.

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

Abundant cause impels the saints to praise. They have received grace as foretaste of glory. Let them realize this, and let them sing aloud as if their promised state filled their hearts with foretaste. Let not the shades of night entirely suppress this happy exercise. In the night season, let not praises be wholly silent. When the earthly tabernacle molders in the bed of death, the liberated spirit will sing with full intelligence and joy. 6-9. *"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written; this honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord."*

Great is the power of the Word when uttered by praising lips. It will subdue all the enemies of Christ's.

PSALM 150

The Psalms thus close. But praise shall never end. Let praise be the constant ecstasy of all our powers and all our time. Eternity will prolong, but never end the strain.

1. "Praise the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the firmament of His power."

Exhortation still stirs up praise. Worthy, indeed, is the Lord to be praised throughout the universe. Let His praise be heard in the public service of His house, where His saints assemble to magnify His name. Let it swell in the highest heavens, where angelic hosts and all the redeemed lift up their joyful voices in adoring strains.

2. "Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness."

Mighty indeed are God's acts in creation, providence, and grace. Creation is a volume replete with wonders. They surpass all power to enumerate. They exceed all admiration. Providence is wonderful in showing His mind in constant operation. But redemption causes love to overflow in wonder. It excites our loudest shouts. To estimate its exceeding preciousness the eternal kingdom must be reached. The innumerable multitude must be joined before we can fully realize that all sin is washed away, and every transgression pardoned, and the law's curse removed, and righteousness divine bestowed as the resplendent robe of heaven. Then will be the joy of knowing that mercy has brought us to the journey's end; that endless rest is reached and endless hallelujahs placed upon the lips. Then shall eternal bliss flow on; then shall the realm of glory shout endlessly the Redeemer's praise.

3-5. "Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise Him on the loud cymbals; praise Him on the high-sounding cymbals."

In the days of Levitical type and shadow, musical instruments of every form and power contributed to swell the melody. Now, when spiritual service takes its enlightening place, let every rational

faculty make our hallelujahs sweet and loud. Are may sing and spirituality still live.

6. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord."

Fitting is the grand conclusion of this book of hymns and odes and spiritual songs. Let us obey the just command. Every breath is God's free gift. Let every breath fly upward on the wings of adoration. But all our efforts can scarcely reach the outlines of due praise. May the Lord inspire us more and more! May we thus prepare to praise Him better when we cast our crowns before His throne. Praise the Lord! Amen and Amen.

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