

A COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS

by Abraham Wright

Abraham Wright's verse-by-verse commentary on the Psalms, exploring God's justice, His care for the poor and oppressed, and the spiritual lessons contained in Israel's hymnal.

3 Chapters

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01 - Chapter 1

PSALM I.

Verse 1. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. The first words of the first Psalm, and the last words of the last, are the Prophet David's Alpha and Omega of knowledge and practice. For he comprehends all that belongs to man's knowledge, and all that belongs to his practice in those two; first, in understanding true blessedness, and then in praising God for it. David's Alpha is *beatus vir*, O the blessedness of righteous men! And his Omega is *laudate Dominum*, O that men would therefore bless the Lord! And therefore as he begins this book with God's blessing of man; so he ends it with the man's praising of God; for where the last stroke of this psalter, the last verse of the last Psalm is, let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord, yet he adds one note more to us in particular, praise ye the Lord, and there is the end of all.

Verse 3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. All fruits of Christians are not all of one sort. For some of them are general, growing upon all the trees of the garden, upon all the branches grafted into the true vine, general duties of piety which lie equally upon every man's shoulder, as love, joy, peace; some are special, which every tree must bring forth according to his kind; as being his proper fruit whereby he must be known in that calling wherein God hath set him; for thus the olive tree hath its fatness, the fig tree bringeth forth his own fruit in due season; and thus the household of faith oweth a service to God after one sort in the general fruits of holiness, and after another sort in the proper fruits of a particular calling, and as they are the several heads of one mystical body.

PSALM II.

Verse 11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Fear and service go still together; and fear usually before service; for that unless our service proceed from fear, it is hollow and worthless. One said well that these inward dispositions are as the kernel; outward acts are as the shell; he is but a rotten nut therefore that hath outward service without inward fear. It is true that perfect love thrusts our fear; but it is as true, that fear brings in that perfect love, which is joined with the reverence of sons; for there is no servant of God but fears filially, and again, God hath no son but he serves; even the holy Son of God was so in the form of a servant that he served indeed; and so served that he endured all sorrow, and fulfilled all righteousness. So every Christian is Son and heir to the King of Heaven; and his word must be, I serve.

Verse 12. Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him. There were many good uses of kissing one another in God's Word. First, it was in use among kinsfolks; thus Jacob kissed Rachel and told how near of kin he was to her; now there is no person so near of kin to thee as Christ Jesus, who is thy Father as He provided an inheritance for thee; and thy Brother as He divided this inheritance

with thee, and as He died to give thee possession of that inheritance; He is thy twin Brother so like thee, as that His Father, and thine in Him, shall not know you from one another, but mingle your conditions so, as that He shall find thy sins in Him, and His righteousness in thee; and therefore kiss this Son as thy kinsman. This kiss was in use likewise when friends parted; thus Laban rose up early in the morning and kissed his sons and daughters. When thou departest therefore to thy worldly business kiss Christ, take leave of him; and remember all that while thou art gone upon His errand, and though thou work for thy family and posterity, yet thou workest in His vineyard, and dost His work. Lastly, they kissed in reconciliation; thus David kissed Absalom. If thou have not discharged thy stewardship well, restore to the man who is damnified therein, confess to God who hath suffered in that sin, reconcile thyself to Him, and kiss Him in his Son.

PSALM III.

Verse 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Distracting fear is the portion of wicked men; the troubles of the righteous are many, but their fears are few. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people is the resolve of faith: whosoever hath much fear hath but little faith: wherefore are ye afraid ye of little faith was our Savior's to his disciples, and how can they but be afraid when storms arise who are of no faith? When fear increaseth faith decreaseth, and when faith is come to the height fear is gone: where there is no faith there can be nothing but fear.

Verse 8. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, thy blessing is upon thy people. The Church's help is not in herself, and the dangers of it are far greater then she is able without better help then her own to withstand. So was it with the children of Israel at the Red Sea, so with the three children in the fire, what help had they in themselves, being bound? Now God is pleased sometimes to suffer His Church and children to be brought to these straits, that His children being driven out of all other expectations might be vehement in prayer, and fetch help from heaven which they want in themselves. The extremity of the Israelites at the Sea made Moses cry to the Lord with vehemency, and when Jehoshaphat knew not what to do, his eyes were towards the Lord. We may observe further from hence that the Church and people of God are never helpless, but they have an omnipotent power with them and for them; this is their privilege and sanctuary. When Christ was helpless and His disciples fled from Him, yet then He had the power and presence of His Father, and so that every child of God as well as Christ himself; which is a most firm prop to stay and lean upon in all extremities; when we can oppose this help of God against all the threats and boisterous proceedings of our enemies.

PSALM IV.

Verse 6. There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. To erect and settle a tottering and dejected soul, an overthrown, a bruised, a broken, a trodden, a ground, a battered, an evaporated, an annihilated spirit, this is an act of such weight as requires the assurance, the presence, the countenance of God, and indeed except the God of comfort give it thee in the light of His countenance and the peace of thy conscience, nec subtus, nec circa, nec intus te est, saith Saint Bernard, non subtus, not from below thee, from the reverence and acclamation of thy inferiors; non circa, not from about thee, when all places, all preferments are within thy reach, so that thou may'st lay thine hand and set thy foot where thou wilt, non intus, not from within thee, though thou have an inward testimony of a moral constancy in

all afflictions that can fall; yet not from below thee, not from about thee, not from within thee, but from above, from the light of God's countenance must come thy comfort or it is mistaken.

Verse 8. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord only makes me dwell in safety. That poverty which comes from the hand of God is as rich a blessing as any that comes from His hand; he that is poor with a good conscience, that hath labored and yet not prospered; knows to whom to go, and what to say, Lord thou hast put gladness into my heart, more then in the time when corn and wine increased (more now then when I had more) I will therefore lay me down and sleep, &c. Does every rich man dwell in safety; can every rich man lie down in peace and sleep? No not every poor man neither but he that is poor with a good conscience can, and though he that is rich with a good conscience may in a good measure do so too, (sleep in peace) yet not so out of the sphere and latitude of envy, and free from the machinations and supplantations, and underminings of malicious men, (that feed upon the confiscations and build upon the ruins of others) as the poor man is.

PSALM V.

Verse 3. My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up. It was an ancient custom with God's people to seek Him in the morning, early in the morning; and the heathens likewise by the light of nature took the same course in their prophane and superstitious worships too. From whence we may learn, first, that God is to be sought unto without delay; as it is with vows so with prayers, defer not to pay them, defer not to pray; seek ye first the Kingdom of God was our Savior's; first in time, not only chiefly but early, put not God behind in the latter end of the day, or in the latter end of your business. It is best to begin with Him who is best. Then secondly, God must be sought unto with diligence, in the morning will I direct my prayer saith David, that is, diligently: they that come in the morning about their business are diligent in their business: we must lay our strength and spirits out in seeking God. It is not a sleight inquiry which finds out God; we read that He is found of some who seek him not at all, but that He is found of any who seek him negligently we read not; free grace prevents those who have not ability to seek Him, but it never meets those who will not lay out their abilities in seeking Him.

Verse 7. But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple. God, both in the Old and New Testament, hath conditioned His doctrine and His religion (that is, His outward worship) so that as evermore there should be preserved a Majesty and a reverent fear, and an awful discrimination of divine things from evil. And therefore the love of God, which is so often proposed unto us, is as often seasoned with the fear of God; nay all our religious affections are reduced to that one, to a reverential fear, if He be a Master He calls for fear, and if He be a Father He calls for honor, and honor implies a reverential fear; and that is the art which David professes to teach, Come ye children and hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord, Psalms 34:1-22, that you think not divinity an occupation nor church service a recreation; but still to remember that with holy David you worship towards God's holy temple in fear, that is by not being over fellowly with God, nor over homely with places and acts of religion.

PSALM VI.

Verse 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. To be rebuked was to be chidden, but to be chastened was to be beaten; and yet David was heartily afraid of the first, of the least of them, when it was to be done in anger; this word that is here to rebuke is for the most part to convince by way of argument; so that this doth but amount to an instruction and an amendment; yet David here would not be disputed withal, would not be instructed nor amended by God in His anger; the anger of God is such a catechism, such a way of teaching as the Law was: the Law is a schoolmaster, but such a schoolmaster as brings not a rod but a sword; God's anger should instruct us; but if we use it not aright it hardens us; for when a sinner considers himself to be under the anger of God, naturally he conceives such an horror as puts him farther off. As soon as Adam heard the voice of God in an accent of anger, he fled from his presence and hid himself among the trees.

Verse 2. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. The reason of our own weakness is a good motive to God for mercy; that thou art weak of thyself is a just reason to induce God to bring thee to Himself; but to leave Him again, when He hath brought thee, not to make use of that strength which He by his grace offers thee, this is not the affection of the spouse, when the person languisheth for the love of Christ, but it is when the love of Christ languisheth in that person, and therefore if you be come so far with David as to this, have mercy O Lord for I am weak, that an apprehension of your own weakness hath brought you to Him in a prayer for mercy and more strength, go forward with him still to his next petition, O Lord heal me, for God is always ready to build upon His own foundations, and accomplish His own beginnings.

Verse 4. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul. O save me for Thy mercy's sake. As God came long ago, six thousand years ago in nature, when we were created in Adam, and then in nature returned to us, in the generation of our parents: so our Savior Jesus Christ came to us long ago, sixteen hundred years ago, in grace, and yet, in grace returns to us as often as we meet Him in his ordinances; when thou canst love Him and embrace Him; as often as He offers Himself to thee in prayer or preaching, or the sacraments. Wish therefore every day a Sunday, and every meal a sacrament, and every discourse an homily; and He shall shine upon thee in all dark ways, and rectify thee in all rugged ways, and direct thee in all cross ways, and stop thee in all doubtful ways, and return to thee in every corner and relieve thee in every danger & arm thee even against Himself by advancing thy work in which thou besiegest Him, that is, this prayer, and enabling thee to prevail upon Him, with this petition. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul.

PSALM VII.

Verse 6. Arise, O Lord in Thy wrath; lift up Thyself against the rage of mine enemies. Execrations and maledictions are not to be directed upon the person, but his sin. And therefore when David asks of God here, which he desired God to forbear in the beginning of the former Psalm, Saint Augustine begins to wonder, quid? illum quem &c. would David provoke God who is all sweetness and mildness to anger against any man? No, not against any man, but diaboli possessie peccator, saith that Father, every sinner is a slave to his beloved sin; and therefore misericors erat adversus cum quicumque orat, how bitterly soever I curse that sin, yet I pray for that sinner, David would have God angry with the tyrant, not with the slave that is oppressed; with the sin, not with the soul that is enthralled to it; and so as the words may be a malediction in David's mouth, we may take

them into our mouth too, and say, arise O Lord in Thy anger against our enemies, our sins.

Verse 15. He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch, which he hath made. It is an old adage, evil counsel is worst to the counselor; it may do hurt to those against whom it is given, but it shall certainly do them hurt by whom it is given; thus God turns the counsels and projects of evil men upon their own heads and against themselves; and this likewise shows the extreme vanity of human policy as it is separated from the wisdom that is from above, seeing it is not only unable to help us, but it doth us hurt, it is not only weak to assist, but strong to ruin us. But doth every man that digs a pit fall into it himself? Not so neither; for we may dig pits for wolves and foxes, wicked men; but when wicked men dig pits for the innocent, who prepares mischief for those have done him no wrong, may fall into the pit himself.

Verse 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. God hath a way to punish the enemies of His Church with the same vengeance as they have inflicted on His Church, or intended against it, according to this of the Psalm. And this is most just with God, that the righteous law of retaliation might be turned on their own heads; how just is it that he who breweth mischief should drink of it? This is that just retaliation our Savior threatens in Matthew 7:1-29. If the Egyptians make a wicked decree to drown the Israelite's children, and will needs follow them into the sea to drown the parents also, 'tis just that themselves should be drowned by a memorable destruction. And thus God repays the enemies of His Church and doth many times order that the mischief they have plotted against His dearly beloved, shall recoil upon themselves as a piece overcharged and recoiling beats down the gunner, not him it was aimed at.

PSALM VIII.

Verse 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; hast put all things under his feet. Here is a supreme estate, a very great dominion and sovereignty given to man; yet we have forfeited this justification, this dominion, and more, our own essence; we are not only inferior to the beasts, and under their annoyance, but we are ourselves become beasts; now to restore us again to our primitive sovereign power, we shall do well to consider the dignity of our soul, which only of all other creatures is capable, susceptible of grace; if God would bestow grace anywhere else, no creature could receive it but thou, thou art so necessary to God, as yet God had no utterance, no exercise, no employment for His grace and mercy, but for thee; and if thou make thyself incapable of His mercy and grace, of which nothing but thou is capable, then thou destroyest thy nature; and remember then, that as in the kingdom of heaven, in those orders, which we conceive to be in those glorious spirits, there is no falling from an higher to a lower order; a Cherubum or Seraphim does not fall, and so become an Archangel, or an angel; but those of that place, that fell, fell into the bottomless pit; so if thou depart from thy nature, from thy susceptibleness, that capacity of receiving of grace; if thou degenerate so from man to beast, thou shalt not rest their in the state and nature of a beast, whose soul breathes out to nothing, and vanishes with the life; thou shalt not be so happy; but thy better nature will remain, in despite of thee, thine everlasting soul must suffer everlasting torment.

Verse 9. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. It is not enough to find a God, a great and incomprehensible power; a God that enjoys His own eternity, His own peace, His own blessedness, but respects not us, reflects not upon us, communicates nothing to us, but we must

find a God that is Deus noster, ours, as we are His creatures; ours, as we are like Him, made to His image; ours as He is like us in assuming our nature; ours, as he hath descended to us in his incarnation; and ours, as we are ascended with him in his glorification: so that we do not consider God as our God, except we come to the consideration of God in Christ, God and man. It is not enough to find Deum, a God in general; not to find Deum meum, a God so particularly my God, as that He is a God of my making: that I should seek God by any other motions, or know God by any other notions, or worship God in any other fashions then the true Church of God doth; for there He is Deus noster, as He is received in the unanimous consent of the Catholic church: Sects are no bodies, for there is nihil nostrum, nothing in common amongst them, nothing that goes through them all; all is singular, all is meum and tuum, my spirit and thy spirit, my opinion and thy opinion, my God and thy God: no such apprehension, no such worship of God as the whole Church hath evermore been acquainted withal, and consented with.

PSALM IX.

Verse 8. And He shall judge the world in righteousness; He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The judges of the earth may absolve the guilty, and condemn the innocent, being corrupted by fear. Pilate for the fear of Caesar condemned Christ; whom the testimony of his own conscience pronounced innocent: but this Judge in the text, which is our blessed Savior, cannot be corrupted; for, whom shall He fear that is omnipotent? Or they may be corrupted with their own affections of partiality; Herod adjudges John Baptist to death for the love of Herodias' daughter, but this Judge cannot be thus corrupted, for He is no acceptor of persons: or they may be corrupted with bribes, but Christ our Judge cannot be so corrupted, if He would take a bribe, thou shalt have none to give Him at that day: a good conscience will do more good then a full purse; Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death, Proverbs 11:4.

Verse 16. The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands Higgsion, Selah. Aliter suis, aliter, impiis innotescit dominus; God is in a different manner known to His own; and His enemies; to His in the condonation of their sins; and donation of blessings; to His adversaries in imputing their sins to them, inflicting His judgments on them: indeed, judicium indicia, every judgment on the wicked is a character, yea an oracle to evidence God's presence. Then do all men see the majesty of a God, when the wicked feel the stripes of His rod. Oleaster derives the name Jehovah from a word which signifies destruction: I will not assess the naturalness of the etymology; yet thus much is true; when God brings calamity on the wicked, He gives glory to Himself, and manifestly appears to be Jehovah. Whiles God is suffering wrong from His enemies, He seems as it were to be asleep, and the world takes little notice of Him, but when He is vindictam agens, doing right, He showeth himself the Judge of the world.

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PSALM X.

Verse 4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts. Wicked men find and feel God often in their consciences, though they never found him in their affections. God makes offers to wicked men, and though He be not actively in all their thoughts, i.e. they do not willingly meditate and think of God, they maintain no correspondence or communion with Him in their inner man, yet God doth (like an unbidden and unwelcome guest) put Himself into their thoughts, and moves in their minds, this proves their trouble, and becomes a pain unto them. As God is not far from every one of us, because (as the Apostle argues with those at Athens, Acts 17:1-34) in Him we live and move, and have our being, so we may say, that He is not far from many wicked men, because He moves and stirs in them, He presents to their minds some manifestations of Himself in His justice, and holiness, longsuffering and goodness, in none of which they accept acquaintance with Him; and therefore say to God, depart from us, trouble us not; and when once they can banish those thoughts, and live thus without God in the world, then they think they live indeed, and till then they reckon their lives a kind of death.

Verse 14. Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite to require it with thy hand, the poor committeth himself unto thee, &c. God delights to help the poor, He loves to take part with the best, though the weakest side; contrary to the course of most; who when a controversy ariseth, use to stand in a kind of indifferency or neutrality, till they see which part is strongest, not which is justest. Now if there be any consideration besides the cause that draws or engages God, it is the weakness of the side. He joins with many because they are weak, not with any because they are strong, therefore He is called the Helper of the Fatherless. By fatherless we are to understand not only such whose fathers are dead, but any one in distress; as Christ promiseth His disciples. I will not leave you orphans, that is, helpless, and, as we translate it, comfortless; though you are as children without a father, yes I will be a Father unto you. Men are often like those clouds which dissolve into the sea, they send presents to the rich, and assist the strong; but God sends His rain upon the dry land; and lends His strength to those that are weak, such are His treasure, His jewels, they are graven upon the palms of His hands, and therefore always in His eye, yea always in His heart, though they lie trodden underfoot as dirt in the streets.

PSALM XI.

Verse 1. In the Lord put I my trust, how say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain. When a foundation is laid in a proportion geometrical, they build, and the more weight is laid on, the foundation is the firmer; so where God is the foundation, settle thy building on Him, entrust thyself and whatever thou art with Him, and be secure for God is able not only to subdue all worldly and bodily enemies, but ghostly also; and by His power can deliver Satan into the chains of darkness, and can rescue out of his Kingdom whom he will and keep them being so delivered unto salvation. Gather thyself therefore under His wings, and trust in the shadow of His feathers. Do we call acts and deeds of men security, and shall we not trust that which God hath sealed and delivered to us?

Children rely wholly on their parents, and shall not we rely wholly on our Heavenly Father? In all our extremities therefore we must be sure to secure our faith and conscience in God, as the serpent doth her head, the soldier his shield; And this is the victory whereby we overcome the world (with all it's allurements or affrightments) even our faith and trust in God, 1 John 5:4.

Verse 2. For lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string; that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 'Ecce antequam vulner amur, monemur', saith Origen; before our enemies hit us, God gives us warning that they mean to do so. When God Himself is so far incensed against us that He is turned to be our enemy and to fight against us, as 'tis Isaiah 63:10, yet still He gives us warning before hand, and still comes a lighting before His thunder. God comes seldom to that dispatch, a word and a blow; but to a blow without a word, to an execution without a warning, never.

Verse 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do. This is not a question of desperation, that nothing can be done, but of consultation with God what should be done. Thou knowest, O Lord, I have not been moved with ordinary trials, not though mine enemies prepare and prepare arrows, shoot, and shoot privily, yet these have not moved me; because I had fixed myself upon certain foundations confidences and allowances of deliverance from them. But if O Lord, I see these foundations destroyed, if Thou put me into mine enemies hand, if Thou make them Thy sword, and then if Thy almighty arm, sinewed even with thine own indignation, fitted with that sword, what can I , how righteous soever I were, do?

PSALM XII.

Verse 1. Help Lord, for the Godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men. All Christians who have tasted the sweetness of God's graces in themselves ought to be witnesses of the fine graces of God unto others, and workers of them in others as much as in them lies. It was said to St. Peter not to engross the gifts and graces of God to himself, but to employ them to a common benefit. To this end David prayed to be holpen and saved himself, but so, as the word in the original imports, that he might save others; the spiritual good of those with whom the righteous man liveth is the chief employment of his prayers and pains.

Verse 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I rise saith the Lord. I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. God is so good and gracious that he loves not to grieve His creature. When He breaks us to pieces, He delights not in our breakings, nor doth He ever break His own but with an intent to bind them up again. God is so far from loving to oppress, that one of His most eminent works of providence is to receive those who are oppressed. For the oppression of the poor, now will I arise saith the Lord, and when the Lord ariseth, oppressors shall fall.

Verse 6. The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. When the people of God are low then let them look for their raising up, and let their low estate be so far from sinking that it should raise their faith in believing deliverance and exaltation. A low estate is a great advantage for faith; faith that hath surest footing when we lie prostrate upon the ground, that faith stands firmest, because there faith meets with most promises. Promises are the foundation of faith. The people of God have never so much of the word about them, as when they have cast off the world about them. The Covenant fits closest to us when we are divested of

the creature. When the river is at the lowest ebb, we are sure that the tide is coming in, when the days are shortest and the winter sharpest, then the spring of mercy is at hand. The lowest downfall of the godly is usually the immediate forerunner of their advancement.

PSALM XIII.

Verse 1. How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? We are ready in all our troubles, when we find not present help at hand, to suppose the Lord to be far from us. We are impatient of delay, we cannot endure to wait the Lord's leisure, so soon as we are entered into the furnace of affliction, by and by we think that God should help us; every moment and minute, appeareth to be a day, and every day a year unto us, until He scatter the coals, and pull us as a firebrand out of the fire. This made our prophet in the heat of affliction to cry out, how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, forever. By which we see that the children of God are wonderfully assaulted, and the flesh wrestleth against the Spirit, and sometimes prevaieth, and for a time gets the upper hand. But seeing God is never far from us, however He may seem to delay and defer His help, let us learn (how great soever our afflictions be) not utterly to despair of God's mercy; but to consider, that however God often deferreth to help us, yet He is still present with us. It is the will and pleasure of God to try our faith, to stir up our zeal, to exercise our patience, and to teach us to make greater account of His blessings when we have obtained them.

Verse 3. Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. When David seems to fear death in this verse, it is not that he suspects any detriment to himself by death, that he should be the worse for dying, but that God may lose His glory, when as he adds there, the enemy shall say we have prevailed against him. For as in the primitive church, those that seem prayers for the dead at funerals, are indeed but thanksgiving unto God in their behalf that are departed; so as often as David expresses himself in that pathetic manner, Awake, O Lord, why sleepest Thou? Arise and cast us not off forever, it is a thanksgiving that he hath, and a prayer that he would not forget them.

PSALM XIV.

Verse 2. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. Wickedness and ignorance grow up together; ignorance is the mother of prophaneness, not of devotion. And therefore the Psalmist joineth these together; there is none that understandeth or seeketh after God. Would you know the reason why they did not seek after God, it was because they did not understand; and in the 4th verse Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? As if he had said, if they had but a little true knowledge among them all, they would not thus greedily have devoured my people; they made no bones of oppression, they swallowed the poor as pleasantly as bread; they did, they cared not; what then? They knew not what they ought to do. The floodgates of wickedness are open, where the door of knowledge is shut.

Verse 4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord. If these trees that brings not forth good fruit are threatened with fire, what shall become of those trees whose fruit, like the vines of Sodom and Gomorrah, is as bitter as gall. If he lie in torments that would not vouchsafe his crumbs to hungry Lazarus, what shall become of them who eat up the poor as bread? And if he must be cast into the fire that hath not

given his own goods, whether shall he be sent that hath preyed upon another man's. If he burn with the devil that hath not clothed the naked, where thinkest thou shall he burn that hath spoiled them?

Verse 6. You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge. As the godly are far from the counsels of the wicked, so the wicked are far from the counsel of the godly. You have shamed the counsel of the poor, i.e. ye are ashamed of it. By the poor, the prophet means here the godly poor, men fearing God, as it is plain by the end of the verse. You are ashamed of the counsel of the poor, why? because the Lord is his refuge. His counsel doth depend on the Lord; trust in the Lord, walk in His ways, shelter yourselves under His protection, this counsel our poor man gives; and he must needs to be a godly man that gives this counsel. This counsel you have shamed, i.e. despised. What have we to do with this counsel, to make the Lord our refuge? No we will take our own course, and work it out by our own wit.

PSALM XV.

Verse 1. Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? From whence we may learn, that some of those who profess to be of the true Church, may be excluded from the communion, when other some shall remain in this state and not be removed. For the question is moved, what are the marks of the members of the Church invisible? And who they are that shall abide in God's tabernacle, and dwell in His holy hill? We are also taught from hence, that only the Lord that searcheth the heart, can put the difference between the true and the false; for this cause the question is proposed to God; Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle?

Verse 4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord, &c. Those whom Christ loves we should love also; he that doth service to Christ, the whole profession is engaged to him. A righteous man honors them that fear the Lord; not only honors the master, but honors the servant. For as Alexander said of Hephastion, he is also Alexander, so this is also God's. For godly men are particles of God, and God will be honored in His particles; he that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten also. God's friends must not walk up and down, as if they had none but their Master to take them by their hand; but the whole fraternity must acknowledge them. Let God therefore recommend friends to us; if they bring along with them His certificate, the fruits of His Spirit; for their Master's sake let them be entertained. If the court of heaven hath bestowed honors upon them, and created them noble, let us give them their titles; let us acknowledge the King in His image, God in His saints, and honor Him in them.

PSALM XVI.

Verse 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight. All the delight of God's children should be in such as excel in virtue; we should bless their expressions, and desire their acquaintance; if they be Christ's, they should be ours. Which may serve to reprove them that leave Christ's friends to himself. For generally none are acknowledged, but upon particular respects. If they have pleased us, then we are bounden to them, we are at their dispose, we are their servants, but religion carries no such strict obligation with it; Christ's relation is none of ours. For let a man be never so singularly endowed with the graces of God, let him be the very reflex of His face, the print of His purity, yet for his meer sanctity he is little respected, precious he may be in God's eye, but man hath no eye for him; but true Christian

friendship is for God's sake. For a good man will love in man nothing but God, that is, the evidence of his grace.

Verse 5. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; Thou maintainest my lot. David does not speak here so narrowly, so penuriously, as to say God hath given me my portion, and I must look for no more; but God is my portion, and as long as He is God He hath more to give; and as long as I am His I have more to receive. And therefore never say God hath given me these and these temporal things, and I have scattered them wistfully, surely He will give me no more; these and these spiritual graces, and I have abused them, surely He will give me no more. For as for God's mercy, and His spiritual graces; as that language in which God spake, the Hebrew, hath no superlative; so His mercy hath no superlative; He sheweth no mercy which you can call His greatest mercy; His mercy is never at the highest; whatsoever He hath done for thy soul, or for any other, in applying Himself to it, He can exceed it.

Verse 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Faith in the resurrection to life, encourageth us against all the troubles and afflictions of this life; the hope of future good is a present comfort. For this cause we faint not, saith the Apostle. What cause was that? Because we have this hope, this faith, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus. Expectations from Christ are as the cordials which keep us from fainting under our burden, and revive us in the sorrows of death itself. The faith of Christ here, in the resurrection of His own body to life, is spoken of prophetically as that which bore up His spirit in the hour of death. Now as that was Christ's support in His sorrows and sufferings, that He should not be left in the grave, that He should not see corruption; so it is the support of saints, that though they see, yet they shall not for ever lie under the power of corruption.

PSALM XVII.

Verse 7. Shew Thy marvelous loving kindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand, them which put their trust in Thee, from those that rise up against them. David calls God's mercy here, multiplicatam, and mirisicatam; it is manifold, and it is marvelous; and therefore this sweet singer in many places carries it above His judgments, above the heavens, above all His works. And for the multitude of His mercies; put together that which David saith, Psalms 89:1-52. Where are Thine ancient mercies; God's mercies are as ancient as the Ancient of Days, even Himself; and that which another prophet saith, His mercies are new every morning; and put between these two. God's former and His future mercies, His present mercies in bringing thee this minute to the consideration of them, and thou hast found manifold and wondrous mercy.

Verse 8. Keep me as the apple of Thy eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings. David under this metaphor, the shadow of thy wings, doth not so much consider an absolute immunity, that we shall not be touched; but as a refreshing and consolation when we are touched, though we be pinched and wounded. The names of God which are most frequent in Scripture, are these three, Elohim, Adonai, and Jehovah; and to assure us of His power to deliver us, two of these three are names of power; but then the name Jehovah is not a name of power, but only of essence, of being, of subsistence; and yet in the virtue of that name, God relieved His people. So then, if in mine afflictions God vouchsafe to visit me in that name, to preserve me in my being in my subsistence in Him, if I be not shaken out of Him, disinherited in Him, let Him at His good pleasure reserve His Elohim, and His Adonai, the exercises and declarations of His mighty power, to those

great public causes that more concern His glory, then anything that can befall me. But if He impart His Jehovah, enlarge Himself so far towards me, as that I may live, and move, and have my being in Him; though I be not instantly delivered, nor mine enemies absolutely destroyed; yet this is as much as I should promise myself; this is as much as the Holy Ghost intends in this metaphor, the shadow of thy wings; that is, a refreshing a respiration, a conservation, a consolation, in all the afflictions that are inflicted upon me.

Verse 14. From men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with Thy hid treasure &c. Sometimes it is called God's hand, when it is the hand of a creature; it is God's hand in a creature's hand. God's hand when it is the hand of wicked men; God's hand when it is Satan's hand. So here you see a wicked man is God's sword, and God's hand. For God's hand may be understood of an instrument; and thus Satan himself may be God's hand to punish, in that sense as wicked men are said to be His hand, from the men that are Thy hand; though there be other readings of that place. Some read it, deliver me from men by Thy hand; and others, deliver me from men of Thy hand; but the first reading is most received; upon which account Titus Vespasian, being extolled for destroying Jerusalem, said, I have only lent God my hand, but He Himself hath done the work.

Verse 15. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness. One main sign and special character of love, is to suffer for Jesus the Father of sufferings, and King of the afflicted. Therefore the royal prophet saith here, I am well pleased when I shall behold myself marked with the characters of Thy sufferings. Jesus Christ in the great sacrifice of patience made in the beginning of ages, supplies the person of a great bishop, putting on flesh wholly imprinted with dolours, a heart drenched in acerbities, a tongue steeped in gall. Round about Him are all the most elevated and courageous souls, who all wear His livery, and both constantly and gloriously dispose themselves to this great model and pattern of sorrows. Suffering our trade, our vow, our profession; our souls are engaged by oath to this warfare, so soon as first we enter into Christianity. Love which cannot suffer, is not love; and if it cease to love when it should suffer, it never was what it professed.

PSALM XVIII.

Verse 2. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliver, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. In all this inventory; in all this armory and furniture of the Church, there is never a sword, no material sword in the Church's hand; arma nostra preces & lacryma; the primitive Church fought with nothing but prayers and tears; and with this artillery did they lay siege to and take even heaven itself.

Verse 4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. David was here, as a man bound and pinioned to execution, so that he saw nothing but death before him, and the snares and cords of the grave beset him, so hopeless was his estate, as if he were laid forth already, and wrapped up in the bonds and clothes of death. Now if you demand wherefore the Lord suffereth His enemies to ensnare His people so far, that their case seems desperate, their deliverance impossible. Tis answered, first, that hereby we may see our simplicity, who can neither observe nor prevent the wiles of Satan and his instruments. Secondly, that we may take notice of God's patience towards His enemies, in suffering them as long as He may; and then His justice, in taking them at the height. Thirdly, that we may learn to depend on God's power

and wisdom for safety and defense. Lastly, that the greater the dangers be, God's goodness may be the more magnified; and that in most desperate evils we may acknowledge our deliverance to be miraculous; that so the praise of all may be referred to the Lord, who is a very present refuge in time of trouble.

Verse 7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth. The troubles and confusions which are in the creature, are tokens and effects of the anger of God. As the settling and establishment of the creature is an effect and sign of God's goodness; or as these tell us that God is pleased, so when the Lord hurls the creature this way and that way, when He tosses it up and down, as if He cared not how this is an argument of His anger. Thus when David was in distress, and his enemies encompassed him round about; what then? Then the earth shook and trembled, &c. That God might rescue David out of that hand of trouble, He troubled the foundations of the earth, He made the world shake, and kingdoms tremble, that His David might be settled upon his throne.

Verse 23. I was also upright before Him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity. God hath given man that form in nature, much more in grace that he should be upright, and look up and contemplate heaven; and God there. And therefore to bend downwards upon the earth, to fix our breast, our heart to the earth, to inhere upon the profits and pleasures of the earth's; this is a manifest declination from this uprightness; from this rectitude of David. Nay, to go so far towards the love of the earth, as to be in love with the graves to be impatient of the calamities of this life, and murmur at God's declining us in this prison; to sink into a sordid melancholy, or irreligious dejection of spirit, this is also a declination from this rectitude, this uprightness. So it is too to decline towards the left hand, to modifications and temporizing in matter or form of religion; and to think all indifferent, all one; or to decline towards the right hand, in an over vehement zeal, to pardon no errors, to abate nothing of heresy, if a man believe not all, and just all as we believe; to abate nothing of reprobation, if a man live not just as we live; this is also a diversion, a deviation, a deflection from this rectitude, this uprightness. For the Hebrew word of this text signifies rectitudinem & planitiem, it signifies a direct way; for the devil's way was circular, compassing the earth; but the angel's way to heaven upon Jacob's ladder was a straight, a direct way. And then it signifies as a direct, and straight; so a plain, a smooth, and even way; a way that hath been beaten into a path before, a way that the Church hath walked in before; and not a discovery made by our curiosity, and our confidence, inventing from ourselves, or embracing from others new doctrines and opinions.

Verse 25. With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright. But doth the Lord take color from every one He meets, or change His temper as the company changes? That's the weakness of sinful man; he cannot do so, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of changing. God is pure and upright with the unclean and hypocritical, as well as with the pure and upright; and His actions shew Him to be so. God shows Himself forward with the forward, when He deals with them as He hath said He will deal with the forward, deny them and reject them. God shows Himself pure with the pure, when He deals with them, as He hath said He will, hear them, and accept them. Though there be nothing in our purity and sincerity which deserveth mercy, yet we cannot expect mercy without them; our comforts are not grounded upon our graces, but our comforts are the fruits and consequents of our graces.

Verse 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaketh them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. He that maketh half repentances, makes none. Men run out of their estates, as well by a negligence and not taking account of their officers, as by their own prodigality. Our salvation is as much endangered, if we call not our conscience to an examination, as if we repent not those sins which offer themselves to our knowledge and memory. And therefore David here places the consummation of his victory in this, I have pursued mine enemies, &c. God requires a pursuing of the enemy; a search for the sin, and not to stay till an officer that is, a sickness or any other calamity light upon that sin, and so bring it before us. God requires an overtaking of the enemy, that we be not weary in the search of our consciences; and God requires a consuming of the enemy not a weakening only, a dislodging and dispossessing of a sin, and the profit of that sin, but all the profit, and all the pleasure, of all the body of sin. For he that is sorry with a godly sorrow, he that confesses with a deliberate detestation, he that satisfies with a full restitution of all his sin, but one, that man is in no better case, then if at sea he should stop all leaks but one, and perish by that. Sivi solvi, solve, catena, saith St. Bernard. If thou wilt be discharged cancel all thy bonds, one chain till broke holds as fast as ten.

Verse 42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the winds. I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. I did scatter them, saith the original. Such a state, such a dispersion and scattering doth the heart and soul of an habitual sinner undergo. The wanton and licentious man sighs out his soul, weeps out his soul, swears out his soul in every place, where his lust, or his custom, or the glory of victory in overcoming and deluding puts him upon such solicitations; and this is a scattering of the soul. In the corrupt Taker his soul goes out, that it may leave him insensible of his sin, and not trouble him in his corrupt bargain; and in a corrupt Giver, ambitious of preferment; his soul goes out with his money; which he loves well, but not so well as his preferment. This year his soul and his money go out upon one office, and the next year more soul and more money upon another. He knows how his money will come in again; for they will bring it that have need of his corruptness in his offices; but where will this man find his soul, thus scattered upon every woman corruptly won, upon every office corruptly usurped, upon every fee corruptly taken.

Verse 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies; yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me; Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. What punishment soever is inflicted upon the enemies of God's Church; proceeds from God Himself, it is His work. Thus in the deliverance of David from Saul, and the murder that was acted by Saul upon himself, the vengeance in this story, the loss of Saul's life must not cost David the loss of his innocency. Saul had for a long time persecuted David, and now he is returned to persecute himself. His own fear and sword quickly dispatch him. David was revenged, when Saul was slain, but God was revenged, when Saul slew himself. Saul fell by his own hand, and by God's; his own hand acts the murder, but God's the revenge.

PSALM XIX.

Verse 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the end of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. As David saith of the sun of the firmament, the Father of Nature, there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. So we may say of the Son of God the Father of the faithful, in a higher sense then Abraham was so called, there is nothing hid from Him; no place, no person excluded from the benefit of His death. The Son hath paid the Father, hath received

enough for all, not in single money only for the discharge of thy lesser debts, thy idle words, thy wanton thoughts, thy unchaste looks; but in massie talents to discharge thy crying debts, the clamors of those poor whom thou hast oppressed, and thy thundering debts, those blasphemies by which thou hast torn that Father that made thee; that Son that redeemed thee, that Holy Ghost that would comfort thee.

Verse 12. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults. When we have passed many scrutinies, many inquisitions of the conscience, we can never get beyond the necessity of this petition. Lord cleanse me from my secret sins. We shall ever be guilty of sins which we shall forget, not only because they are so little, but because they are so great; that which should be compunction, will be consternation; and the anguish, which out of a natural tenderness of conscience, we should have at the first entering into those sins, will make us dispute on the sin's side; and for some present ease, and to give our heavy soul breath, we will find excuses for them; and at last slide and wear into a customary practice of them; and though we cannot be ignorant that we do them, yet we shall be ignorant that they are sins; but rather make them things indifferent; or recreations necessary to maintain a cheerfulness, and so to sin on; by which means we shall never be able to shut our mouths against this petition, cleanse me from my secret faults; for though the sin be manifest, the various circumstances that aggravate the sin, will be secret.

Verse 13. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. The original word for transgression, is a word that signifies sin in all extensions, the highest, the deepest, the weightiest sin; it is a malicious and a forcible opposition to God; it is when this Herod and this Pilate (this body and this soul of ours) are made friends, and agreed, that they may concur to the crucifying of Christ. When not only the members of our bodies, but the faculties of our souls, our will and understanding are bent upon sin; when we do not only sin strongly, and hungrily, and thirstily (which appertain to the body;) but we sin rationally; we find reasons (and those reasons even in God's long patience) why we should sin. We sin wittily, we invent new sins; and we think it an ignorant, a dull, and unsociable thing not to sin; yea we sin wisely and politically; and make our sin our way to preferment. And thus the word used here by the Holy Ghost expresseth both the vehemence, and the weight, and the largeness and the continuance; all extensions, all dimensions of sin.

03 - Chapter 3

PSALM XXI.

Verse 4. He asked life, of thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. In regard that God's dearest children are cut off many times in the flower of their years, how doth God make good this promise to those that are His. I answer; God in such cases makes His word good, in that instead of a less good He giveth a better, a greater; for suppose thou comest to a landed man, and dealest with him for some term of years in a farm; and when the deeds come to be drawn he maketh over to thee the fee simple of a manner, even so deals the Lord here. The King, saith the Psalms &c. God promised long life; and for the lease of that life of some few years continuance He bestoweth a perpetuity; instead of a miserable long life here, He giveth a blessed and eternal life hereafter. Which may reach us to suspend our censures, in regard of those that are taken away from us; and not to justify ourselves, because we survive and escape, when others perish; they may go for the better, and we be reserved for worse matters; to see and suffer that misery, which they are taken away from.

Verse 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Christ always had, hath, and shall have enemies, either openly sitting or secretly plotting against His Church; but herein lieth our comfort, that they shall at length be all destroyed; and this destruction is commonly set forth by most hot, burning, and tormenting fire. Wherefore, let us patiently wait upon Him, whatever we in the interim suffer at their hands; and let all the enemies of the truth, be dismayed, and whensoever they think upon the mischief they intend against God's Church, let them also think on that judgment God intends against them.

Verse 11. For they intended evil against thee; they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. The malicious enemies of Christ's kingdom, beside all the hatred they have shown and evil they have done, are still upon plots and designs to overturn Christ's kingdom; they intended evil against thee. The enemies of Christ's kingdom may possibly conceive, they only oppose such as do trouble mens' interests; and not as they are the Lord's children, yet it is found, that what they do against them, they do it against the Lord; because they do it against His children and subjects for His cause and service. And though the wicked are not able, to bring their designs to pass; yet the evil which they would do; and do set themselves to do, shall be made the reason of their destruction, as well as the evil which they have done, if they repent not. For, they intended, is here given as a reason of the judgment.

Verse 12. Therefore shalt Thou make them turn their back, when Thou shalt make ready Thine arrows upon Thy strings, against the face of them. The Lord will suffer His enemies to manifest themselves in open opposition oft times, before He fall upon them. For here they are found in the posture of pursuers and opposers of God; setting their face against Him, when He comes to execute judgment on them; Thou shalt make them turn their back; and when God falleth upon His enemies to be avenged on them; He useth to make them and the beholders see, that He hath set

them up as a mark to shoot at; for He will make ready His arrows one after another against the face of them.

PSALM XXII.

Verse 2. O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. The not enjoying of what we desire, whets our affections and makes us the more eager in the pursuit, and the gift more welcome at the receipt. For usually what is hardly got is greatly set by. And thus the child of God prays, sometimes on his knees, sometimes on his face, and that with sighs which cannot be uttered; and yet God seems not to regard. O my God, says David, here I have cried in the morning, and at night; but Thou hearest not. What then, is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save? No, but our iniquities do separate between us and our God. Sometimes we ask we know not what, with the sons of Zebedee; sometimes we ask with doubting and wavering; and sometimes we ask amiss, that we may consume it on our lusts. Lastly, sometimes, any, almost always, we have roving and ranging thoughts; and so no marvel if we receive not. Quomodo te audiri a Deo postulas, cum te ipse non audias; how canst thou expect that God should hear thee; when thou dost not hear thyself.

Verse 3. But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. It argues a great degree and much strength of grace, when we maintain high thoughts of God, and settled resolves that He is good; when He not only lets us fall low into trouble, but lets us lie unheard in the day of our trouble. Such was the strength of David's faith, or rather of Christ's, of whose sufferings this Psalm is a Prophecy; who as soon as he said, O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not; adds in the next verse, But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel; as if he had said, I will not have an evil, or an uncomely thought of Thee, though Thou refusest to hear; I know Thou art holy, and therefore canst not but be just and good, whatsoever Thou art pleased to do with me.

Verse 4. Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted and thou didst deliver them. It is wisdom to look to the carriage of the godly in former times; our fathers trusted in thee; and to look upon their patient depending on God, doubling their diligence in calling on Him; as their straits did grow, they cried, they trusted; and to remember that they did never seek God in vain, but every one of them were delivered and not confounded. For this direction is held forth to us in this example of Christ, and David.

Verse 6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. When David had said, as the lowest diminution that he could put upon man. I am a worm and no man; he might have gone lower, and said, I am a man and no worm. For man is so much less then a worm, as that worms of his own production shall feed upon his dead body in the grave; and an immortal worm gnaw his conscience in the torments of hell; and then, if that which God hath made thee, man, be nothing, canst thou be proud of that? Or think that any thing the King hath made thee, a Lord; or which thy wife hath made thee, rich; or which thy riches have made thee, an officer? As Job said of impertinent comforters, miserable comforters; so I say of these creations, miserable creations are they all.

Verse 9. But Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. Our birth and production is the special work of God; Thou art He that

tookest me out of my mother's womb, saith David here; and he apprehended the power of God so great in his natural birth, that he from thence takes an argument to strengthen his faith, that God could do any other thing for him how hard soever. He knew he could never be in such straits but the power of God could deliver him, when he once remembered that it was God that took him out of his mother's womb. For in the words immediately foregoing he bringeth in his enemies reproaching him, and saying, he trusted in God that He would deliver him, &c. They jeer him with his God, Let Him deliver him. David answers, what do ye think God cannot deliver me? Lord, saith he, thou art He that tookest me out of my mother's womb. Can I ever be in such straits, as I was then? Can I be ever in a more helpless condition? Can I ever be in more need of an Almighty help, then when I was struggling to get into the world? There is more of the power of God put forth in bringing a poor infant into the world, then in bringing him out of any trouble, or strait he can fall into, in his travels through the world.

Verse 15. My strength is dried up like a potsheard; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. Even then when a man is no man he may be a Christian; when I am a worm and no man, when I am the offscouring of the world; yet, as my Savior in the text, when He lay in the grave, and was brought to the dust of the earth, was the same Christ; so in the grave of oppression and persecution I am the same Christian, as in my baptism. Let nothing therefore that can befall thee despoil thee of the dignity and constancy of a Christian. However thou be severed from those things which thou makest account do make thee up; severed from a wife by divorce, from a child by death, from goods by fire or water; from an office by just, or unjust displeasure (which is the heavier but the happier case) yet never think thyself severed from thy head Christ Jesus, nor from being a lively member of His body. Thy Savior when He was brought to the dust of the grave, was still the same Lord; thou, when thou art enwrapped and interred in confusion, art still the same Christian. Be truly a Christian, and in the grave of persecution, in the grave of putrefaction, thou shalt retain the same nature, and even thy dust shall be Christian dust.

PSALM XXIII.

Verse 1. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. In the midst of our greatest miseries and afflictions our interest in God will be our comfort. Ask David, and he will tell us in that Psalm, that seeing the Lord is his shepherd he shall not want any good thing, even then when things go never so ill with him. In his sorrows he shall have consolation, in his dangers preservation, supply in his wants, safety in his ways; and whatever may be meet for him in any estate that may befall him.

Verse 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. See here what a faithful God you have to stand by you, one that will not fail in greatest need. No such trial of a friend as in time of trouble, but here many times friends will not, and sometimes they cannot help the case is sometimes so desperate, that friends society can only afford pity, not succor; they may look on, they cannot take off, but the presence of God is ever active and powerful; and whereas too most faithful friends part at death, this friend will not then leave us. David knew He would be with him in the shadow of death; not only when we walk through the pleasant meadow of prosperity, but when we go through the salt waters of affliction; nay, when we pass through Mare mortuum, the sea of death, He will be with us.

Verse 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. In the most present dangers, God shows the most present help; thou shalt spread my table in the very face of my enemy; even then when my enemy is nearest, and looketh on. As when the sword is in the hand of the angel, so when it is in the hand of man, a thousand shall fall on thy right hand, yet it shall not come nigh thee. Not nigh thee? What? Doth it not come nigh him when they die on every side of him? Yes, nigh him, but not nigh to hurt him; the power of God can bring us near to danger, and yet keep us far from harm. Yet we are not to take this, or the like holy writs of protection, as if God would deliver all his people from famine, or the sword. No, for the Lord knows how to distinguish His, when famine, and sword do not. If God's servants are not delivered from famine and sword, they are delivered by them, and while they are overcome by one trouble, they conquer all.

PSALM XXIV.

Verse 1. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. The devil told our Savior that all was his, and to whomsoever he would he gave it. Luke 4:1-44. But the devil lied in saying so for it is God alone that is the sole proprietary of the whole world; He only can truly say as Daniel 3:32. I rule in the kingdom of men; and give it to whosoever I will. How then can God do any man wrong, who is obliged to none, but all are engaged to Him for all they have. And again, how can God's children want anything that is good for them, seeing they have so rich a Father who seems to say unto them, as in Genesis 45:1-28. Regard not your stuff, for all the good of the land is yours.

Verse 2. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Hereby is mystically meant, that He hath set His church above the waters of adversity; so that how high soever they arise, it is kept still above them in safety, and so shall be for evermore. Or it may agree thus, He will take in all Nations to be in His grace, because all be His creatures; He made them so admirable an habitation at the first, and upholds it still, shewing hereby how much He regards them; therefore He will now extend His favor further towards them by taking them in to be His people.

Verse 4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. God looketh not, neither would He have us to look upon external titles, or outward state, but upon the uprightness of the heart. When David was anointed, 1 Samuel 16:1-23, Samuel was ready to pour the anointing oil upon Eliab, the eldest brother, 'cause as the text says, he was a goodly man. Not so says God, look not upon his countenance. Abel offered, so did Cain; but God rejected the offering of Cain, 'cause he offered not with an upright heart. The upright man is the first ingredient into that holy mountain. And indeed, what part of man is more fit for God than that which God himself shall choose, and that is the heart; My Son give me thy heart; not the eye, though it be piercing, nor the foot, though it be swift; nor the hand though it be strong, nor the tongue though it be eloquent; nor the head though it be politick; but the heart, an upright heart; he that hath an upright heart shall ascend into His holy mountain.

PSALM XXV.

Verse. 5. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation, on Thee do I wait all the day. When as the world began in a community, that every thing was every bodies; but

improved itself to a propriety, and came to meum and tuum, that every man knew his own; so that which is *salus Domini*, the salvation of the Lord, as it is in the first decree; and that which is *salus Mundi*, the salvation of the world, as it is in the accomplishment of the decree by Christ; may be *mea*, & *tua*, my salvation, and thy salvation, as tis applied by the Holy Ghost in the ministry of the Church. Salvation in the decree is, as the Bezar stone in the maw of that creature, where it grows. Salvation in Christ's death is, as the Bezar in the merchants or Apothecaries provision; but salvation in the church, in the distribution and application thereof by the Holy Ghost, is as that Bezar working in my veins, expelling my peccant humors, and rectifying my former defects.

Verse 11. For Thy name sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. It is well noted upon these words of David, for thy names' sake, O Lord, that the word is *Elohim*; which is Gods, or Lords, in the plural. For David, though he conceived not divers Gods, yet he knew three divers persons in that one God; and he knew, that by the sin which he lamented here, he had offended all those three persons. For whereas we consider principally in the Father power, and in the Son, wisdom, and in the Holy Ghost, goodness, David had sinned against the Father in his notion, in abusing his power and kingly authority to a mischievous and bloody end in the murder of *Uriah*; and he had sinned against the Son in his notion, in depraving and detorting true wisdom into craft and treachery; and he had sinned against the Holy Ghost in his notion, when he would not be content with the goodness and piety of *Uriah*; who refused to take the eases of his own house, and the pleasure of his wive's bosom, as long as God Himself in His army lodged in tents, and stood in the face of the enemy.

Verse 15. Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Upon these words of David's, Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord. S. Augustine, saith, *quafi diceretur, quid agitur de pedibus?* As though it were objected, is all thy care of thine eyes? What becomes of thy feet? Dost thou not look to thy steps, to thy life, as well as thy faith? To please God, as well as to know God? And he answers in the words that follow, *ipse evellet*; as for my feet, God shall order, that is, assist me in ordering them; if His eye be upon me, and mine upon Him (O blessed reflection, O powerful reciprocation, O happy correspondence!) He will pluck my feet out of the net though I be almost ensnared, almost entangled, He will snatch me out of the fire, deliver me from the tentation. Let us therefore look God full in the face; and then confidently expect deliverance from all enemies bodily or ghostly, either of the world, the flesh, or the devil.

Verse 16. Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. Although a Christian may be grown up to such a strength of devotion, as that he can boldly go to God in supplications, and intercessions, and thanksgivings; yet, saith S. Bernard, at first, when he comes first to deprehend himself in a particular sin, or in a course of sin, he comes *verecundo affectu*, bashfully, shamefully, tremblingly, he knows not what to ask; he dares ask no particular thing at God's hand; but although he be not come yet to particular requests for pardon of past sins, nor for strength against future, nor to a particular consideration of the weight of his sins, nor to a comparison between his sin and the mercy of God, yet he comes to a *misereremes Domine*, to a sudden ejaculation, O Lord be merciful unto me, how dare I do this in the sight of my God.

PSALM XXVI.

Verse 3. For Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in Thy truth. David provokes God with all those emphatical words, judge me, prove me, try me, examine me; and

more, ure renes; bring not only a candle to search, but even fire to melt me; but upon what confidence all this? For Thy loving kindness is ever before mine eyes. If God's anger, and not His loving kindness, had been before his eyes, it had been a fearful apparition, and a dangerous issue, to have gone upon; and therefore it was not God's searching, and trying and correcting of him that David deprecates here; but that anger which might change the nature of all, and make all the physic poison; all that which was intended for David's mollifying, to advance his obduration.

Verse 5. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. There is nothing that more discovereth what lieth in the heart, then the company with whom we ordinarily resort. The heart of man is deceitful, and the secret corners thereof are past finding out; but the company which we use shall try what is in it. If the heart be set upon goodness, we will not incline ourselves to any lewd conversation. The prophet David hereby justified his heart, in that he hated the company of evil persons; which may serve to reprove all such as are the companions of prophane livers. The crouding of ourselves into such company argues a comformity in affections. We see in the course of nature, that like will to like, and if they be not made like unto them, and corrupted by them, it is greatly to be feared they will be so.

Verse 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth. Every house by public designation separate for prayer, or other religious uses, is God's house. Thine house, saith this text. God had propriety in it, and had set His mark upon it, even His own name. And therefore it was in the Jews idiom of speech called the mountain of the Lord's house, and the Lord's house by our prophet frequently. So that since the purpose of man, in separating places of worship is that thither by order and with convenience, and in communities of men, God may be worshipped and prayed unto; God having declared that He accepts of such separate places to such purposes, saith, that there He will be called upon; that such places shall be places of advantage to our devotions, in respect of human order, and divine acceptance and benediction.

PSALM XXVII.

Verse 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. Strange, but yet strong, was the faith of the Psalmist in this verse. Lo, here a soul like the Ark rising with the waters; the encamping of an host is terrible; and yet David fears not; the rising up of war is yet more dangerous, yet David will not only not fear, but be confident; nor yet (which is very considerable) doth he say in God, but in this, that is in the very war itself, will I be confident; as knowing, that when the enemy did not only encamp about, but war against him; (so that either he must perish, or God must help) it would not be long ere the wisdom of the Almighty would find out a way to rescue him. Not much unlike this is that resolution of holy Job, though He slay me yet will I trust in Him; death and hope seem to be at the greatest distance, and yet here they are brought together; death could not kill Job's hope; nay according to Pagnines reading of the Hebrew text, behold He will slay me; death itself giveth life to his hope and becomes a prop to his confidence.

Verse 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will 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. To this note David sets his harp in many Psalms. Sometimes that God had suffered his enemies to possess His Tabernacle, as Psalms 78:1-72, He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh. But most commonly he complained that God disabled him from coming to the sanctuary. In which one thing

he sums up all his desires, all his prayers in this Psalm; to this end he expresses a holy jealousy, a religious envy, even to the sparrows and swallows (yea the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest of herself, even Thy altars, my King and my God). Thou art my king, and my God, and yet excludest me from that which Thou affordest to sparrows.

Verse 7. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, have mercy also upon me, and answer me. Have mercy upon me, is the first groan of a sick soul, the first glance of a soul directed towards God, and imports thus much. Lord turn Thy countenance towards me, Lord bring me to a sense that Thou art turned towards me; Lord bring me within such a distance, as my soul may feel warmth and comfort in the rising of that Sun. For though a sinner in his regeneration come not presently to look God in the face; nor conceive presently an assurance of an establish reconciliation, a fullness of pardon, a canceling of all former debts in an instant; yet such a one in his first act of regeneration, in this miserere met, is called to a contemplation of much comfort to his soul. For as S. Basil saith, in scala prima ascensio est ab humo; He that makes but one step up a stair, though he be not got much nearer to the top of the house, yet he is got from the ground; and delivered from the foulness and dampness of that; so in this first step of prayer miserere met, O Lord be merciful unto me, though man be not established in heaven, yet he is stept from the world, and the miserable comforters thereof.

Verse 8. When thou saidest, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. From this verse you may know how you may judge of yourselves in the time of hearing, whether the word be mixed with faith; if your hearts answer God's words as David's did; when God said, Seek ye my face, he answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. For faith is such an assent to every word of God, as it produceth affections and actions answerable to the word whereunto the heart assenteth. So that when John Baptist preacheth repentance, we grieve in the sense of sin; and when Christ preacheth the Gospel, we are comforted in hope of forgiveness. Hereby are condemned such, who are like those proud men who told Jeremy that he spake falsely, when he delivered the word of God, which crossed their purposes, as also such as despair in time of affliction, and do not live by faith.

PSALM XXVIII.

Verse 2. Hear the voice of my supplication, when I cry unto Thee. When I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle. He mentioneth the lifting up of his hands, as a sign of his seeking help only from above; which reproveth the remissness of too many in praying; who lift up no hands, nor make any outward expression; surely it sheweth a dead heart; and yet if this be done in hypocrisy; it availeth not neither; for with the hands the heart must be lifted up, that we may prevail.

Verse 4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the nakedness of their endeavors; give them after the work of their hands, render to them their desert. Here the prophet prays, that they might be dealt with according to their doings towards others, not out of a desire of private revenge; for then it had been evil, but from zeal for God's glory, and a prophetic spirit; by thus praying, shewing that it should be for aiming yet always at this, that the wicked enemies, being judged in this world, might at the last be made so ashamed of their evil doings, that they might be brought to repentance, and saved, as he elsewhere expresseth. Any imprecations which are not thus moderated, or made against any, without abundance of sin by them first committed, and long persisted in, come from the flesh and are sinful; for he saith not only their works; but the evil of

their doings, and the works of their hands, to shew that they were many and committed time after time without end.

Verse 8. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of His anointed. By this all power is ascribed unto Christ, to save at all times all such as believe in Him, to their assured comfort. And of David learn we likewise, when we pray, and when we have victory over our enemies, to ascribe the power whereby to Him alone, and not to ourselves, looking upon Christ also though despised by the Jews as weak and unable to save himself, as being of all power most able to save both temporally and eternally.

Verse 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up forever. Such as find access to God in prayer for themselves, should speak also a word for his Church, and say, Lord save thy people. For the privileges which the godly have, are common to all. The godly are all Gods people, his inheritance, his flock; and as the benefits imported under these titles are common; so are the duties due from us to God, imported thereby, common also, and to be so studied that we may discharge them; as we would find from God the benefits of protection and deliverance, as subjects whom he will save, as being fed and led on as his flock, and exalted over all our enemies.

PSALM XXIX.

Verse 9. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests and in His temple doth every one speak of the glory. God is worthy of all praise and honor; not only when He doth enrich and strengthen us, but also when He doth impoverish and weaken us. When God thunders in judgments so loud; that He breaketh the cedars, and shakes the wilderness; then to give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, argues a spirit highly enabled and glorious in grace. Therefore His children should not rest in this; that they bear afflictions, but they should labor to bring their hearts to bless and glorify God in and for the afflictions that they bear. And a soul that thus honoureth God shall assuredly receive honor from God. That which the Apostle speaks of the saint suffering persecution, is true of them in any kind of holy suffering, the spirit of glory and of God doth rest upon them 2 Peter 4.

Verse 10. For the Lord sitteth upon the cloud yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. However the king of the earth be troubled, and rais'd and thrown down again; yet the Lord sitteth King forever. The Lord dwelleth in the heavens, and yet He sits upon the compass of the earth, Isaiah 40:1-31 where no earthquake shakes His seat; for sedet in confusione, as one translation reads this place here, the Lord sitteth upon the flood, so we read it; what confusions soever disorder the world; what floods soever surround and overflow the world, the Lord is safe.

Verse 11. The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace. Peace is one of the greatest temporal blessings that a state or church can receive; and therefore the prophet calls it here not barely peace but the blessing of peace; and doubtless it is to teach the world, that all earthly blessings are as it were unblessed till peace be upon them, till then no enjoying of any. And therefore it was an ancient custom among the Jews, to salute them to whom they wished all happiness with this complement, peace be unto you. For indeed without peace we can have no solid temporal happiness. Peace, or nothing; peace, and everything. With peace your barns are your own, and your bags are your own, your servants are your own, and your wives they

also are your own too; but without peace none of all these things are yours, not so much as your very wives, for they are all at the mercy of the soldiers. Neither is this blessing of peace a peculiar only of particular men, but likewise of whole nations it is a national blessing, a fundamental happiness, that which blesseth all other things to us, and without which they are not blessings; and this not in respect of God's people alone, but of the very infidels themselves, and such was at the birth of Christ, when it was said, Isaiah 19:1-25, that there should be freedom of traffic and commerce, and this not without a blessing, even a blessing in the midst of the land, for the Lord of hosts shall bless them. Verse 25.

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