
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>



Princeton University Library



32101 063698631

ANNEX

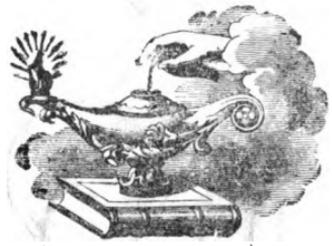
2

28
3

ANNEX LIB.

5228
.283

Library of the College of New Jersey.



Presented by

~~XXII 1856-28~~

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ON

THE PSALMS.

BY J. N. Darby

LONDON:

ROBERT L. ALLAN, 15 PATERNOSTER ROW;

AND 75 SAUCHIEHALL STREET, GLASGOW.

DUBLIN: TRACT DEPOT, 13 WESTLAND ROW.

GUERNSEY: J. TUNLEY, 104 VICTORIA ROAD.

BOSTON, U.S.: F. G. BROWN, 3 TREMONT ROW.

PREFACE.

PROBABLY no part of Scripture has been so little generally understood in its true application and interpretation as the Book of Psalms. And yet but few portions have been more the solace of the heart, in giving a voice to the exercises of souls of the saints of God in all ages than they.

With the true understanding, in recent years, of the calling and hopes of the Church of God, has also been unfolded that of Israel; and with this, the understanding of those touching and heartfeeling plaints which came from the pen and heart of the Shepherd-King of Israel, as of others too—many of them the fruit of those moments of his sufferings, under the hand and during the reign of Saul.

“David and all his afflictions,” touches and moves the heart’s affections more than “Solomon in all his glories.” A greater than David was there in spirit, giving a voice to those blessed and divine songs. As an inspired writer in the New Testament when using, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, one of these divine songs, (Ps. viii.) in unfolding the glories of the Son of Man, (Heb. ii.) would not say, “*David*” in a certain place testified, but “*One* in a certain place testified;” for he knew that a greater than David was there!

We read in Isaiah, (c. lxiii.) “In all their afflictions He was afflicted;” and we know of a day which approaches fast, when Jacob’s time of trouble comes, (Jer. xxx. 7) and unlike his former troubles “he shall be saved out of it.” He will then have to pass

5228
283

(RECAP)

20007

through his sorrow in the great tribulation, under the government of God in the earth. These divine plaints will find a response in his heart when passing through the furnace of affliction in that day. Jesus had been through them before him, "in all their afflictions . . . afflicted." And the godly Remnant of Israel will thus learn morally, the heart and affections of Jehovah-Messiah; before their eyes behold Him; and they look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son; and say, What are these wounds in thine hands? And He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (Zech. xii., xiii.)

All this has been treated in the way of prophetic interpretation by the writer of this book.* This treatise does not therefore so much take up the Psalms in this way; but with the view of the profit to the souls of the saints, in their moral teaching, apart from direct prophetic interpretation.

Still, while sweet and blessed lessons are to be gathered here as in all parts of the word of God; they do not contain the true experience of Christians, in the known and enjoyed relationship ministered to us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; unless so far as we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ. We possess four things, as Christians, which are never found in the Psalms. They are, a purged conscience through the finished work of the cross. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The knowledge of the Father, by the Spirit of the Son: and our standing in divine righteousness by the gospel, in contrast to the "forbearance," under which the saints of old stood before God. (See Rom. iii. 25, 26.)

* Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. Vol. ii. Morrish; London.

When at peace with God, the heart turns back from the Epistles, where the work of Christ is unfolded, and all needed to set the soul at rest and peace with God is made known; it turns back to the Gospels to learn the ways, and thoughts and actions of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. It turns back still—when rightly informed as to the true meaning of the Psalms,—to them, and learns the heart of Christ, and how His sympathies enter into, and give a voice to the exercises of His people's hearts. He "learned" all this when in divine grace, He entered into that order of suffering, especially at the close of His life on earth, in order to be able to speak a word in season to him who is weary. It learns too the plaint of His own heart, at moments when no human heart could ever fathom the deep waters of anguish His holy soul passed through.

May the reader learn, by His Gracious Spirit, and as at peace with God, to discern the things that differ, and to gather from every line of Scripture those lessons by which the heart is enlarged in the knowledge of Jesus; that so, while he knows the true and direct application of the Book of Psalms, as intended of God, he may also find in them sweet food for his own soul, and solace and comfort in the sorrows and trials of the way; and more truly apprehend the dealings and government of God, which never changes in its direct application; though never displayed unless on its true platform—His ancient people Israel, now set aside nationally for a time; but hereafter to be restored, and to be the platform for His open and manifest government of the world.

F. G. P.

BLACKROCK, 1870.

ERRATA.

- Page 25, line 9, *for* which he has brought, *read* which He has brought.
,, 35, line 4 from foot, *for* His . . . place as man in glory, *read*
His . . . place as man is glory.
,, 46, line 11 from foot, *for* He that loves Him, *read* he that loves
Him.
,, 50, line 2 from foot, delete period after "and at thy right hand."
,, 59, line 17, *for* does so to, *read* does so too.
,, 59, " 18, ,, *for* his living heard, *read* for his being heard.
,, 63, " 13, ,, which he Has, *read* which He has.
,, 66, " 9, insert in before xxi.—9.
,, 69, " 11, delete "in which."
,, 71, " 4 from foot, *for* forsaken, *read* forsaking.
,, 71, last line, *for* enclouded, *read* unclouded.
,, 82, line 1, *for* for He knew Jehovah, *read* for he knew Jehovah.
,, 90, line 8 from foot, *for* sheel, *read* sheol.
,, 97, line 2, *for* come upon Him that cries, *read* come upon him that
cries.
,, 129, line 9 from foot, delete "is" before "in chastening."
,, 345, line 15, *for* God's ways revealing, *read* God's way revealing.

INDEX.

	PAGE.		PAGE.
Psalm i.,	10	Psalm xxxvi.,	112
„ i.,	11	„ xxxvii.,	120
„ iii.,	11	„ xxxviii.,	125
„ iv.,	13	„ xxxix.,	129
„ v.,	14	„ xl.,	129
„ vi.,	16	„ xli.,	135
„ vii.,	18	„ xlii.,	138
„ viii.,	19	„ xliii.,	143
„ ix., x.,	19	„ xliv.,	145
„ xi.,	20	„ xlv.,	153
„ xii.,	25	„ xlvi.,	155
„ xiii.,	26	„ xlvii.,	157
„ xiv.,	28	„ xlviii., xlix.,	158
„ xv.,	29	„ l.,	161
„ xvi.,	29	„ li.,	162
„ xvii.,	54	„ lii.,	168
„ xviii.,	58	„ liii.,	169
„ xix.,	61	„ liv.,	171
„ xx., xxi.,	65	„ lv.,	171
„ xxii.,	67	„ lvi.,	174
„ xxiii.,	76	„ lvii.,	177
„ xxiv.,	78	„ lviii.,	179
„ xxv.,	80	„ lix.,	180
„ xxvi.,	86	„ lx.,	181
„ xxvii.,	86	„ lxi.,	182
„ xxviii.,	90	„ lxii.,	183
„ xxix.,	92	„ lxiii.,	186
„ xxx.,	93	„ lxiv.,	191
„ xxxi.,	96	„ lxv.,	193
„ xxxii.,	98	„ lxvi.,	195
„ xxxiii.,	105	„ lxvii.,	197
„ xxxiv.,	106	„ lxviii.,	197
„ xxxv.,	110	„ lxix.,	198

	PAGE.		PAGE.
Psalm lxx., - - -	198	Psalm cxv., - - -	266
„ lxxi., - - -	198	„ cxvi., - - -	268
„ lxxii., - - -	198	„ cxvii., - - -	270
„ lxxiii., - - -	198	„ cxviii., - - -	270
„ lxxiv., - - -	203	„ cxix., - - -	271
„ lxxv., - - -	204	„ cxx., - - -	314
„ lxxvi., - - -	204	„ cxxi., - - -	314
„ lxxvii., - - -	205	„ cxxii., - - -	315
„ lxxviii., - - -	207	„ cxxiii., - - -	315
„ lxxix., - - -	209	„ cxxiv., - - -	316
„ lxxx., - - -	210	„ cxxv., - - -	316
„ lxxxi., - - -	215	„ cxxvi., - - -	316
„ lxxxii., - - -	217	„ cxxvii., - - -	318
„ lxxxiii., - - -	217	„ cxxviii., - - -	318
„ lxxxiv., - - -	218	„ cxxix., - - -	319
„ lxxxv., - - -	222	„ cxxx., - - -	320
„ lxxxvi., - - -	227	„ cxxxi., - - -	321
„ lxxxvii., - - -	229	„ cxxxii., - - -	321
„ lxxxviii., - - -	230	„ cxxxiii., - - -	326
„ lxxxix., - - -	233	„ cxxxiv., - - -	327
„ xc., - - -	235	„ cxxxv., - - -	328
„ xci., - - -	238	„ cxxxvi., - - -	320
„ xcii., - - -	240	„ cxxxvii., - - -	331
„ xciii., - - -	241	„ cxxxviii., - - -	331
„ xciv., - - -	245	„ cxxxix., - - -	334
„ xcv.—cii., - - -	253	„ cxl., - - -	336
„ ciil., - - -	256	„ cxli., - - -	336
„ civ., - - -	256	„ cxlii., - - -	338
„ cv., evi., cvii., - - -	257	„ cxliiii., - - -	338
„ cviii., - - -	260	„ cxliv., - - -	340
„ cix., - - -	261	„ cxlv., - - -	340
„ cx., - - -	262	„ cxlvi., - - -	343
„ cxl., - - -	263	„ cxlvii., - - -	343
„ cxli., - - -	264	„ cxlviii., - - -	345
„ cxlii., - - -	264	„ cxlix., - - -	346
„ cxliii., - - -	265	„ cl., - - -	346
„ cxliv., - - -	266		

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PSALMS.

MY purpose in this series of papers is not to interpret the Psalms, but to draw from them some portion of the spiritual instruction and edification they afford our souls. The interpretation has been sought to be given elsewhere. The Psalms afford us special light on the government of God and the sympathies of the Spirit of Christ with His people. This, in the first instance, has the Jews for its object and centre of display. Still, in making allowance for the difference of their state and ours, and of the relationship of a people with Jehovah and children with a Father, God's ways in government apply to us Christians also. If it is not the highest ground on which a Christian is viewed, for that is heavenly, it is a most important and interesting one, and brings out all the tenderest displays of divine care, the care of Him who counts the very hairs of our head, and the seriousness and vigilance required in walking before God, who never swerves from His holy ways, who is not mocked, nor withdraws His eyes from the righteous, though all be the ministration of His grace for perfecting us according to these ways before Him. Of this application of the government of God to the Christian's ways, the

Epistles of Peter are more especially the witness. See, for example, 1 Peter i. 17; iii. 10—15, and the spirit and tenor of the whole Epistle. This government in the 2nd Ep. is carried on to the consummation of all things. The first is more the government of the righteous, the second the judgment of the wicked, though that judgment, as closing the power of evil and the deliverance of the just, be alluded to in the first also. He was the apostle of the circumcision, and this subject came specially under his eye in teaching.

Psalm i. This government in the earth is plainly pointed out in the first Psalm and the character of those whom that government blesses. He it is who keeps separate from the wicked in his way, and delights in the law of Jehovah and meditates on it. Submission to the Christ, as the depositary of this government in God's counsels at the close of this time of trial, is the subject of the second. Only a few words on the first of these two Psalms, which lay the basis of all the rest. The counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful are avoided. While here connected with human responsibility in walk, yet it is being kept from the evil. I do not desire to spin out the force of the words, but a few remarks may be made on these words. The ungodly have plans, counsels of their own will, their own way of viewing things and arrangements to obtain their purpose. There the just is not found. The sinner has a path in which he walks, pleasing himself there: the just does not walk with him. The scornful are at ease, despising God.

There the just will not sit. Judgment will come and such will not be allowed to stand in the congregation of the just then brought to rest by the glory of God.

Psalm ii. This Psalm announces the establishment of Christ's earthly triumph and royalty in Zion, when the heathen shall be given Him for an inheritance. This is not fulfilled. The Government of God does not secure the good from suffering as it will then, but turns suffering to spiritual blessing and restrains the remainder of wrath, giving a glorious reward for our little sorrows. But for us a Father's name is revealed in them. We call on the Father who, without respect of persons, judges according to every man's work, and we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed. Here kings are called on to submit before the coming judgment of the earth. But this is not yet executed, and we have to learn our own lesson in patience. This the Psalms will teach us.

Psalm iii. Let us see the lessons of the first Psalms which follow. Troublers are multiplied, but the first thought of faith is "Lord." There the spirit is at home and looks at troublers from thence. Jehovah is thus trusted. When "Lord" comes in the heart *before* those that trouble me, all is well. Our spirit sees Him concerned in matters and is at peace. He is a glory, shield, and lifter up. Another point is, it is not a lazy, listless view of evil and good, nor listless confidence. Desire and dependence are active, the links of the soul with Jehovah. *I cried* and He heard. That is certain. That is the confidence that if we ask anything accord-

ing to His will He hears, and if He hears, we have the petition. We do not desire, if sincere, to have anything not according to His will; but it is an immense thing, in the midst of trial and difficulty, to be sure of God's hearing, and God's arm, in what is according to His will. Hence rest and peace. I laid me down and slept: I awaked: for the Lord sustained me. How emphatic and simple! Is it so with you reader? Does all trouble find your heart resting on God as your Father that, when it is multiplied, it leaves your spirit at rest, your sleep sweet, lying down sleeping and rising as if all was peace around you because you know God is and disposes of all things? Is He thus between you and your troubles and troublers? And if He is, what can reach you? The thousands of enemies make no difference if God is there. The Assyrian is gone before he can arise to trouble or execute the threats, which, after all, betray his conscious fear. We are foolish as to difficulties and trials, measuring them by our strength instead of God's, who is for us if we are His. What matter that the cities of Canaan were walled up to heaven, if the walls fell at the blast of a ram's horn? Could Peter have walked on a smooth sea better than on a rough one? Our wisdom is to know that we can do nothing without Jesus—with Him, everything that is according to His will. The secret of peace is to be occupied with Him for His own sake, and we shall find peace in Him and through Him, and be more than conquerors when trouble comes, not that we shall be insensible to trial, but find Him and His tender care with us when trouble comes.

Psalm iv. This Psalm affords us another most important principle, the effect of a good conscience in calling upon God in our distress. It is not here a good conscience as justified from sin, but a practically good conscience, giving confidence towards God. If our heart condemn us not, says the apostle, then have we confidence towards God. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. He does not say, Justify me, O God of my righteousness; but hear me. The soul is in trouble, yet had been enlarged, had had experience of God's faithful lovingkindness. His glory and honour was from God. How true this was of Christ! Man turned it into shame and sought after vanity. Still it remained unalterably true, in the divine government of Him who cannot deny Himself that He has set apart the godly for Himself. They are thine, says Christ. We are a peculiar people to Himself. Now this is always true, but in walking in godliness we have the present confidence of it, and our eye sees God brightly, and we know then He will hear us. We have not lost the perception of what He is at the present moment for us. Our soul is not beclouded, and nothing is so soon clouded as present dependence on and confidence in God. Integrity when there is dependence, gives courage. It is not that God will not hear us from the depths of contrition—but that is another thing. Integrity of heart gives confidence in the day of trouble, because God is seen by the spirit. The eye is then fixed on Him across all the trouble. And so it is here: Commune with your own heart and be still; worship God in integrity, without fear, and trust in Him. In what is

around us, many might say, Where is any good to be found? and discouraged and disheartened, despair of finding any; but in and through all circumstances the light of God's countenance is the secure and unchangeable good. His favour is better than life. Besides, it secures good. The power of evil is below the power of God. He disposes of it, removes it, turns it to blessing, annuls it as He sees fit. The light of His countenance does this for faith. And the soul rises above evil and rejoices in God. Hence there is more joy than in temporal blessings. They may be taken away: besides, they are not God Himself, and the light of His countenance in trouble is altogether Himself, and gives the secret to the soul of His being for us. Hence he lays down in peace and sleeps—does not disquiet himself in anxious watchfulness against evil, for after all it is God only that secures him in joy or trouble.

Psalm v. furnishes the occasion of saying a word on the calls for judgment which are many times found in the book, and with that I shall pass it over. There is constancy of cry in the presence of enemies. It is to Jehovah the tried one looks; but it is on the ground of that righteous character and government of God which makes it impossible for Him to look on evil complacently. He will destroy the violent and deceitful man. And this is right. The Christian feels God ought not to let successful evil go on for ever. When his mind rests on the government of God, he looks for the removal of evil by judgment, and rejoices in it; not in thinking of the evil doer, but

of the righteousness and the result. Vengeance belongs to God. But it is in no way the element He lives in. The Jew having his portion in the earth—“for the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace”—looks for the removal of the violent and deceitful man in order to his own comfort and rest. Not so the Christian. He leaves the violent man here and goes to heaven. He walks, as to his personal walk, in the time of grace and leaves it for glory. Even in the millennium, when government will be exercised and the wicked cut off, his distinctive place is grace. The river of water flows out of the city; the leaves of the tree of life, of which he eats the full ripe fruit, are for the healing of the nations. *Now* his place is wholly grace and patience. He does well, suffers for it, and takes it patiently, and knows this is acceptable with God. He would overcome evil with good. He sees the evil, knows it will be judged that the judgment shall devour the adversaries, and, viewed as adversaries, can be glad that they are removed from hindering good. Righteous judgment, I repeat, his soul owns and acquiesces in. But he looks not for it for his own gain or liberty. He is above this in grace. And this was Christ's place. He will execute judgment. His Spirit calls in these Psalms for judgment. But as walking on earth, in which He was a personal pattern for us, He did not call for judgment on His enemies. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” was His word when their violence was directed against Himself; and in judgment He opened not His mouth.

Now the fifth Psalm takes up the call for judgment according to God's government of the earth, founded on Jehovah's immutable character, and looks for the happiness and joy of Jehovah's people flowing from it. And so it will, but not ours, because our joy is in heaven, where such deliverances are not needed. We leave the earth. Hence while the spirit sees and feels the rightness of this Psalm, I do not give it as in any way the experience of a Christian, save that his cry in difficulty and trial is undividedly and actively directed to the Lord—we may say to the Father.

Psalms vi. and vii. both partake of this character and call for judgment. But the sixth is on very different ground from the fifth, and in certain respects will afford us experimental light for the Christian. When the believing soul is under trial, the recurrence to God as its resource and hope is the natural movement of faith. The great grace of God in being for us and the sense that there is nothing like this love, the confidence which accompanies submission of heart, draw out the heart towards Him. Nor is there a sweeter time for the soul that trusts Him than the time of trial. This supposes indeed the will to be broken, and the heart subject, and God's love to be known. When this is not the case the trial through grace works submission and is then removed, or the soul finds its happiness in the wise and holy will of God, and in the fruit it bears. But there is another case where trial, though ever salutary and gracious, has another element in which it makes confiding love to God more difficult. I mean where the

trial has its source in the conduct of the person suffering. If I have brought trial on myself by sin, how difficult to see love in it! how difficult not to groan in the consciousness that it is the fruit of sin and just rebuke for it, and hence that we have no right to think of love in it! Yet where can we turn but to Him, and how look to Him to deliver whom we have offended? Such is the real and distressing difficulty of a soul which, feeling that it has brought sorrow on itself, feels it has no right to look for deliverance. It is indeed almost tempted to despair and sink under the sense of hopelessness. This was the force of our Lord's intercession for Peter, that his faith might not fail, his confidence in Christ, and his love and hope of divine favour not be lost, or he might fall into the hands of Satan through despair and remorse. In his case it was not trial or chastening, but the danger was the same. Faith hinders this despairing feeling but it does not take away the sense of sin nor of the justness of rebuke; but it trusts God and His love and goodness, which now take the character of mercy to the spirit of the sufferer. The sense of sin is deeper, the dread of consequences less, and God is trusted with a humbled heart in spite of all. Still it is felt that rebuke is deserved—nay, the soul may be in a measure under it. This is the state brought before us in the sixth Psalm. It pleads the distress and desolateness under which it is lying, and looks for mercy, and pleads that the rebuke may not be in anger. It has confidence in God, though in presence of the thought that the rebuke of His anger would be but the natural consequence. It owns the justness of this, yet resting

in faith on grace says, How long? God cannot cast off for ever those who trust in Him: light will spring up. There is relationship with God and faith counts on it. So that the heart can plead its extreme sorrow and trial with a God whose compassions are known. The last three verses express this confidence fully. We see how the government of God applies to this world, so that death has the character, in that government, when so falling on anyone, of cutting off. This was fully true with the Jew, as we see in Hezekiah and even in Job. But it is true in a measure as to the Christian. There are sins unto death, and death may have the character of discipline, as 1 Cor. xi., and may be arrested, as we read in James' and John's Epistles. The Psalm does not look beyond it, save into darkness, nor does the government of God either. When the believer has peace, he looks at discipline, even when justly severe, in the sense of certain divine favour. Hence his horror of sin is of a much purer kind, for it abhors the sin and not its consequences. It may be that the fiery darts of the wicked reach him or that dread threatens him at least. He looks through it to God's mercy and faithfulness. His faith through Christ's intercession does not fail. Still this is a terrible state; but the heart clings to God and can say, How long?

Psalm vii. is a full and elaborate appeal to righteousness and vengeance, and faith in that judgment. Thus the congregations of the peoples of the earth will own Jehovah and compass Him about.

He looks for God's anger on the wicked as he

depreciated it for himself, and he expects it with a certain faith. This we do and own it all to be most right and excellent; but I cannot give the Psalm as presenting anything of the experience of the Christian, save the consciousness of integrity and the fact of trusting God. It is all true and certain; but it is for those who are in the distress produced by the haughty wicked, and look for deliverance, and not to suffer like and with Christ that they may be glorified together, that the Psalm provides an expression of feeling.

Psalm viii. is the celebration of Jehovah's millennial dominion and the glory of the Son of man in connexion with, and in the mouth of, the Jewish people.

I pass over the 9th and 10th Psalms—the former celebrating the judgment of the enemies of Israel, the latter descriptive of the wickedness of their oppressors. They express the consciousness during the oppression that God does see it, and does not forget the humble; and then, on the deliverance, celebrate the faithfulness of Jehovah. The *world* is judged in righteousness, and Jehovah known by the judgment which He executes. I have only to draw the reader's serious attention to the judgment of the world here spoken of, and the main scene of it in the land of Israel; while, in every case, the humble soul in oppression and trial may walk in peaceful assurance that God sees it, and that its cause is in the hands of God. Yea, what is more difficult, that when it has brought it on itself, if truly humbled, it may count on

God. I now turn to the expression of the feeling of those who are in the trial before the deliverance comes, and while they have to possess their souls in patience.

Psalm xi. sees distinctly—as is always true, though not publicly manifested as at that time—that there is no hope from, no reliance on, man on the earth—that nothing earthly is stable, and that evil has brought in ruin. The foundations are cast down, and what are the righteous to do? This, for faith, is true, since the time that Christ was rejected on earth; only the restraining hand of God checks the power of evil, as long as patience can be exercised, and there are souls yet to be drawn out to the fellowship of Christ. It will be openly the case when the wicked one wields power in the earth, before God arises to judgment, and to help all the meek of the earth. Cases of peculiar trial bring us often into analogous circumstances in our own little sphere. Only we must remember that we have to do with a Father known as such, who disciplines us for our profit, for our heavenly and eternal gain, with a well-known love which has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us.

The question put in the Psalm is: If the foundations be cast down, what can the righteous do?—what they might refer to as of divine stability; for good does not exist, and the wicked are disturbed by no scruple of conscience and with fraud of heart seek to destroy the righteous. There is a time when the Lord warns to flee, when no action and no patience is of any avail. This is not the case here. It is only so when God

delivers up all to the wicked for a time. Fear and unbelief would urge flight, as a bird, away from the scene to a place of refuge and human security. Faith looks higher. "In Jehovah put I my trust." Trust in the Lord, who is above all, to whom nothing is unknown, whom nothing escapes, whose faithfulness is unchangeable, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, who, after all, orders everything, whatever man's plans are, who is our Father. Trust in Him is the resource and peace-giving feeling of the righteous. This, in its nature, gives a perfect walk and calmness at all times; because circumstances do not govern the feelings, and the soul has no motive to lead it but the will of God, and can have boldness to do it when called on, through confidence in Him. It gives calmness, too, because God is trusted for every result.

But the simple fact of this confidence is not all the Psalm teaches us. All is subverted and in confusion on earth. No security for the righteous there. But Jehovah is in His holy temple. His throne is in heaven. And His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. He does not slumber nor sleep; the righteous may leave his cause to Him. But there is, besides this, an explanation of God's ways in the time of sorrow. Jehovah tries the righteous. When His eyelids, who sees all things according to His own purity, try the children of men, He has an object as regards the righteous: He proves and sifts them. This is a most important truth—the activity of God in dealing with the righteous, to accomplish His own gracious purposes as to them, to manifest His own

character, to judge, and lead them to judge, all that is not according to it, and thus give them the intelligence of what He is, and conform them morally to it—at the same time subjecting their will, and engaging their affections, by the sense of His faithfulness and love. The breaking of the will is a great means of opening the understanding.

But His temple and His throne govern all this. In His temple everyone speaks of His honour. It is the place where man approaches Him, where His nature and character are revealed, for man to be associated with Him according to them. And the throne orders all things, to associate us rightly with the temple. The flesh, of course, cannot always like it; but this dealing with it is just what is profitable in the matter. He tries the children of men. Their actions do not escape His eye. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, and He judges of them all. But more particularly He tries the righteous. This is in contrast with His hatred of the wicked, on whom He will pour out judgment. In His trial of the righteous, one must first think of God's own character and glory. This He maintains. For, however His countenance beholds the upright, however much He delights in them in love, He cannot deny Himself. He will conform them to what He is, but not relinquish that. He maintains his character in government. He has let the earth know, in Israel, that He will not have wickedness. The nearness of a people to Him is only an additional motive for this. "Thee only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will

I punish you for your iniquities." And *now*, whatever His grace, God is not mocked: what a man sows he will reap. The passages are numberless in which this principle is applied to Israel. It is carefully maintained. (Rom. ii. 6, and following verses.) The epistles of Peter particularly unfold this righteous government of God—the first, as regards the righteous; the second, as against the wicked. In trying the righteous, God vindicates and maintains His character in those near Him.

But it is for the profit also of those who are tried, the precious proof of the constant watchful care of God. "He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous," says Elihu. It is, *if need be*, that we are in heaviness through manifold temptations or trials. We are to count it even all joy (James) when we fall into divers temptations, seeing that they work patience. And mark the fruit: "Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete in all the will of God." We are to glory in tribulations; (Rom. v. ;) they work patience; and this brightens, in its result, our hope, the love of God being shed abroad in the soul—the true key to all that comes.

The love of God in the chastening itself leads to two conclusions, expressed in Heb. xii.—not to despise the chastening; for there must be a reason for it in us, if love does it; and not to faint, because it is love which does it.

There are two causes which, as we are taught in the Book of Job, bring trial on the saint. First, God shows the transgressions in which man has exceeded, that is, positive faults. Secondly, He withdraws

man from his purpose, and hides pride from him. (Job xxxiii. 16, 17; xxxvi. 7—9.) This book gives us full divine instruction as to God's ways in trying the righteous. There we learn another truth, important to exercised souls, who often dwell on secondary causes: that God is the cause, and moves in all these exercises. The origin of all Job's trials was not Satan's accusation, but God's word, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" God had, and saw that he needed this. The instruments were wicked, or disasters caused by Satan; but God had considered His servant, tried the righteous, but measured exactly the trial—stayed His rough wind in the day of the east wind, debated in measure: and when He had done His own work, (which Satan could not do at all,) and shown Job to himself, blessed him abundantly.

He humbles us and proves us, that we may know what is in our heart—feeds us with the bread of faith. But it is to do us good in our latter end.

When the trial is met in the truth and power of spiritual life, it develops and brings out much more softness and maturity of grace—a spirit more separated from the world to God, and more acquainted with God. Where it is met by or meets the flesh, the will of this, its rebellion, is brought to light, the conscience becomes sensible of it before God, and, by the discipline itself, the self-will is, even insensibly, destroyed.

Trial cannot in itself confer grace; but, under God's hand, it can break the will, and detect hidden and unsuspected evils; so that the new life is more fully and largely developed. God has a larger place

in the heart, there is more intelligence in His ways more lowly dependence, more consciousness that the world is nothing, more distrust of flesh and self. The saint is more emptied of self and filled with the Lord. What is eternal and true, because divine, has a much larger place in the soul; what is false, is detected and set aside. There is more ripeness in our relationship with God. We dwell more in the eternal scenes into which he has brought our souls. We can look back, then, and see the love which has brought us through it all, and bless God with dependent thanksgiving for every trial. Such only purge away the dross, and confirm us in brighter, fuller, and clearer hope, and increase our knowledge of God—self being proportionately destroyed.

Psalm xii. It is evident that is written under the pressure of extreme wrong and violence and the feeling of being isolated. Human power, and those that have confidence in it, are all against the soul. It is rare to be in such a case rightly—that is, to have occasion to suffer as is here described. But it may come. Individual Christians may find themselves isolated and pressed down. The fifth verse introduces Jehovah's judgments, which will put an end to it. This He often does still in His government, but it is not the direct proper hope of the Christian. For him to do well, suffer for it and take it patiently, is acceptable with God. His rest is elsewhere, where God is perfectly glorified; so it was with Christ, and, therefore, with us. He surely did well, suffered for it here on the earth—was not delivered. How acceptable it

C

was with God I need not say. It behoved Christ to suffer. It is our profit; so that we can glory in tribulations also, because of their fruits, a far higher fruit than ease or repose here, and which ripens in heaven, in our being fitted for enjoying God more deeply; and if we suffer for righteousness' and Christ's sake, we can say, happy are we. The Spirit of glory and of God rests on us. But in many cases of detail, deliverance, if we wait patiently for it, comes even here. At any rate, and this is the point of the psalm, the words of Jehovah are pure words; they prove all that is in man, but they may be thoroughly relied on as genuine. He will hold good in holiness, but make good in power all that His mouth hath uttered. Our wisdom is to hold fast by the word of the Lord, come what will. Outward trials are but instruments of purification and of trying the heart as to faith. The word is the test of all for the soul, the inward measure of its condition before God, and the infallible ground of confidence. If it tries the heart, if the circumstances we are in try the heart, it is only to free it from all that would hinder our leaning on and appropriating every word that has come out of the mouth of God. We shall surely live by it.

Psalm xiii. continues the expression of the workings of a soul under the trials we have seen referred to in psalm x. We have, comparatively speaking, less to do with it. Yet the Christian may be tried by the momentary and apparent triumph of the power of evil. And in such, can look to the Lord for deliverance, not to be left as if God did not care for him.

We see the difference of the Jewish remnant here and Christ, for outwardly He *was* left in the hand of the wicked; whereas, (though, indeed, some of the wise will fall by the hand of the enemy in that day, obtaining a better resurrection, but,) in general, they will be spared and delivered; but our object now is the moral lesson. In the midst, not only of heartless and conscienceless enemies, but apparently forgotten of God, the soul trusts in His mercy, counts on Himself in goodness and faithfulness of mercy so as to rejoice in deliverance by His power before it comes. So we thank God, when we pray, before we receive the answer, because knowing in our hearts, by faith, that God has heard and answered us, we bless Him before His answer comes outwardly, and this is just the proof of faith. This confidence gives wonderful peace in the midst of trials; we may not know how God will deliver, but we are sure He will, and rightly. He has all at His disposal. It is Himself we trust, and in looking to Him the heart receives a real answer on which it relies. The circumstances and the word try the heart. Confidence and divine deliverance rejoice the spirit. One knows, and before the deliverance comes, that God is for us. The taking counsel in the heart is very natural, but not faith. It wears and distresses the spirit. The sorrow tends to work death. The soul, even though submitting, preys on itself; it is turning to the Lord which lightens the soul. The consciousness that it is the enemy who works against us, helps the soul to confidence. It is a solemn, and for man would be an appalling, thought, but with the Lord is a ground of being assured of deliverance.

Psalm xiv. is an eminent example of the principle of very frequent application: how psalms, or other passages of scripture, clearly applicable literally to the Jews in the last days, and events then occurring, are used as great principles, deciding morally on important truths at all times, truths which are then publicly and judicially brought to light. The apostle applies this psalm as the expression of the divine judgment on the state of the Jews, as declared in their own scriptures, and proving the need of a righteousness not their own. I have not much to remark on it here. We may expect to meet with difficulties which arise from a total absence of the fear of God in those with whom we have to do. It is hardly credible for one that fears God, that this can be so, that there should be no compunction; nothing that stays the heart in wickedness, at least, in deliberate wickedness. But we must expect this sometimes, where we should least expect it. But the Lord sees all this. This is our confidence. He may take time, be patient with evil, or, at least, with evil doers, and exercise us, but He sees it all. Not only so, but God Himself is in the generation of the righteous. There is an influence produced by the presence of God with the righteous, which the enemies of the Lord feel, and which in the righteous is known only by faith. We may see an example in what Rahab evidently saw among the Canaanites, Joshua ii. 9. The same feeling is referred to in Phil. i. 28. This feeling of fear, in those who oppose the truth, may be accompanied with boasting and violence; but when faith has confidence in the Lord, the wicked, even if they succeed, have

always fear. So even the Jews, when they had crucified Christ, feared lest, after all, His absence from the tomb should make matters worse than before. But there must be the sense of God's presence for the righteous to be thus sustained.

Psalm xv. shows, evidently, that the direct application of these psalms is to the Jews in the last days. Still, there is a present government of God which it is well for saints to remember. It is developed in the Epistles of Peter—in the first in favour of the righteous, in the second in the judgment of the wicked. (See 1 Pet. iii. 10—15, showing the Christian application of the principles on which God dealt with the Jews as a people, and will still more absolutely in the last days, but which have their application to the time of our sojourn here below.)

Thus, though this psalm be strictly Jewish in its character, we have principles to act on. Thus, ver. 4 gives what, in principle, pleases the Lord at all times.

Psalm xvi. With these few remarks, I pass on to psalm xvi., which applies directly to Christ, but in which we shall find the sweetest instruction also for ourselves. It is essentially Christ taking the place of a man, and pointing out the path of life before him through death, since He came for us, but trusting in Jehovah, into His presence, where is fulness of joy. We must not lose sight of the direct prophetic character; still this path is an example for us. The Good Shepherd has gone before the sheep. The great principle proposed in the psalm

is trust in the Lord, even in death—the place of dependent obedience, and the Lord Himself's being the whole portion of man, excluded all inconsistent with this. We may add, having Him always in view. These are the great principles of divine life, and of divine life come into the scene of sin and death. No doubt we should speak of communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ in this path of life; but the great moral principles, the subjective state of soul, is brought out before us here, and that in Christ Himself. And note here, it is His perfection as man and before God and towards God. It is not divine perfection—God manifested to man; but what He was as man dependent on God. We have not even His offering Himself, in which we have also to follow Him; (1 John iii. 16;) but His place as man in perfection. It is perfectness before God—the principle that governed Him. Hence, even the word, My goodness extendeth not to thee, has its application also to us. That our goodness does not actually reach God it might seem almost absurd to affirm; but when it is applied to Christ as man, who was absolutely perfect, it affords us an apprehension of the nature of this goodness, a principle which we can apply to ourselves, and which puts us in our place. It is man's perfection towards God—the new path of which Christ is the perfection and example in the earth. But this thought shows the unspeakably blessed place which we have as Christians—though in our own case in the midst, not only of weakness, but of internal conflicts, which were not in Christ, in whom was no sin. But Christ's place is the perfect expression of our place before God.

This is fully unfolded at the close of the Gospel of John, and particularly in the 17th chapter.

The Epistle of John, too, which first presents Christ as the manifestation on earth of that eternal life which was with the Father, its manifestation in a man whom their hands had touched, teaches that this was true in Christians as in Him, (1 John ii. 8,) and unfolds the character of this life in righteousness and in love, adding the presence of the Holy Ghost, through which we can dwell in God and God in us. We have this eternal life which is come down from heaven, but is only said to be in the Son; and he who has the Son has it. Indeed, this gives it all its value. No doubt the Epistle of John unfolds it in all its extent and value, as it cannot be unfolded in the Psalms: still in this psalm we have Christ taking the place itself as amongst the excellent of the earth. I may remark here, that the writings of John, though intimating it, and just showing that we shall be with Christ above, do not pursue this life to its presentation in glory before God. This is Paul's office. Indeed; he had only so seen Christ. John presents the life in itself, and manifested on earth. The life is the light of men.

I have already made some allusion to a restriction which we must put, in speaking of this psalm, to the development of the life of Christ on earth. But this restriction only brings out more directly and blessedly in its place, that part of Christ's life, which is the subject of the psalm itself. Christ was the manifestation of God Himself (I speak of the divine traits of His character, not of His divine nature and title) in His path in this world. Perfect love was seen there

—perfect holiness and righteousness. He was the truth in the revelation of all that God is. And this is most blessed. And in this we have to imitate Him. (See Eph. iv. 32; v. 1, 2; Col. iii. 10.) But this is not the aspect in which the psalm views Him. It depicts His place as the dependent devoted man. It depicts Him as taking His place among the remnant of Israel, in contrast with the idolatry of that people. But on that I do not dwell now. The character of the blessed Lord's life will alone occupy our thoughts.

The expression, *My goodness extendeth not to thee*, would not suit the divine manifestation of goodness on the earth. But taking His place entirely as a man here, the Lord shows us the true place of man living to God—not in his innocence, not surely in sin, but the very opposite; but perfect, in a world of sin, in righteousness and true holiness, having the knowledge of good and evil, tempted, but separate from sin and sinners, not made higher than the heavens, but fit for it in the desires of his nature, and in the path towards it: dependent, obedient, taking no place with God, but before Him as responsible as man upon earth, and looking towards the place of perfect blessedness as man with God by being in His presence, which would be fulness of joy for him, a place which, when having His nature, we can have with Christ. It is man trusting God, deriving his pleasure and joy from God, living by faith and in that sense apart from Him—not God manifested in the flesh, which we know was also true of the blessed Lord. This, while it is our place on earth as sanctified through the truth, is above the place of the Jewish

remnant. We have another in the consciousness of union with Christ through the Holy Ghost. The Lord takes the place we are considering when He says to the young man, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Thus far it went outwardly well with the young ruler, but there was more than this to characterize this life where divine life was, in a world of sin and sinners, in its path towards the place of the fulness of joy—what had been shown in Abraham and in the saints of God, in the Davids and the prophets. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Having the Lord Himself as that which governed and led the heart, Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me. But the Lord was not, at any rate then, the portion of his inheritance. Only one knows not what may have become afterwards his state through grace.

The state described in this psalm is that of man considered apart from God; (I do not mean of course morally separated, nor touch upon the union of the divine and human nature in Christ;) but it is man partaker of the divine nature, for so only it could be, but having God for his object, his confidence, as alone having authority over him, entirely dependent on God, and perfect in faith in Him. This could only be in one personally partaker of the divine nature, God Himself in man, as Christ was, or derivatively as in one born of God; but, as we have seen, Christ is not here viewed in this aspect nor the believer as united to Him. The divine presence in Him is viewed not in the manifestation of God in Him, but in its effect

in His absolute perfection as man. He is walking as man morally in view of God. Christ here depends on Jehovah for His resurrection. He says, *Thou wilt not leave, though He could say, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* Yet He could say, as perfect man, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. As Peter among the Jews could say, He hath made Him, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ; while Thomas could say, My Lord and my God. Indeed Peter never leaves this ground—the rejected man, the Messiah exalted by God—nor preaches the Son of God as Paul did at once in the synagogues, though the first, by divine revelation, to confess Him such. Hence Christ is a perfect model for us—shows what the perfect man is. The first great principle, and that which characterizes the whole psalm, is the referring Himself entirely, and with confidence, to the care of God. He does not preserve Himself, take care of Himself, nor depend at all on Himself: He refers to God. “Preserve me O God, for in thee do I put my trust.” But this goes far. As God, Christ could have preserved Himself; but He did not come for that. In that sense it was impossible. He came in love to suffer, obey, and so by grace also save—but glorify God. From this, morally speaking, He could not swerve; but as to power, He could have preserved Himself, or as to title to favour as Son, He could have asked and had twelve legions of angels. But thus, as He says, He could not have fulfilled the counsels, the revealed counsels, of God.

It was free submission and dependence, but perfect

submission and dependence—the one right thing *in the position* which He had taken. This was perfect faith. He was the leader and completer of faith, absence of self, dependence, and confidence: and we may add, the word of God was the revelation on which He acted, that which He obeyed, the weapon He used, as we see in His temptation in the desert. He was the word and the truth personally, and all He said expressed what He was. (John viii. 25.) But it is not less true that He used and acted on and obeyed the Scriptures as man. But here He takes the place of dependence and confidence. As man He says, “Preserve me, O God. In thee do I put my trust.”

The next point, partly necessarily anticipated in what I have said, is entire subservience to the will of God. Here to God, as *revealed* among the Jews, Jehovah: to us it would be the Father and the Son—*one God, even the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.* “Thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord.” Remark, “Thou hast said.” He had taken this place. He was Jehovah, but not taking that place at all here in His path. In the form of God, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He had taken the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. Freely taken, perfectly preserved in, through death, His taken place is humiliation. Freely to take it is a divine title and action. Creatures have to keep their own; though when not kept by God, none have done so. His given, but deserved, place as man in glory. (John xvii.) He humbles Himself, and is highly exalted. He had said to Jehovah, “Thou art my Lord;” that is, I am subservient to Thee. He had

taken a *place*, while never ceasing to be God, and which Godhead alone could fulfil the conditions of, outside Godhead; but in which as man to satisfy God, to glorify God in an earth of apostacy and sin, indeed with all on earth, and Satan's power against Him—at the close, even God's wrath, if to fulfil His glory in righteousness. Hence He says, My goodness extendeth not to thee—up to thee. He was to fulfil man's place in the condition in which God's glory was now concerned in it. A perfect man, when a perfect man, was *alone* in perfectness; none to sustain—none even to have compassion on Him. He must trust God in life and through death—yea, through wrath. But here it is in the path of life, and even this shown Him. (Ver. 11.) But, further, there were objects of divine favour from which He did not dissociate Himself. But He does not speak of them as chosen by Himself here—as in John of His disciples, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,”—(though there also for service,) nor as chosen of God in grace, but as objects of divine delight in the path they trod, as manifested morally—those who were in the path He had to tread in—the saints that are in the earth, the excellent. This is full of interest. It is still His moral place as man, delighting in what God delighted in, as becomes one perfect with God, as we see in full figure in Moses. (Heb. xi. 24—26.) He takes His place with the saints—those really sanctified to God. This we see in fact, and in the way of the most perfect obedience and humiliation, in that the Saviour went to be baptized with the baptism of John, when those moved by the Spirit of God to humble themselves

went there. In the first and lowest step of divine life, that of the heart giving itself up to God in the acknowledgment of sin, He who knew no sin went with those who owned it; for their owning it was divine life, and it was consecrating themselves to God. They were the true excellent of the earth. How sweet and consoling in the wilderness to see Christ treading this path, victorious over all temptation in it, as shown directly after His baptism by John; binding the strong man, in life possessed and victorious over all the power of the enemy. One sees easily here, that though it be the divine life, the fruit of grace, it is not *in se* God manifesting Himself, a goodness in its character in itself reaching to God; for it was owning sin, though it was divine grace in Christ to do it. Just as it was not properly of God, as such, to die; though nothing but the perfect love, that is, one who was God Himself could have died as Christ did, given Himself, laid down His life, given a motive to His Father to love Him, for what He did. We see one acting as man in man's place, (only absolutely, perfectly, and freely as loving the Father, which He could not have done if not divine), before God and towards God as men had to act. That a divine person should do this has a value beyond all thought, and it is what, as much else, the blessed Saviour did for us, a man in our place, that is in the perfection of it as God's delight, and according to what it ought to be, in the midst of this sinful world, what glorified God in it. And it is of all importance for us to see Christ thus an object of delight, adoring delight, for instruction and confirmation to the soul. It is a

path the vulture's eye has not seen and that no man's thought could have traced, if Christ, the perfect One, had not walked in it. We have it in life—in a person—as it only so could be, the path of life in a living one who was the thing to be loved. No doubt the written word gives us the elements of this life in all details, but at the same time it gives much of it, however many blessed precepts direct our path, in the life of Christ Himself; so that this life is understood according to the degree of spirituality which apprehends that life as depicted in the gospels or other parts of Scripture, its motives or rather its motive and nature. Even in precept we find a direction to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing. How evidently does this require the true knowledge of what He is. The view which we have taken of this divine life, perfect in itself, but displayed in a knowledge of good and evil and proved in the midst of evil—in us renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him that created us—is brought out distinctly in positive separation from evil, but especially in the motive and spring of life, the confession of Jehovah. He (ver. 4) repels all that can be called another God. He will have nothing at all to say to it. It is absolute rejection. He cleaves to Jehovah. Fidelity to Jehovah characterizes the life of Christ as so walking on earth. We can say fidelity to Christ Himself. Christ is all and in all. Jehovah is not only Lord to obey, He is the portion of his inheritance. He sought nought else; as of the priest of old and yet better, as in heart and desire, the Lord was his inheritance and the portion of his cup, his lot here, which he had to drink. His enjoy-

ment in hope, his portion by the way. This I apprehend is the difference between heritage and cup; the inheritance is the permanent portion of the soul, the cup what its feelings are occupied with, what comes to a man to occupy his spirit by the way. He gives the cup of wrath to the wicked to drink; the blessed Lord had to drink the cup of wrath on the cross. My cup runneth over—was filled to overflow with blessing; so we say, habitually, it was a bitter cup. It is not merely the circumstances we pass through, unless the soul be subject to them; but that which we taste in the circumstances, what our spirits feel, that which presses on them in the circumstances. Thus, in psalm xxiii., the circumstances were all sorrowful, but the Lord being shepherd all through them his cup ran over with joy and blessing. Thus Jehovah was the permanent portion of the heart of Christ, and, as walking through this world, that on which His heart rested; what formed and characterized His feelings more than the sorrow He went through, save on the cross. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Man, no, not even His disciples, never entered into His thoughts. One who sat at His feet once in affection felt that to which He could give a voice but only to bring out more sadly the failure of all else; but He had meat to eat they knew not of. Jehovah was the portion of His cup, nearer than all circumstances which otherwise could have pressed upon His heart as man, and which He fully felt, if we except the cross, or rather, indeed, more than ever there, for it was the wrath of Jehovah Himself that pressed upon His soul in the cup He

then drank. But otherwise so truly was Jehovah the great circumstance and substance of His life in and through everything, that He could only wish that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. But, then, it was from Jehovah only, and therein His perfection; the world was absolutely a dry and thirsty land, where no water was, but Jehovah's favour was better than life; and was His life, practically, through a world where all was felt, but felt with Jehovah realized; Jehovah and His favour, the life of His soul, between Him and all. So the Christian, forsaken, perhaps, and imprisoned. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and, again I say rejoice. Nature has circumstances between itself and God; faith has God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference! No peace like the peace, which hiding in the tabernacle from the provokings of all men gives. But this is a divine life through the world. Jehovah—we say the Father and the Son, a brighter development through the Son Himself—the permanent portion of the soul, its inheritance. Jehovah, the present joy and strength that fills the soul and gives its taste to life. (Comp. lxiv. and xxiii.) And, thirdly, the blessed confidence that Jehovah maintains our lot; we trust not ourselves, not favourable circumstances, not a mountain which the Lord Himself has made strong, but Jehovah Himself. Delight thyself in the Lord, He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Faith leans on Jehovah, on the Father's love and Jesus'; for the securing infallibly happiness and peace we need not look to circumstances, save to pass through them with Him. This was perfect in Christ. He

had only this, nor looked for aught else. We see it brightly manifested in Paul. In principle, it is the path of every Christian; and some time or other he is exercised in it. The life of faith is this: God Himself the portion of our inheritance and of our cup: He maintaineth our lot. This is blessedly developed for us in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. But the great principle is the same. It is the life of Christ, and this is enjoyed in contrast with and to the exclusion of all else that could become the confidence or the portion of the heart; expressed here in Jewish relationship, but always essentially true.

I may here remark a distinct characteristic of this psalm which comes into greater relief by the contrast of the one which follows. It touches on no circumstances, though it supposes them: It is divine life with God and knows and lives in the present consciousness of only Him. We find that there must have been death, hades, and the grave, but they are only mentioned as the occasion of the power and faithfulness of Jehovah. The psalm is man living through, with, and in view of God in this world, and so enjoying Him for ever in spite of death. Circumstances are but circumstances, and not the subject of the psalm; divine life never passes away. "While we look not," says the apostle, "at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Such is the Christian expression of this. The former part of the phrase, which I do not cite, tells the effect of this as to circumstances, and is to be compared rather with the following psalm. The apostle beauti-

D

fully expresses life itself in one word: "for to me to live is Christ; to die," no wonder, was "gain." But it is important to remember, that there is an inward divine life which dwells and joys in God, having nothing to do with circumstances, though enabling us to go through them, and *in us* helped by them, because annulling the flesh and the will, so that we live more entirely of the inward life with God.

But the consequence in the soul, is the deep consciousness of blessing. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places." Christ could not have said that in the same way, had He had the kingdom living on earth; nor could we, were we in the garden of Eden, or the world at our disposal. This living relationship with God casts a light, a halo on all; lights the soul up with such a direct consciousness of divine blessing that nothing is like it, save the full realization of it in the presence of God. A man with God, enjoying Him in a nature capable of doing so with all the necessary conscious result where it shall be fulfilled without a cloud, a man as Christ was in this world with God—is the most perfect joy possible, save the everlasting fulfilment of all known and felt in it. It is not Messiah's portion, it is that joy of which Christ speaks when He says, "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." No doubt; He will inherit all things: but I do not think this to be the thought here. This was not the joy set before Him for which He endured the cross and despised the shame. There is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." This is known in

joying in God. Life has its delight there. In God's presence is fulness of joy.

The lines fallen in pleasant places, I believe to be His joy as man in God, and in what was before God. Compare Col. iii. 1—3. In what follows we have the active expression of this life, in reference to God. "I will bless Jehovah who giveth me counsel." We need in divine life the positive instruction of wisdom—counsel; wisdom, a divine clue and direction in the confusion of evil in this world—to be wise concerning that which is good. Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time; not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Jehovah gives counsel. So if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally and upbraideth not. There is the immense privilege of the positive direction and guidance of God. The interest He feels in guiding the godly man aright, in the true path suited to God Himself, across the wilderness where there is no way. For innocence enjoying the blessings of God, there was no need of a way. In a world departed from God, what way can be found? It would be to return, but that is impossible; no sinner ever returned to innocence. The way of the tree of life is shut up on that side—but how a way in a world without God? But God can make a way, if He gives a new life, with a new object to that life—Himself as known in heaven—if there is a new creation and we are new created. Now Christ is a new life, and passes through the world, according to this life, to a new place given to man, and He does so as man, dependent man. God has prepared the path for man endowed with this life,

and so for Christ, who was this life, and so the light of men. He has even prepared the special works suited to it—"good works which He hath afore prepared that we should walk in them." This last thought indeed goes somewhat beyond our psalm. It, at any rate, includes the activity of divine nature in man, and is not limited to the right and holy path of man having this life before God, a thing as important in its place as the other. So Moses asks not, "Show me *a* way across the desert," but "Show me *thy* way that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight." What Moses sought Jehovah gives—the counsel and guidance of His love. So Christ walked; so He guides His sheep, going before them; and now we are led of the Spirit of God, as ourselves sons of God. It is the divine path of wisdom which the vulture's eye has not seen: the path of man, but of man with the life of God, going towards the presence of God, and the incorruptible inheritance, in an uncorrupted way—the path of God across the world; but God gives counsel for it. There is dependence on God for this, and Christ walked in it. "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel," says even the remnant of Israel; and, psalm xxxii., "I will guide thee by mine eye." I repeat, He is interested in the guidance of the man of God, and the soul blesses Him. In this path Christ trod. The written word is the great means of this; still there is the direct action of God in us by His Spirit. But there is also divine intelligence. "My reins instruct me in the night season." The divine life is intelligent life. I do not separate this from divine grace in us, but it is different from counsel given.

We can be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Col. i. 9, 10. "Why even of yourselves, (says the Lord to the Pharisees,) judge ye not that which is right?" Thus, when removed from external influences, the secret workings and thoughts of the heart show what is suited to the path and way of God in the world. A man is spiritually minded and discerns all things. It is the working of life within (in us through grace) on divine things, and in the perception of the divine path, what is well pleasing. In Christ this was perfect, in us in the measure of our spirituality; but that to which the Christian has to give much heed, that he neglect not the holy suggestions and conclusions of the divinely instructed life when freed from the influence of surrounding circumstances. It may seem folly, but if found in humbly waiting on God will in the end prove His wisdom. It can always be discerned from an exalted imagination.

In the first place, the state of the soul is exactly the opposite, for pretension to special spiritual guidance is never humble. But besides, the controlling judgment of God's word which overrules the whole divine life is there to judge false pretensions to it. To this, divine life is always absolutely subject. Christ, who was this life, yea, was the Word and Wisdom; yet, (and because He was) always wholly honoured the written word as the guidance and authority of God for man. But guidance by the Lord is not quite all the practical process of the exercise of divine life. It looks entirely to the Lord. "I have set, (says Christ, walking as man on earth,) Jehovah *always* before me." He kept

Him always in view. How have our hearts to own that this is not always so! How withdrawn from all evil—how powerful morally in the midst of this world should we be, were it always so! There is nothing in this world like the dignity of a man always walking with God. Yet nothing is farther from failure in humility: indeed it is here, it is perfect. Self-exaltation is neither possible nor desired in the presence and enjoyment of God. What absence of self, what renouncement of all will, what singleness of eye, and hence bright and earnest activity of purpose, when the Lord is the only object and end! I say the Lord, for no other such object can command and sanctify the heart. All would go against duty to Him. He alone can make the whole heart full of light when duty and purpose of heart go together and are but one. Indeed this is what James calls “the perfect law of liberty”—perfect obedience, yet perfect purpose of heart, as Jesus says, “that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do.” We say, as Christians, Christ is all, and He that loves Him keeps His commandments. Thus Jesus set Jehovah always before His face. This is man’s perfection as man. This is the measure of our degree of spirituality, the constancy and purity with which we do this. But if Jesus did this, surely Jehovah could not fail Him nor us. So walking, He maintains the saint in the path which is His own. “I set Jehovah always before my face: He is on my right hand, so that I shall not fall.” This is known by faith. He may let us suffer for righteousness’ sake—Christ did so—be put to death—Christ was; but not a hair

of our head can He let fall to the ground, nor fail in making us enter into life according to the path in which we walk, but here it is confidence in Jehovah Himself. It is faith, not the question of righteousness in Jehovah, which is in the next psalm. Faith in walking in the path of man, according to God's will and towards God solely as the sanctifying end and object, knows that God is at its right hand. Jehovah will secure. How, or through what, is not the question. It will be Jehovah's security. What strength this gives in passing through a world where all is against us, and what sanctifying power it has! There is no motive, no resource but Jehovah, which could satisfy any other craving, or by which the heart desires to secure itself in seeking aught else. Hence come what would, Christ waited patiently for Jehovah, looked for no other deliverance. Nor have we to seek any other, and this makes the way perfect. We turn not aside to make the path easier. And to this the psalm turns. Death was before Christ. As Abraham was called to slay his son, in whom the promises were to be fulfilled, Christ as living on the earth had to renounce all the promises to which He was entitled and life with them. The sorrow of this to Him—for He felt all perfectly—is depicted in the 102nd psalm; but as Abraham trusted Jehovah and received Isaac from the dead in a figure, so the Lord here, the leader and finisher of faith, trusts Jehovah in view of His own death—is perfect in trust in it. He had set Jehovah always before Him. He was at His right hand, therefore His heart was glad and His glory rejoiced; His flesh rested in hope, for the Jehovah He trusted.

would not leave His soul in hades nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Holy One is not here the same as "saints in the earth." Saints are those set apart—consecrated to God. Thy Holy One is one walking in piety, agreeable to God. It is Christ known in this character. He is also given this name in psalm lxxxix. 19, where read "*of thy holy one.*" Remark that it is thy Holy One, One who morally belongs to God by the perfection of His character. Christians are such only full of imperfections. They are saints, set apart to God, but they are also—and are to walk as—the "elect of God, holy and beloved;" and as such to put on the character of grace in which Christ walked. The former part of Col. iii. displays this life at large in us. Eph. i. 4 shows it in its perfection in result. This confidence of the pious soul in the faithfulness of Jehovah, the reasoning of faith from this nature that it could not be otherwise, and the consciousness of relationship with God as His delight, is very beautiful here. It is not, "thou wilt raise me," but it is not possible in the thought of One in whom is the power of life, that Jehovah should leave the soul that has this life in hades, far from Him in death; and the object of His delight to sink into corruption. This moral confidence and conclusion is exceedingly beautiful. "It was not," says Peter, "possible that He could be holden of it." This may include His person, but His power cannot be separated from this grace. The same confidence, flowing from life, is manifested as to Jehovah's showing Him the path of life. It is the perfection of faith as to life, but in Jehovah. "Thou wilt show me the path of life,"

perhaps through death ; for there, if He was to be perfect with God, this path led—but not to stay there, or it were not a path of life. Jehovah could show Him no other. Man had taken, in spite of warning, the path of death—the path of his own will and disobedience ; but Christ comes, the obedient man. There was no path for man in paradise—no natural path of life in the desert of sin. Man had not life in himself ; but what path of the new divine life in man could there be for man in a world of sin, amongst men already departed from God ? The law had indeed proposed one, but it only brought out the sinfulness of man's nature. The knowledge of sin was by it, and its exceeding sinfulness. Christ, who had life, no doubt, could have kept it ; yea, did so, because in Him was no sin, but there He was in this wholly dissociated from us who are sinners. He was alone, separate from sinners. But in a path of faith, He could be associated with those quickened by the word—confessors of sin, not keepers of law, judges of all evil, separated by quickening grace from sinners, and treading the path of faith across the world, not of it, towards the full issue of this divine life, which was not here, which must go through the death of flesh. He had nothing to judge, nothing to confess, nothing to die to or for in Himself ; but he could walk in the holy path of faith across the world in which they, as renewed, had to walk. But for them this holy path was necessarily death, for there was a life of sin. He could have abode alone, and had twelve legions of angels, and gone on high ; but, speaking reverently, though this would have been righteous as to Him,

there was no sense in His becoming a man for this. And not only does He die for them, (for expiation is not the subject of this psalm, but life,) but having set out to go with, yea, before, them, He treads this path through death, that He may destroy its power for us, and treads it alone, as He had overcome Satan's power in this world, and now destroyed it in death too—treads it alone. The disciples could not follow Him there, till He had destroyed Satan's power in it. "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after." No earnestness of human will, no affection could abide there. But when dead to sin, and strengthened with the strength of Christ, he could let another bind him and carry him (as Jesus did) whither nature would not. Christ then associated Himself from John's baptism with these *saints in the earth*—trode the path, only perfectly apart from sin, and only with God, doing His will, showed this path of life in man; then, having died to sin, and, in the full result of this life in its own place, where no evil is, lives to God. He did so, by faith, when down on earth always, but as man, in a world apart from God, and taking the word as His guide, living by every word that came out of the mouth of God, as we have to do. The resurrection demonstrated the perfectness of a life which was always according to the Spirit of holiness; but now He lives in it in its own place, and this is what, though through death, in an undiscontinued life, He anticipates. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This, always His delight, was now His perfect enjoyment, "and at thy right hand." (Divine power had brought Him to this place of power and accept-

ance—the witness of His being perfectly acceptable to God) are “pleasures for evermore.”

Such is life as life is with God—life shown as man in this world, associating itself with the saints on the earth, and treading their path; not Christ uniting them to Himself. Life before God, and looking ever at Him: a life which, though free from sin, neither innocence nor sinful man could know—which, in fact, had not to be lived in paradise—which could not be lived as belonging to the world, but which was lived to God through it: setting Jehovah always before it as its object. Such is the life we have to live. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Christ, as the psalm shows us, lived the life of faith, and never of anything but faith; and this was His perfection. In this world there is no other for a man. A life which has no object but the Lord Himself. This is a wonderful point—not one object in the world at all. For otherwise, it is not faith, but sight, or lust. Innocent man had no object: he enjoyed in peace God’s goodness. Man departed from God—had many objects; but all these separate his heart from God, and end in death. Morally separated from God, he may find a famine in the land, but has noway God for his object. But the new life which comes down from the Father looks up with desire to its source, and becomes the nature in man which tends towards God, has the Son of God for its object—as Paul says, “that I may win Christ.” This life has no portion

in this world at all ; and, as life in man, looks to God, leans on God, and seeks no other assurance or prop, obeys God, and can live only by faith. But this is a man's life, does not extend to God. God as such is holy, is righteous, is love ; but cannot, it is evident, live by faith. He is its object. Nor is it exactly an angel's life, though they are holy, obedient, and loving. It is man's life, living wholly for and towards God in a world departed from Him—hence, towards Him and by faith ; for it is not merely that they serve in it. *That* angels can do ; but though not morally of it, for the life is come down from heaven, “ They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.” Yet, as to their place as man, they are of it, and hence have to live in order not to be of it morally ; objectively entirely out of it ; thus having to say to God, or it would be idolatry. But, thus, while it is a man's life, and no more as such, yet it must be absolutely for God according to His nature : and it lives, in that it lives, to God. The living Father had sent Christ, and He lived (*δια του Πατερα*) for the sake of the Father : so he that eats me shall live for me. God is the measure of perfection in motive—hence, hereafter in enjoyment, and a heart wholly formed on Him. This life of man Christ led and filled the whole career of. Out of this Satan wanted Him to come in the wilderness, and have a will, make the stones bread, distrust, try if the Lord would fulfil His promise or fail him, have an object—the kingdoms of the world. This last destroyed the very nature of the life, and Satan is openly detected and dismissed. Christ would not come out of man's dependent, obedient place of

unquestioning trust in Jehovah. His path here was with the excellent of the earth, perfect in the life which was come down from heaven, but which was lived on earth, looking up to heaven. Whatever our privileges in union with Christ, it is all-important for the Christian to live in the fear and faith of God, according to the life of Christ. It is not man's responsibility without law or under law as a child of Adam : it is all over with us on that ground. It is the responsibility of the new life of faith, which is a pilgrim and a stranger here—a life come down from heaven. " God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son : he that hath the Son hath life ;" but a life which man lives in passing through this world, but wholly out of it in its object—a life of faith, which finds in God's presence fulness of joy. A man's life does not extend to God, though perfect for God, and in its delight in God. Such was Christ, though He was much more than this. Such are we as far as we are Christians ; only we have to remember that the development of this life in us is not, as in the psalm, in connexion with the name of Jehovah, but with the full revelation of the Father and the Son. The blessed one who thus lived as man on earth is as man at God's right hand, where are pleasures for evermore, with Him in whose presence is fulness of joy. His flesh saw no corruption, and His soul was not left in hades. He despised, for this joy set before Him, the shame and endured the cross, the leader and finisher of faith.

This psalm gives us the inward spiritual life of Christ, and so ours, ending in the highest joy of God's presence.

Psalm xvii. considers this life practically here below, and in respect to its difficulties with man opposed to what is right. The state of the soul is still marked by *entire* dependence on God, but as to integrity towards God, and as against man, the soul can plead righteousness. Still it does not avenge itself, but casts itself entirely on God, and thus gets the fruits of His righteous dealings. This is a great secret of practical wisdom, not avenging self—the patience of the new life in the midst of evil, and looking, and leaving all to God. This supposes the righteous path as man of the divine life, which therefore can appeal to God's necessary judgment about it, knowing what He is and also trusting in Him; but even here deliverance is sought, not vengeance, only the disappointing the plans of wickedness. If we have not walked uprightly, still confidence in God is our true place. He spares and restores in mercy most graciously; but this, though other psalms take it up, is not the subject of this psalm. Here it is the righteous life which God looks at and vindicates against the men of this world, for it is Christ and Christians as far as they live the life of Christ. Immediately, as ever, it is Christ and the remnant. Jehovah hears the righteous and the prayer which goes not out of feigned lips. Remark that in this psalm the life of Christ is supposed and found to meet opposition and oppression in the world from the men of this world. We have seen how separated it was, associated with the excellent of the earth, passing as a stranger through it, though humanly in it. But then faith—and this shews how entirely Jehovah is

still looked to—sees that the men of this world are the men of God's hand. They serve to prove the heart and, in us, who are ever in danger to slip into the world, to keep us strangers in it. Still God delivers from them. Christ for blessed reasons was not delivered; yet as freely giving Himself. The heart has the sense of righteousness here and hence counts on deliverance; but there is no spirit of vengeance. It is the Spirit of Christ Himself, and hence above the spirit of the remnant, and much more the Christian spirit. There is the consciousness of righteousness and of integrity, but entire dependence on the Lord in respect of it, not as regards justification—it is not the question here—but confidence. I know nothing of myself, says Paul, yet I am not hereby justified. Again, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God. So Jesus: “the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.” There is the consciousness of righteousness and confidence in God. And the heart appeals to him, because of righteousness. And all this is right, thinks rightly of God, and trusts to God that He will not be inconsistent with Himself and cannot be. If there be desire of vengeance, we have sunk below this. Remark the further traits of the conscious life. It is not merely righteous walk, but a proved heart, where the secret movements of the heart are alone with God. When the reins instruct, God proves, but nothing is found. This, absolutely true of Christ, is true of the Christian as to the purpose of his heart, and so far as he keeps nothing back, nothing reserved from God. This can be, though then in utter humiliation, where even

there has been failure. "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." So in Job. He held fast the consciousness of his integrity—not that he had not failed. The short-comings of nature had to be checked and judged, and this he only did when humbled in the presence of God. He had for a long while, as God witnesses, held fast his integrity in every sense. He did as with God all through, but did not know himself as this was needed. Christ ever walked so and the provings of His heart only found integrity to God. There was purpose. His mouth also should not transgress. He was a perfect man, as James says. Next, as regards the works of men, for He walked as a man in this world, this word was His absolute rule. By it He kept Himself from the paths of the destroyer. But there is no pride, but entire dependence on Jehovah in the right path. "Hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Such was the practical life of Christ in this world. This was His life and walk in itself.

In what follows from verse 6, it is shown in looking to God as regards the opposition and oppression of the wicked. He looks for Jehovah's loving-kindness as his sole stay in presence of his enemies. This, again, is perfection. His path was with God; no yielding to please men and be spared; no complaint that he had not his portion in this world. He sees the success and prosperity of the men of this world, without envy. Faith fully tried is faith still. If we trust the Lord and have Him for our portion, we have courage to walk in His path and not find nature satisfied; but this is faith. If there be not so, there will be

some craving after what the natural heart could have, and so danger of yielding, in order to have what nature craves and the world gives—after all, husks that perish. But the human heart must have something. If it has the Lord it suffices, but this tests it. Here we have perfection in respect of the heart and path in this world. The great secret is to have the heart filled with Christ, and so be in the path at God's will. Thus there is no room for will and acts which harass the soul, and of which self is always the centre, as Christ is in the heart walking in faith. Hence His presence in righteousness is what is before the soul as the blessed result. It is in righteousness. It is not the absolute joy in God of Psalm xvi., but the righteousness which gives joy in His presence for those who have suffered for it and by it here below in God's paths, in an opposing world, and absence or denial of self. "God is not unrighteous to forget." "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense to you rest with us." And the heart, too, is satisfied, not here exactly with what God is, but with what we are. "I shall awake up after thy likeness," so, "we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as He is." We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. Holy delight in God, having Him always before the face, leads to perfect delight and joy in God, when His presence makes it full. Faithfulness, internal and external, to God in the midst of an opposing and perhaps oppressing world, leads to righteous recompense of glory and God's presence in righteousness. Both are perfect in Christ, and through Christ, the portion of the saints.

E

Verses 7 and 11 give the general application to those associated with Christ; still, though applicable to the remnant, the psalm gives the proper perfection of Christ and so of the Christian. Deliverance now is looked for in this psalm, not in xvi. There it was the perfect passage of life with God through death, up to fulness of joy in Him in His presence. Here righteous deliverance from men is looked for. And for this—though we may be honoured with martyrdom, according to the pattern of Christ's sufferings—the Christian may look. "The Lord shall deliver me," says the apostle, "from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom." The soul may confidently and entirely trust God, as against all the machinations of the wicked, as walking in the path of righteousness. God saves such by His right hand. He may trust for restoration, if it has failed; but there is a path of righteousness which Christ has traced here below in a world of sin, and left the blessed track of His steps, and the witness of the movements of His heart, for us to walk in and live by.

Psalm xviii. is of the deepest interest, as regards the interpretation, presenting, as it does, the sufferings of Christ as the centre of all the deliverance of Israel. His cry there called out upon Israel all the favour of God in power. But I have not a great deal to say upon it, for that very reason, in its application to us. The great principle developed—and it is a precious one—is the cry to a trusted God in distress, which He surely hears. Of this Christ is the example, as elsewhere. "This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard

him." Only that here it is not, as in psalm xxxiv., tender commiseration towards the suffering poor; but the interest that Jehovah takes in a suffering Christ, who has walked in perfect obedience to the law. The psalm is a psalm of praise, because He has been heard and Jehovah known as a rock and a deliverer; but this, as often remarked, is the result expressed in the first verses, and what leads to it is then pursued.

"I will call upon Jehovah," for His name it is, and His alone, the God of His people, which inspires confidence. It is His name which is celebrated, but what has drawn all his praise out is the answer to the cry raised to Him in distress in the midst of enemies, in the sorrows of death. In that distress Jehovah heard out of His temple. This associates it at once with the earth, and deliverance, and triumph there. But another point of the highest interest does so to—obedience to the law laid as the ground for his living, heard in the day of distress. (ver. 20—26.) The righteous obedience on earth and dependence of Messiah on Jehovah, calling on Him in distress, brought Him earthly deliverance and earthly triumph. The two previous psalms look onward to heavenly blessing, though the latter of them for the disappointment of the enemy also; and the hope held out is heavenly, the righteousness not legal; but in the former the heart set on Jehovah, in the latter a heart right with God, and in this world, and looking for righteousness.

Here in psalm xviii. there is obedience to His statutes, a cry in distress even to the pains of death, and deliverance, and triumph on the earth. Such is the result of the legal righteousness of Christ, when

in distress, in the midst of the floods of ungodly men and His strong enemy. Note, it is the power of men and death, and His crying thus to God, and His cry comes before Him—in no way God's hand upon Him as suffering for sin. Messiah's legal righteousness and distress bring earthly triumph and supremacy to David and to his seed. It is the government of God, (see 25, 26,) having regard to righteousness on the earth which in Christ was perfect. But this, perfectly accomplished when Christ's enemies are put under His feet, is not actually so now, because God prepares His saints for a heavenly dwelling and joy, and, during all the proving of the first Adam, shows by their trials that their rest is not here. Still there are some precious points for every soul. In uprightness and suffering through it, he can surely count upon God; and remark here that the interest and sympathy of God, awakening in us the blesseddest affections, are sweetly shown. The Lord hears when we call in distress, and in the greatest depth we can have confidence, and what ought to seem to shut us out from it is just the occasion of it. The psalm instructs us thus to call upon the Lord in distress, come how or why it may—to call on the Lord; and thus not only the deliverance is known, but the Lord is known in His sympathy, and kindness, and interest in us. I love the Lord, he says; or rather the heart turns to the Lord Himself and says, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," and then the heart thinks of all He is for us. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and

my high tower." The heart enlarges in the sense of what He has been for us. And so He is. Though our deliverances may not be exactly of the same kind, yet difficulties and distress often beset us, and there is deliverance in crying to the Lord. Note also, there are holy affections drawn out by the dealings of the Lord, as by His eternal salvation—holy and confiding affections, piety; not merely praise, because he has redeemed us for ever, but daily exercise of sympathy and tender thoughts of compassion. He cannot bear to see us suffer, save when needed, and there are trials which draw out love to Him. Surely, He says, "Ephraim is my dear child; for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." There indeed it was the remembrance of him when under chastisement. Here it is suffering in integrity, but at bottom there is integrity in the Christian and in Christ. He can cry in that distress. The psalm however is the cry of a holy and calm spirit, confiding in God and finding the abundant results in His faithfulness. The heart is drawn to Himself.

In xvi., xvii., xviii, we have found Christ Himself—His personal position, the joy set before Him in heaven, and His final triumph on earth as suffering when legally righteous. In xix.—xxi. we have the godly remnant contemplating the different testimonies presented to the responsibility of man. A few remarks on each are called for. First, there is the testimony of creation, and in particular the heavens, for the earth has been given to man and is corrupt. Here, remark, God is spoken of, not Jehovah—His hope in God as such. Hence the godly man sees that the

witness goes out into all lands, and that the Gentiles are the objects of God's testimony. This is a very important point, which the Jews ought to have understood, and which Paul, by the Holy Ghost, did understand, citing this psalm to show it—not resting on what the testimony was, but on the fact that the testimony of God went out into all lands to the ends of the earth. The godly man can delight in this testimony to the glory of His God; but he sees it reaches out to all. He enters into and understands the penetrating, pervading character of this testimony, and that it is God who is witnessed to by it. Such, I add, will be the estimate of the restored remnant in the last days. (See psalm cxlviii.) But the godly man estimates the experimental excellence of the law of God also; and though, of course, for Israel it was the law as given by Moses, we must take it here as the testimony of the word of God to the conscience. I say the conscience, because it is not the revelation of the riches of grace, or the unfolding of the person of Christ and the ways of God in Him, but the testimony of God's word respecting man, to the conscience of man, even when it is taken in the largest sense. He does not say the law of God here, but "the law of Jehovah," a God known in covenant relationship. His law is given to His people, to His servants. It is perfect, the exact mind of God as to what man ought to be before God, according to God's will, now that evil is known; but man's mind is not such, even when the law of God is delighted in. It sets the soul therefore right. One has the consciousness of its doing so: for the soul, having life, appreciates

it when revealed, (though it may not have had it in mind,) and is livingly susceptible of its truth. It has living power as the word of God for him who lives. But where it is not forgotten, there is enlightening and direction. It is pure and enlightens the eyes, gives to see clear where we were obscure in heart and spirituality. But the psalm connects this with the state of the heart. There is a reference, not merely, to the law, but to the Lord Himself—the effect of the sense of God's presence in the conscience—the fear of the Lord—the introduction of God into every thing, and the reference of the heart to Him, and the judgment which he Has of everything. This is clean; no spot can remain there, and it is an eternal principle, for it depends on the nature of God Himself. Further, God's dealings and ways as pronounced (for judgments include that, as well as judgments executed; He does show His judgment of things in His chastisements;) but in general every judgment He forms, however shown, is true and righteous altogether. But they are not only this, but as gold and the honeycomb to the faithful; they are the expressions of God's mind, and that is infinitely precious and sweet to the saint. But, besides this, the heart is in the midst of dangers and human tendencies, which draw us far from God. The judgments of the Lord on all human conduct warn us: for the joy of the word, and, in the case of the Christian, of heaven, do not suffice. We need the wisdom and prudence which can point out a divine path in the confusion of evil, to guide our steps out of the reach of evil here. God's word meets us even here. And in keeping His judgments there is great reward: great positive blessing and peace of

heart here. The soul is happy with God, and walks in peace through the world, and, as a Christian, the heart is thus wholly free to serve others. Remark that it is not merely what the law is, but what the heart knows it to be: the servant of Jehovah is warned by it. There is delight in it, according to the new nature, and the consciousness of relationship; for we are servants of God, though we have higher, more intimate and glorious relationships. But in this confidence the effect of this nearness is to turn the eye to another point: the want of full self-knowledge, distrust of self. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." In many things, although delighting in the word, and appreciating it when thinking of it, I may not have judged my own heart, or be able morally to prove it, so as to judge it according to that perfection: for there is growth in spiritual judgment. But there is integrity and confidence in the Lord, and he demands to be cleansed from his secret faults, and to be kept from all presumptuous faults—what one would commit with open disregard of God. Thus he would be undefiled, and be kept with God, not turning aside to idols or vanity. For small and neglected sins and unjudged confidence of heart lead to forgetfulness of God, and denial of Him in the truth. I do not speak here of security by grace, but of the path in which these evils leads. Finally, the true desire of the heart is shown: that the words of the mouth, and the meditations of the heart may be acceptable in God's sight. This is the true test of a godly life, when good is sought inwardly, when only in God's sight: the

research of good *with God*, not before man or in the knowledge of man. I speak not of hypocrisy, but of walking with God. But in all true righteousness God is owned as our Rock and Redeemer; for we cannot be “with” Him, with the real apprehensions of a new life, without feeling our need of Him in both characters.

Psalms xx., xxi., as remarked elsewhere, present to us the third witness presented to the responsibility of men—Christ. But this is not our only subject here: psalm xx. shows us the profound interest which the heart takes in watching the Faithful One in His sorrows—in a Jewish form no doubt. Still, as elsewhere, the substance is the same for us. It is still confidence in Jehovah which characterizes the feeling of Him who speaks; for the God of Jacob is before His thoughts. There is faith in Him in this relationship. Yet Messiah is seen in the trials and questions of His life here below, walking but in piety towards Jehovah, and in dependance on Him. Nothing can show Christ more completely as a man than this. The Anointed is saved, i.e., delivered, and heard. The whole heart of the godly is wrapped up in this. But the remnant see yet further here, as Israel ought to have done; they see Him answered in His demand for life, by a most glorious one for ever, in the immediate light of God’s countenance, with which He is made glad, and after that, His right hand finding out all His enemies, and destroying them. But, even in all this, (as in John xvii. where one sees at the same time that he must be one with the Father,) Messiah

receives all from Jehovah, as a man, and is so viewed by the godly. And so was He presented by Peter. His privilege is the favour of Jehovah; His piety, confidence in Jehovah. This link is what occupies the godly, who are thus profoundly attached to Messiah, and this was in effect what characterized Christ—seeking His Father's glory, and in nothing His own. So Jehovah associates Himself entirely with Him as xxi. 9, as the godly does on his side also. And as Messiah is exalted by Jehovah in spite of His enemies, so is Jehovah exalted in His glory in doing it; and so it is, the remnant, equally interested, exalt and praise the power of Jehovah. This linking up the interests of the godly, bound in heart to Messiah—Messiah and Jehovah, as characterizing the piety of the godly, is full of beauty and interest. Yet, in His life, Christ never took this title with His disciples. He would lead them further. He was Son of man, and spoke of His Father as being Himself Son of God. "My Father," said He to the Jews, of whom ye say that He is your God. All the moral qualities of Messiah, Son of God, He had, but He was weaning His disciples from the earthly associations to higher and heavenly ones; and this shows us the need there is in all our use of the psalms to make this difference. We see with the profoundest interest the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, but it is from a higher point of view; we look not at His official place and then humiliation, but the divine and perfect love in which He emptied Himself and came down and took the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and passed with a purpose of love

across the trials and sorrows of this world of sorrow, and we see His glory in it. The truth is much more deeply taught in the New Testament. Still the way Christ is presented as a true dependant man, and His piety in this dependence is most instructive to us who can add the deeper truth from the revelation of the Son of God. The word of life in it is seen.

In commenting on psalm xxii., our part here is not to unfold the blessed doctrine contained in it, in the introduction of grace on a wholly new footing, (viz., redemption, and the death of Christ,) which rose above and closed all mere human responsibilities in grace. We have rather to pursue the feelings and thoughts of Christ. For the piety of this part of the Psalms is the piety of Christ Himself. Nor is anything more instructive or sanctifying. Nothing deepens our own piety so much.

This, then, shall be our subject now. The Lord enable us to tread reverently here!

We find what called out the special cry of the Saviour—a cry which, till that bitter cup had been fully drank, could not be heard. There is progress and completeness in the utterance of these sorrows. Violence, unrestrained and full of rage, surrounded Him—bulls of Bashan—ravens and roaring lions. It was no haughty strength of man which met this. He must meet and feel it in the meekness of His nature, and know the weakness, though never the sin, of human nature, save in bearing it. He was poured out like water—all His bones as out of joint—His heart melted like wax in the midst of His bowels.

His strength is dried up like a potsherd : His tongue cleaves to His jaws. But here there is no stopping, nor could He do so, at second causes. He is down in the dust of death ; but Jehovah has brought Him there. The point here is His state—the dust of death : only He looks at the real source of all, at the thoughts and counsels of Jehovah. This is perfection in this respect : entire sensibility as to, and moral perception of, the character of the enemies, who are the instruments of our suffering ; but looking, through it all, to the ways and wisdom and will of God, and God in faithful relationship to us, the true source of all. But besides the violence which, instrumentally, had brought the gentle and unresisting Saviour, dumb as a sheep before His shearers, to the dust of death, had violently dragged away and mocked Him whose simple presentation of Himself had made all fall to the ground—there was the manifestation of the character of men, when, through His own giving Himself up, He was in their power. Dogs encompassed him—creatures without heart or conscience—without shame or feeling, whose pleasure was in the shame of another, and insults offered to Him who made no resistance, in outrages to the righteous. They were wicked as well as violent. They stared and looked upon Him. How must the Saviour have felt their shameless and heartless insults—His exposure, naked to the hardened eye of those that rejoiced in iniquity and in His shame ! They amuse themselves with appropriating His garments. The vesture of the Innocent was an affair of dice or casting lots. No eye to pity—none to help. Trouble was there : He looks on Jehovah,

entreating Him not to be far from Him, and, if He has no strength, Jehovah, as His strength to be near.

And here we approach the deeper part of this solemn hour. In the utmost trials from man, when no eye was there to pity, no hand to help, He looks to Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel's and Messiah's faith. But here, O mystery of mysteries! there was no help either, but only infinite perfection (for infinite it now must be) in the Blessed One. He is still associated here with Israel as to His place in the psalm, whatever the efficacy of that work in which, in this great turning-point of divine history, this central definition and solution of the question of good and evil, that in which it was settled for eternity. The God of Israel was to leave Him and destroy the eumity, and rend the veil which, in Israel, concealed God; that, in the full result of divine love by righteousness, grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for every believer, Jew or Gentile, and for the complete glory of God in heaven and earth. We still, remark, find the necessary difference of Christ in the psalms and in the gospels. There it is as Son (save in His forsaking) He speaks, saying, "Father, forgive them;" and afterwards, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Here it is: "Be not far from me, O Jehovah." He seeks help for Himself from the God of Israel, His God. And such is the result. It is the remnant gathered, and then all Israel, the millennial nations and the people to be born—those who are the called and blessed fruit of this work. We do not rise up to heaven. Having made this remark, as important

to the right use of the psalms, which we find has its place even in what is said of the cross itself in the psalms, I turn to the character of faith and piety found here in the Blessed One, in His trust as come in the midst of Israel, in Jehovah. "For of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for evermore." There is the deepest consciousness of His own outwardly-bject state and desertion, and that in painful contrast with every faithful soul—a circumstance wonderfully calculated to produce in the human heart irritation and despondency, i.e., a forgetfulness of what God was—if this had been possible with Jesus. "I am a worm, and no man — a scorn of men, and despised of the people." Nor was this all. The blessed Saviour, He who had been cast upon Jehovah from the womb, whose hope Jehovah had been from His mother's breast, who had sought His will and glorified His name, had to declare before all, and in presence of the taunts and mockery of His adversaries, that God had forsaken Him. How deep this trial was morally, none but He could tell who passed through it. It was in the proportion of the love He enjoyed and lived in, and His faithfulness to it. We speak of trial and piety, not of expiation here. In all this, and through all this, the blessed Saviour is perfect towards Jehovah. First, His trust is perfect. He says not Jehovah; for the relationship was not then in exercise as it was with His Father in Gethsemane; but He says, "*My* God, my God." Whatever the dreadful forsaking was, His perfect faith in God and devotedness to God, as the only one He owned,

remains absolute and unshaken. He is perfect, absolutely perfect, as man, subjectively. But this is shown in another point. Whatever the sufferings of Christ—notwithstanding the fact, that in His path, there was no cause for His being forsaken,—His testimony to God, His sense of the perfectness of His ways and nature, remains the same, yea, more elevated. “But thou continuest holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” Let God abandon the righteous, the righteous One is sure He is perfect in doing so. Nothing can express more completely the perfection of Christ as man, His position as such—how He had taken the place of “my goodness extendeth not to thee.” He is not here contemplating the counsels of God, and understanding their accomplishment, which He had Himself undertaken. It is the dependant man feeling the trial as it reached Himself as man, but perfect and faithful when, as regards His feelings, there was no answer of God in trials, wherein He counted on it, and it alone was to be counted on.

We can answer the question, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” We shall answer it, who believe in Jesus, with everlasting adoration. But it is of the last importance for us, not only to know that Christ has, by Himself, purged our sins, having drank the cup of wrath, but to know Christ as suffering personally under this forsaking of God—His own entrance as man into the sense, as regards Himself, of this forsaken—His own personal sorrow in it; because though He were wholly alone in it, it leads us to that joy which He felt in entering, again and more than ever, into the full, enclouded light of His Father’s

countenance—consequent on, and according to, the value of redemption, and the full resting of the necessary delight of God in Him, and His acceptance, as having perfectly glorified Him, when sin had put all in confusion. So that all that God was, as brought out by sin, (for sin brought out sovereign love, righteousness, truth, vindicated majesty,) was perfectly revealed and glorified. His own sufferings, I say, lead us to that joy into which Christ entered with His God and Father as man; and which, as all this was accomplished in a work wrought for our sins, He communicates to us, introducing us into the full blessedness into which He is entered as man. In the work, He was alone; but it was for us, while for the divine glory; and He introduces us into the blessedness, as that which He enjoys in consequence of it.

This is the second part of the psalm, as to which I will only now refer to the sentiments of Christ. He has been heard from the horns of the unicorn, transpierced by the power of death; God's judgment against sin being executed and passed. I have remarked, elsewhere, the very instructive fact, that Christ never speaks in the gospels, during His life, of God as His God, but always as the Father. This was the impression of His own personal relationship, the name, too, that He revealed to His disciples. He never directly calls Himself the Christ, in the gospel history; not that He was not presented as such to Israel, for He was, but it is not the place and name He takes Himself with God and His Father, which is the way we have to know Him. When the Jews say to Him, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly,"

He says, "I have told you already;" but as revealed to us, He is Emmanuel, the Prophet that should come, the Son of man, the Son of God. The word He uses with, and of God, is ever, Father, and My Father; with His disciples, Son of man. In the psalm we are studying, we read, My God, My God. He is man with whom God deals in judgment, but man, even if forsaken, perfect in his own relationship with God in faith: He says, My God. Now He declares the name of God to His brethren, and employs both these titles—man gone to the extreme of trial with God, standing as regards all that God is in righteousness, truth, majesty, love. My God—all that God is in His own perfection and majesty, and claim, He is necessarily and obligedly, though in the delight of His love for us as in Christ, doubtless according to His own counsels, but righteously, and thus necessarily, and unalterably for us. What He is as God, He is as our God, for through Christ—Christ proved on the cross—He is for us, and that, sin being put away by Christ's sacrifice of Himself. The cloudless perfection of God shines out on us, in His own proper blessedness, as on Christ in virtue of His having glorified Him, in the perfection in which He thus shines out. This name, (that is the true reality of this relationship,) is declared to us. The gracious name and nature of God was declared on earth by Christ, who was the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. But with *that*, sinful man, at enmity with God, could have no part or association. The light shines in darkness; the darkness comprehended it not. Yea, man saw and hated Him, and His Father. But Christ was made sin for us,

F

stood as man responsible before God, with God in all these attributes in which He dealt with sin, but was perfect there; that love might righteously have its free course. Hence He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" For He was that love—God, in Christ, reconciling, till it could flow out according to the perfection of God in righteousness; but it could not flow out freely where sin was. This, through the cross, through Christ's perfection, when He was made sin for us, it could; yea, love was exalted and the very character of God made good in and by it—His name, the very name which was to be revealed, made good by it. Hence Christ could say "*therefore* doth my Father love me." But then Christ entered in a still more supreme degree, into the joy of His Father's love, and all this as man. He does so when heard. It was publicly made good and evident in resurrection. He was raised by the glory of the Father. Then He declares this name to His brethren. For now sin being man's only place with God, out of Christ, he who believed had, in Christ, Christ's place as raised from the dead, in the relationship in which He stands with the Father; and, death having come in, no other. Go and tell my brethren, said the Lord, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." Now He employs both titles and applies them both to us, both because all that God is, He is in righteousness for Him as man in glory, and He is re-entered into the joy of His Father's communion, and places us, in virtue of this work, wrought for us, in the position in which He is; as His brethren, partakers

of the favour and heritage which is His, through grace.

I have entered more into the doctrine connected with the psalm, than I intended, though it has been practically ; for the feelings and affections of Christ are my object now. Remark that the first thought of Christ, when heard from the horns of the unicorn, is to declare the name of God and His Father, to His brethren—now glorious, but not ashamed to call us brethren. Perfect in love, attached to these excellent of the earth, He turns when once He is entered into the position of joy and blessing, through a work which gave them the title to enter, to reveal to them what placed them in the same position with Himself. Thus He gathered them ; and then having awakened their voices to the same praise as that which He was to offer, He raises the blessed note as man, and sings praise in the midst of the assembly. Oh with what loud voices and ready hearts, we ought to follow Him ! And note he who is not clear in acceptance, and the joy of sounship with God, in virtue of redemption, cannot sing with Christ. He sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Who sings with Him ? He who has learnt the song, which he has learnt to sing as come out of judgment into the full light and joy of acceptance. The first chapter of Ephesians shows us this place, in verses 3 and 4. Here we have the saints led by Jesus in praise, according to His own joy. The grace of this position is perfect. The further results of the work, I do *not* enter on here, save to remark, that all is grace, no judgment (it is founded on it,) and that nothing goes beyond earth here.

Psalm xxiii. is so ordered by the Spirit as to apply to a dying Christ, or "saint" who follows His footsteps, or the preserved remnant. It does not consider the sufferings of Christ from God, or from man, nor those of the faithful, save as mere facts and occasions of Jehovah's care. Its subject is, "Jehovah is my shepherd,"—the constant, unailing care exercised by Him. It is a life spent under His care and eye, come what will, the experience it affords, and the assurance that Jehovah's love gives to the end and for ever. It is not what He gives, which assures the heart, but Himself. "The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want." Power, grace, goodness, interest in the faithful One, all assure ; and assure in all circumstances and for ever, and always. He has undertaken and has charged Himself with the care of His faithful ones. These cannot want. We have not to think of what may come, or what means may be employed. The Shepherd's care is our assurance. The natural fruit of this care is fresh and green pastures in security, the peaceful enjoyment of the sure refreshings of goodness. But in fact man, specially the remnant, and Christ Himself, are in the midst of oppressing sorrow, and death, and in presence of mighty enemies. Is the soul troubled and bowed down ? He restores it. Does it go through the valley of the shadow of death ? Does death cast its dark gloom over the spirit that must go down into its shade ? He is there, greater than death, to guide and sustain. Are powerful and relentless enemies there to alarm and threaten ? They are powerless before Him. He dresses a table for His beloved, where they sit down in safety and secure. Divine

unction is the seal of power when all is against us. Human weakness, death and spiritual powers of wickedness, all are only the occasions to show most evidently that Jehovah, the Shepherd, is the infallible safeguard of His people. Christ was not, of course, a sheep, but He trod the path the sheep have to tread, and trusted in Jehovah. He is the Jehovah-Shepherd of them that are His. He loves us, as Jehovah loved and cared for Him. It is then, the sure care of Jehovah through all that besets human nature in its path through this world. The natural proper fruit of this care is green pastures in the security of peace; but in man's ruined state, and the path He has to tread in the midst of the powers of evil, an infallibly sustaining power. Hence the heart, as it trusts in the unchangeable Jehovah, reckons on the future. It is as certain and secure as the past. Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and the house of Jehovah receive me for ever. Confidence is in the Lord Himself, and therefore all circumstances, and the whole power of evil, and difficulties of mortal man included in them, are but occasions of Jehovah's power, interested in infallible faithfulness, in carrying the faithful through.

It is interesting to see this care of divine power, holding its place in infallible certainty over all the special sufferings, and trial, and death of the Lord. This is the faithful man's blessing, when the earth is not the Lord's, when the power of evil and death and mighty adversaries are before it. Jehovah is the secure dwelling-place of faith. When the earth is the Lord's, (Ps. xxiv.) who shall ascend His hill, or stand

in His holy place? Here, remark, the door has become open to all. Only Jacob has the place of acceptance and proximity to Jehovah; but blessing and acceptance in favour from God, who is their salvation, are the portion of every one who has purified himself to seek God, who has placed His blessing in Jacob. The character of such is given, but the Gentiles who have it, have access in Jehovah's holy hill. Christ himself enters there in triumph as Jehovah.

Psalm xxiv. closes the whole series which speaks of the association of Christ with the excellent—the saints that are in the earth. We have in it, Christ in the path of life with the saints; Christ in the path of righteousness in the midst of an evil world; Christ suffering, the centre of all Israel's history, and the object of Jehovah's interest when identified with Israel; Christ suffering as witness to the truth, object of the remnant's thoughts and affections; Christ suffering as forsaken of God; Christ taking personally the path in which the sheep had to walk, and so unfolding to them the care of Jehovah, though Himself the true shepherd; (compare John x.;) and Christ, when all own Jacob and the God of Jacob, entering into the temple as the triumphant Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts. Though the blessed One be largely a pattern for us in much of this, yet the true effect on the piety of the heart is wrought in seeing Himself truly man, treading the path before our eyes, and engaging every affection of the soul in the contemplation of it.

In what follows, we have again the thoughts and feelings of the remnant in their sorrows, in connexion with this place of Christ: but we shall find large instruction for our hearts in a path which is always one of sorrow, and essentially the same as long as evil reigns. In looking back to the psalms which we have studied, there is, I think, progress in their character. Thus in the first psalms—from iii. to vii. we have the general principles and condition, showing that righteousness does not yet reign by judgment. This is founded on the great foundations of Psalms i. and ii. The righteous man in the midst of the wicked; judgment yet to come; and the counsels of God as to Messiah announced but not yet fulfilled in viii. In Psalms ix. and x. the circumstances of the land and the Jews in the last days; and, then, xi.—xv. the relationships, judgment, and principles of the remnant looking towards Jehovah in this state of things; xvi.—xxiv. having given the whole position of Christ in respect of Israel, introducing Him amongst them, and showing the result, we have now much more of the experimental exercises of the saints in that day. This we have now to consider. These could not be but founded on the intervention and sacrifice of Christ. It is not meant thereby that they are clear as to this, or that the expressions of the psalms suppose it, or suit a soul which is in liberty. But such exercises could not have place without that intervention and sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit, in the remnant, and in every soul, works in virtue of them, and with a view to their full recognition.

In Psalm xxv. we have, for the first time, the definite confession of sin. This, with xxvi., the declaration and consciousness of integrity of heart, form the subjective basis of all their experiences: the two following the objective. Jehovah, light and salvation, and present distress, through the pressure of the wicked, still here with confidence of heart in Jehovah. But the more we study the Psalms, the more we shall see that they apply properly to the Jews, and that almost universally; referring to the godly, righteous man of the remnant, animated *according to his position*, whose thoughts are furnished by the Spirit of Christ speaking in the prophet. Many parts of them can be applied to Christ Himself; when all cannot. But this shows what I have already remarked, that the possibility of referring passages to Christ does not make them exclusively prophecies of Him, nor prove that all the Psalm applies to Him; and, further, the real danger of taking the Psalms as the expression of Christian piety. They are not so. Often they furnish blessed instruction on confidence in God; but he who would take the form of his piety from the Psalms, as a whole, would falsify Christianity. Having said this, I turn to details. The soul is lifted up to Jehovah in its difficulties—the true secret of overcoming them, and having peace in the midst of them. The true heart has no other refuge. *Another distracts it from this.* It says, my God, in them—it can now, through Christ, and trust in God; and looks not to be ashamed, nor its enemies triumph over it. This in difficulties is the first desire of faith. But it cannot confine itself when real to self. It is linked up by grace with

God's goodness, felt in this very hope; but then with all those who wait on Jehovah. It desires that the wicked—causeless transgressors, i.e., those who love iniquity, not who fall in it, may be ashamed. This, as a general principle, is no way unchristian. The Christian cannot desire that an individual enemy come under judgment; but he does desire that evil be set aside, and that the adversaries of good be made ashamed: he loves and desires righteousness, and that the oppressor of righteousness, and of the lowly, and meek, and just, be put down, and put to shame. In his own case he can desire it as to result, without wishing evil to the individual. His trust in Jehovah prevents his taking the smallest step for the injury of his enemy; but he refers his case to the Lord, and leaves it in His hands, looking for His deliverance.

But there is another characteristic of the saint whose heart is turned towards the Lord in repentance. He seeks Jehovah's ways, His paths—to be led in His truth and taught. Remark this very definite character of good in the upright soul. It is not simply a right way, but the Lord's way he seeks. His spirit is returned to the Lord, thinks of Him, estimates His character, is conscious of owing allegiance and service to Him, belonging to Him, and that all does, and delights in and seeks only His way. But this psalm presents a returning man, (the Jew,) not one first converted. Israel (and so the saint) does remember and recall, but looks to Jehovah's remembering his faults no more, and according to His mercy to remember himself, to remember him in that way ;

for He knew Jehovah to be merciful, and it was for the glory of His own name, he could ask it for His goodness' sake. This shows, not known pardon, but the confiding of grace. This is not a purged conscience, yet it flows from the answer of God. But it is an acceptable way of approaching God. So the poor woman that was a sinner in the gospel. She came thus, she went away in peace. But there is a faithfulness of the Lord to His own goodness—His own character, which is above evil, which (a ransom being found which maintains righteousness) makes Him act for the true blessing of the sinner thus looking to Him. As it is said even of Joseph, "He was a just man, and not willing to make her a public example." No doubt other motives come in with man; still, as far as he has to act like God, this principle comes in. Good and upright is the Lord. Good to us, He loves uprightness, loves to see it, and so will teach it in grace to those wandered from it. It is sweet to one that has wandered to count on this. Remark, it is not here *His* way. That was the expression of the state of the saint's heart—this the revelation of (or, rather, the confidence of) the saint in what was in Jehovah's. What the way was not exactly the question—of course a good one; but He would teach them in it. His active love would be occupied with them for good. Yet the character of the way is not left out when the true character of the renewed saint is brought in. The meek will He guide in judgment, in the path which expresses God's mind. The meek will He teach His way.

But there is progress in other respects in this

psalm. It divides itself into three parts, 1—7, 8—14, 15—22. In the first part, the oppressed and tried soul judging its past sins, but trusting God and looking to Him, pleads with God in respect of its wants and difficulties, in presence of the power of evil. In the second part, this reference to God has led the soul to speak about Him, dwelling on and declaring what He is in His ways. In the third, the soul looks personally to the Lord, as assured of His interest in it, and calls down the eye of God on itself and on its enemies and circumstances, looking for forgiveness in that, but confiding in conscious integrity; and, finally, applies its request to all Israel. But there is also progress in detail, as to the condition of the soul in speaking of God. First, His goodness and uprightness lead Him to teach sinners uprightness in heart. They had wandered in their own ways; how terribly are God's forgotten. But the good and gracious Lord will not leave them unguided; their state draws out His compassion. He loves the right way, nor can He bless elsewhere. He teaches sinners in the way. But the effect of acknowledging sin and knowing the goodness of God, is meekness, subduedness of spirit, and lowliness; the absence of haughtiness, of self, of what the heathens considered the spring of virtue. In this state God guides in judgment and teaches His way. Not only the way is taught to one who had wandered far from it; but where there is lowliness and submission to God, He guides in the intelligence of His ways, in their own spirit and mind. They are formed by His instructions to judge of what God's own way is. This is an internal and moral conformity

which applies itself to discern and judge circumstances. And this moral conformity and discernment is very precious. But verse 12 goes further. We have one fearing God, walking in the consciousness of His presence, and responsibility to Him, referring in heart to Him as subject to Him. Here is not merely moral discernment, but knowledge of the chosen way of God. The man who is guided in judgment will know what is right and do it, and avoid what is wrong, but the man of Issachar had understanding of the times. There was a way God chose in the midst of prevalent evil, and he who feared Jehovah, should be taught in this way. He would find the path which issued in full blessing. This is a great privilege, and of which no surrounding darkness or confusion can deprive us. It is the way Jehovah chooses in the midst of it—a special covenant way for those who fear Him. So surely there is for the Christian in the confusion in which the Church of God is. This is shown with additional evidence in the words which follow. The secret of Jehovah, for He has a secret for the ears of those who hear, is with them that fear Him—His friends to whom He makes known His mind. It is wonderful that Mary knew more of it than Martha. She could anoint Him beforehand for His burial, had the Lord's mind in the scene which was before. His word is always a guard against false pretences to this, but it remains ever true, that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And however all seems to run against His sure promise, they see the result and progress towards it by faith, and will see it in full accomplishment further on when

His ways are accomplished. This is a great blessing and gives a tranquility, a calm, in the path, which nothing else does. One has the Lord's mind in it. This closes the second part. In traversing the evil, the trust of the soul is in the Lord, and His faithful love. "Mine eyes are ever to the Lord, he shall pluck my feet out of the net." This is the secret of all—the Lord. One looks out of all the evil and trusts in Him who is above it all. Knowledge of the Lord's secret is not insensibility to present evil, even as it affects self; nor coldness as to the Lord's interest in ourselves, not only in righteousness, (though He be ever righteous,) but in ourselves. The secret of the Lord, through His fear, tends to give this intimacy and confidence. Turn thou unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am afflicted and desolate. There is a truth of heart with the Lord. But this supposes integrity, and such is found here; and such in Christ is found in the true of heart, though they confess themselves in themselves the chief of sinners, and in their flesh no good thing. The heart can present all the hostility of its enemies to God, and leave that also with Him. It looks to be not ashamed, for it has put its trust in Him. Christ only had to go through the contrary for us, the upright soul never will. But the heart, though having this intimacy with, and confidence in, God, does not forget His people—Israel, then; for us, the Church. The heart is there and, if it is intimate with God, must be. I have entered somewhat into the detail of moral feelings exhibited in the psalm, but it must be held in mind that all are founded on the presence in the heart

of a deep consciousness of what Jehovah was for it, that the thought of Jehovah predominated, and is the source of all that is felt.

In Psalm xxvi. it is, as already remarked, the consciousness of integrity rather than the confession of sins, but here, also, all refers to Jehovah, and draws from what Jehovah is, and the attachment of the soul to Him, the principle of separation from evil doers, and final joy in His congregation when there shall be full deliverance from them. The spirit of the psalm is that integrity which has kept the soul by its own affections, and its attachment to Jehovah, and trust in Jehovah in presence of the power of evil (and for the time, as between them and the saints, evildoers are always the most powerful, because they can act according to their will without restraint or conscience,) apart from evildoers; and the conscience in presence of Jehovah looks to God's not gathering it with sinners, when He comes in in power, and on this it counts in faith. It is the expression of the path and desire of integrity in presence of evil.

Psalm xxvii. shews the heart confident in Jehovah, yet exercised *before Him* in the presence of the *outward* manifestations of evil. What would create fear more than distress of spirit? The connexion of confidence in thinking of the enemies, and exercise of heart when looking to God, I think instructive, though at first sight it seems strange in this psalm. Confidence is not indifference or insensibility; but true exercises of heart with God, even when fear ac-

companies those exercises, shew themselves in confidence and boldness in presence of the hostile action of evil. Man would have spoken of fear when in presence of the enemy and confidence when with God. Whereas grace, working in true exercises of heart with God, gives boldness with the enemy. There is a real power of evil. The rightly taught heart feels it in its inward sources and reality (more or less spiritually,) but feels it with God, and then is at peace in the midst of, and as to, the conflict itself. So Christ sweat, as it were, great drops of blood in exercise of soul before God, and was of perfect calmness in the presence of His enemies, yea, they fell to the ground at the mention of His name. This is full of instruction as to the difficulties and pains of Christian life. Where the heart, conscious of the power of evil, is exercised with and before God as to it, the evil itself, whatever its power, is powerless when it comes, assuming the exercise to be complete. "This is your hour," said Christ, "and the power of darkness." But He had felt all that with God, and took the cup, as to the fact, out of the Father's, not the enemy's hand, who had, as to Christ, no such power. The psalm shows us the working of this in ordinary men according to His Spirit. Jehovah is the saints' light by faith, lightens up all around. There is no power of darkness for the spirit, when darkness is there in power. It rules in the enemies, but light is in the heart from the Lord, and it walks thus in the light. This is a great consolation. But the Lord is more than this—He is actual deliverance. This, till the cup was drank, He could not be for Christ; but He is

known to be so for the redeemed soul in the midst of the trial. The same revelation of Jehovah which gives light, gives us in the light to be assured of the deliverance: I do not say necessarily to see the deliverance, for the *how* may be obscured, but to be assured of it. Because Jehovah is there in light, He will deliver; so the Father for us, and in His place of government, the Lord. But if it be God Himself, clearly there is nothing to fear. This is celebrated in thinking of the wicked, whom no conscience restrains—of war, where will is unbridled, however violent and mighty; if the Lord is there, all is provided for. But an important principle, or state of soul, is associated with, and is the basis of, this confidence—entire singleness of eye and desire, the looking to Jehovah for, and seeking one thing, to be with Him, in His presence where He is, and can be adored; to behold His beauty, and learn there His will and mind. But this, on the other hand, is connected with confidence in His goodness. The soul, defenceless in itself, knows the Lord will hide it in the time of trouble in His pavilion. Who shall hurt or disturb it there? And what love in the Lord, what interest He takes in those He loves! The soul dwells with Him, and dwells in safety. It is not apparent deliverance, but the secret of His tabernacle. And it is wonderful how the Lord does when evil rages, and there seems no resource; the soul seeks none, it confides sweetly and quietly in the Lord, sure of security in Him. The 6th verse counts on full deliverance and praise in His tabernacle, now not a hiding-place, nor a secret, but the blessed place of

open praise. In the following verses we have the exercises of soul with the Lord, while waiting on Him for help. The Lord had called to seek His face. He could not turn it away. The soul recognizes here the possibility of anger, and deprecates it, and counts on grace. This is important for the soul, for one might think it could trust in the Lord if He had nothing against it. But not so: the heart may recognize that it ought to expect anger, yet trust grace. It has known a helping God, and looks not to be forsaken of one who is a Saviour God. This confidence is complete; more than the nearest ties of nature can give, and so indeed it is for him who knows the Lord. It takes up its own matters between itself and God, looks to be taught His way, and led in a plain path, because its enemies watched for its getting out of the way. The pressure of enemies was great, and there will be such for the saint. There is a will of evil—false witness, then cruelty. The goodness of the Lord—no human means—is the resource of the heart, the goodness of the Lord in His government. The result is: wait on the Lord. He strengthens the heart. "Wait, I say, on the Lord." This, indeed, is the secret of strength in the time of evil. There is, then, nothing to fear. We may have learnt that it is a Father's love in our path of children, and the care of Christ, that good Shepherd, but the principle of our confiding in the Lord is the same. It is remarkable how entirely absent is the thought of any other resource or help, than that of the Lord. And this it maintains integrity, for the Lord cannot help otherwise than in maintaining truth of heart. The wile of

G

enemies is there. The soul knows nothing, (no human means or strength, or wisdom, or plan,) but seeking Jehovah's face; with Him all is settled, and so in truth in the inward parts, and integrity. The enemies are then Jehovah's concern. This is the secret of our security and comfort in trial. Hence, grace being there, we can reckon on the Lord at all times. If we have erred, bring it to Him. It is a true exercise of soul in His presence. He deals with it according to truth, between itself and Him, but grace and His secret place, and their deliverance are its position.

Though Jehovah be the great subject of Ps. xxviii. as of all these, as regards the faithful there is a special point—his *cry* to Jehovah, and the supplication addressed to Him. The heart connects itself with the Lord in crying to Him. The cry implies the Lord's interest in us, and our having this for our starting point; also our avowed dependence on Him. Hence, crying and prayer to the Lord are important, and an index to the state of soul. We may desire from the Lord, have faith in His goodness in giving, but crying to Him identifies us avowedly with Him, even before others. Here the soul is spoken of as in extreme distress—the pit of sheol open before it. But the principle is ever true, even in interceding for others. Here faith is shown in crying, when all seemed to man's eye hopeless. This connection with the Lord is distinctly marked here, in its being made the ground for not being drawn away with the wicked in judgment. In psalm xxvi. it was the integrity of the believer in his ways, which was laid as the ground for not being

so drawn away: here it is this connection with the Lord, shown in calling upon Him. And though the wickedness of evildoers be the ground on which their judgment is looked for, yet their disregard of Jehovah is declared to be the ground of their destruction. The righteous has trusted in Him and been helped. But there is more, and much more, in the Lord's deliverance of us than the fact of being delivered. He has delivered us. The heart was attached to Him, adored Him, looked up to Him, believed Him, and He has not failed us. Oh! true this is! and how it attaches afresh the heart to Him. So here, (ver. 6, 7,) "My heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him." This looking with confidence to the Lord is a real entering into His character and conformity to it, in the sense of estimating, delighting in, and honouring it, in counting it impossible to be otherwise. It appreciates the Lord; and he who appreciates anything morally excellent is in a dependent way like it. I have a friend, of a noble, faithful, self-devoting character. I am in circumstances where all is opposed to the probability or possibility of his coming in to help. I am sure he will. I count with affection on what he is. It is evident that I hold fast in my appreciation of him. He is to my mind superior to all circumstances, governed by his own excellence; and this is what I appreciate and reckon on. Whatever circumstances may be, my heart goes with his in his conduct, though in the way of dependence, and his with mine. When he has acted, I rejoice in him, in my estimate of him.

I say, I knew my appreciation was just : I knew him, and what he is. I rejoice in his excellence : I have reckoned on it as certain, and above all the circumstances. He has proved his interest in me in intervening. Thus, when God shall deliver the remnant, and when He delivers the Christian, they can say, "This is our God ; we have waited for him." This is what we can see in Job through all his culpable irritation. He reckons on God, and knows what he would be and do if he could find Him. The heart has trusted God's heart, and found it, and rejoices in it—has really honoured God, though only in waiting, in assured confidence for Him. It is satisfied in what its mighty Friend is, and in His love. It rejoices in deliverance, for it suffered and was oppressed in weakness ; but rejoices in heart—delight in the deliverer. It has a friend that has formed the heart after His own excellency, and formed it to confide in it. In the Christian this will be calmer, because he is more instructed in heavenly things, knows God better, and has less anxiety as to what is here below, does not look on the things that are seen. But the principle is the same.

Psalm xxix. does not call for much remark connected with the way we are now viewing them. It is a summons to the mighty of the earth to own and give glory to Jehoyah—the honour due to His name. The only point I would notice is the connexion of worship with this, and here owning Him in His temple, where He has placed His name. His name has been revealed. Glory is due to Him as revealed, to His

name ; a name which, while it is the revelation of Himself, is that also of His relationship with His people. There He has placed His name, so as to form a centre of association and revealed place of worship. Thus, while His voice may proclaim the majesty of that name, they who know it are drawn together by it as a place of common worship. The glory of this name is made good by and revealed in what is declared in the last verses. Jehovah sitteth upon the floods, is above, and rules to His own purposes all the tumultuous movings of the mass of peoples. He sits, too, King for ever. As He is above the swellings of men, so He sits in sure, unmoved government for ever. But, then, there is the connexion with His people. He gives them strength. He blesses them with peace. Verse 10 is the possession of power over all and in Himself. Verse 11, what He is for the people. It is the invitation of the mighty to own Jehovah, and the sure blessing of Israel.

The great truth of psalm xxx. is the practically deeply-interesting one, that the joy flowing from the deliverance the Lord (in this psalm Jehovah) affords is greater and deeper than the blessing of prosperity, even when acknowledged to come from God. It may be that the deliverance is from sorrow occasioned by faults. With the remnant of the Jews it will surely be so ; but it is complete and full ; and when the sin or evil is fully acknowledged, the restoration and blessing is absolute in communion with God. Forgiveness, or the thought of it, in an unhealed soul, may have regrets. When the soul is healed, it will

learn judgment of the evil, assuredly, and a sense of humbleness, if it be recurred to—always more tenderness of spirit, more grace; but if the healing be full, the soul wholly searched out, no regrets, because what God is for us, as such, will possess the soul. The soul will abhor the flesh, and the principles which led to evil; but self will be taken out of the abhorrence when the evil is really hated, and peace will be there. I do not say the psalm pursues these thoughts to this depth. It is more occupied with the outward circumstances, with the hand of God upon it for evil, than with the evil for which His hand is upon it. But these are looked at as His anger. The effect is, that circumstances are looked at as a matter of His anger and favour; and on this the soul rests. It had been in prosperity, had owned its coming from God, but saw in circumstances its ground of confidence for happiness, though looked at as given and established by God. But, in so doing, however much it owned God in giving and assuring the blessing, it rested on the blessing, and that blessing ministered to self, instead of taking out of it. “I shall never be cast down. Thou, Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my mountain to stand strong.” Though piety might be there, it might degenerate into “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The psalm, however, supposes true piety. Only that God’s favour has made the mountain—“*my mountain*”—to stand strong, instead of the favour itself being the blessing. Jehovah hides His face, and direct dependence is felt, direct blessing looked for. Chastening and exercises for faults come, and divine favour itself is felt to be

the blessing needed. And what Jehovah is Himself is the source of joy. When His anger is on the people that is felt; not merely the circumstances it is expressed in, but the hiding of Jehovah's face for sin. The soul is brought into an immediate relationship, though it be by anguish and distress. It is brought to think of itself, not as a self to be caressed, a centre of its own blessing, but as sinful, and God's favour is needed. Thus, though painfully, a most useful and important work is done, through grace, when this self-judgment is wrought in the soul, so that there is spiritual integrity. The favour of Jehovah shines in upon it, and is enjoyed, and is become itself the blessing, while positive deliverance accompanies it in God's good time. The true nature of God in holy worship is entered into. He is not merely a God to serve man in blessing. The enemy does not rejoice over us, and the soul itself is healed. We see that if His anger be there, it is but a moment of discipline and instruction for the saints; and then they, being purified, enjoy Himself more fully. Here, literally, we see the remnant at the verge of the grave, and there delivered; but the true work is, even for them, with God.

I add these conditions of soul in which we may see saints now, of which this psalm gives an occasion to speak. First, what we may call, in a comparative sense, innocence, when a converted soul has no acquaintances with corruption, and no great inward conflict. Here the grace of forgiveness is enjoyed, and the soul is cheerfully happy in the known kindness and love of God its Saviour. Such a soul, if

walking close with God, may attain to the real judgment of self and deep acquaintance with God. Otherwise, the soul is superficial, and the man of self little known, separation from flesh's sphere, the world on its amiable side, little realized. The next is where it has failed, and, gone through deeper exercises, has been brought thus to the knowledge of self in a humbling way. This is more the case of the psalm. Then forgiveness may be known, and there is the rest of this; but a certain shame of sin and want of open confidence with God, as naturally in enjoyment of Him, if there have been anything base or trifling with God. This is more difficult to attain. But self, at any rate, is not set aside. Thirdly, when the root that has produced the evil is really judged, the point of departure from God, (not merely the evil itself,) and self thus set aside practically, then divine favour is everything. The heart is so far whole with God, and, while humble, bold with men. It has its conscious link with God, His favour—God known to be with it in moral unison, and in positive sustainment and strength. The present is its place with Him, not the past.

Psalm xxxi. is the expression of entire confidence in Jehovah—God known in our relationship with Him, in the most terrible circumstances of trial and distress. and that where sin has brought it on; yet where faith is at work, and the known name of God counted on, and therefore His righteousness in making it good. It is not reckoning upon God with pride. It is Jehovah trusted in for what He is—His name—but

with the fullest confession of failure, and that it is through sin that trouble has come upon Him that cries to Him. It is not so much the confession of iniquity, but that the sorrow out of which the cry is sent up is due to iniquity ; but the extremity of pressure casts the soul in confidence on God according to His revelation of Himself. The special character of the psalm is trust, and, from personal knowledge of Jehovah, the committing one's case to Him. This is a deep principle of true piety—such a knowledge of the Lord, such faith in what He is, that the soul can trust Him, and cast all on Him, when distress and hostility come to an extremity. And it is a principle of utter righteousness, because the soul cannot look thus to God but in righteousness. The Lord is known as having considered the distressed one's trouble. He has known his soul in adversities. The sufferings were not God's forgetting the sufferer. God has known, recognized, followed, His heart owned, the sufferer's soul, and thought of it in the midst of adversities ; and the sufferer as an owned soul, (however faulty), looks through the suffering to the Lord. It accepts the punishment of its iniquity, but in this righteous feeling trusts Jehovah ; and in this spirit, in what is perfect in principle, commits itself entirely to the Lord, and knows, and is content that it should be so, that all is in His hand. (Ver. 15.) It looks hence for His face to shine on it ; but that through His appearing for it, it should not be finally ashamed, nor will any that trust in Him. He has laid up goodness for them that fear Him, and trust in Him before the sons of men. His presence is a sure unfailing sanctuary,

which makes human malice vain in its attempts. He admits that, in the pressure of distress, he had for a moment spoken as cast out of God. Still faith was shown in the cry to the Lord, and he was heard. The Lord preserves the faithful, so that the saints may love Him, and be of good courage, whatever come. It is not every one that has to pass through such sorrows, as those referred to here; but when it is the portion of the saint, it gives great intimacy and confidence. What a known God is, is the ground of the psalm, and the cry founded on faith in it. I should not say that such is the brightest exercise of faith. This will be found, for example, more in the Epistle to the Philippians, the bright expression of normal Christian experience. Nor is it the commonest: but God, in His rich mercy, has in His word met every need, and made provision in His word for every state. And the state of soul here is one of much exercised depth and intimacy of confidence in God only, learnt through needed distress.

Psalm xxxii. But in the midst of all the exercises of heart which belong to a renewed soul in the midst of its difficulties here below, there is one point which is the centre of all, a need to which an answer is craved alike by the heart and conscience—its relationship to God when it thinks of its sin before Him. It has need of confidence for trials, of deliverance and help. It is cheered by promises, and bowed in heart and will as to the ways of God. But it needs reconciliation with Himself above all, the unclouded light of His countenance; as regards its own state forgiveness, and

the absence of guilt. The entire removal of all guilt before God, and His complete forgiveness, is beautifully connected here with purifying the heart and inner man, the taking out guile, and this in the confession of actual sins. But it begins, as it must, with God, and finds its satisfaction in His thoughts towards it. And this is right. Thus only can the heart be really purified, and sin have its true character, and God His right place, without which nothing is right. Yet it is the conscious state of its forgiveness which first affects the soul, after conviction and distress for sin has been wrought and the soul brought to confession. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven." He has sinned against God, transgressed. It is all perfectly forgiven. But it was sin before God and evil—a thing itself hateful in God's sight, and now in the soul's. It is expiated, covered; propitiation has been made. The present state is then put absolutely:—Jehovah imputed no iniquity to it; and now the whole heart is open before God. There is no guile in it. Why should there be when all is open with God, all cleared, and sin gone out of His sight? And oh! what a blessing it is to have the perfect light of God on an unsullied soul, not an innocent one. That is a far less thing, and, indeed, the inshining of perfect light would be inapplicable then; but with a knowledge of good and evil, and knowing what light is (in contrast with darkness,) and to have it shining upon one as white as snow, is infinitely blessed. I do not deny that it is more personal relationship here, into which also I will enter; but for the Christian this is implied in forgiveness,

and covering, and non-imputation of sin. As yet, of course, it is by faith, but not the less true for that. The ways of God in bringing the soul to it, and His ways after it, are also gone into in the psalm: no rest to the proud will which would not confess! (how gracious to pursue the soul thus!)—the most intimate guidance for the soul reconciled in communion, care in the midst of trial.

The psalm, then, is the expression of conscious blessedness in the sense of being forgiven. And how sweet it is to be in the sunshine of God's favour in the sense that His love has been active towards us! The undeservedness of the favour, though it is not the brightest joy, gives great deepness to it, because it is God Himself who forgives; for so it must be in forgiveness when the soul is restored to Him. Then there is the consciousness of the sin being out of God's sight. This is a very great blessing indeed, and the consciousness of it most sweet, the thought that not one sin appears in the sight of God. But there is the special sense, not that there was no sin, but that God imputes none, that He has a determined fixed judgment—He does not impute it. The sin is not denied; that would be guile. In this part the feelings are not so much engaged, but there is the judicial certainty of non-imputation necessary for truth in the inward parts. This connects itself with confession. But it is not only uprightness in word and confession, but in spirit. There was truth in the inward parts. No desire in the soul to hide, to conceal from itself the evil, it presents itself before forgiveness, before non-imputation: that is its connexion

with sin, not hiding it. He sees the sin *truly*, but sees, and because he sees, it is not imputed. But the phrase is absolute and general—"to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." It is an absolute condition of the individual; it is not his iniquity or particular fault forgiven, though, doubtless, that is so too, but absolute non-imputation of any. The man exists before God as having no sin, according to the judgment of God. Then my heart is open and free before God. I have the consciousness of this, and look up to God as having no sin, with the consciousness that He sees none. Hence there is no cloud, nothing to hide. This is not so, however, when confession is not made. Absolute non-imputation—that is God's actual judgment of me and manner of looking at me. No sin is there; none between me and Him. But, in arriving at the consciousness of this blessed truth, there has been confession. Till then, the pressure of God's hand was upon the soul, to force it to come to this. How gracious this is, God's watching over a soul, and a soul going wrong, too! to bring it to Himself. But he was brought by grace to this point—acknowledging sin to God, no excuse, giving it its true character, real spiritual uprightness, however humbling it may be. This was morally important, but is not all. "I will confess my transgressions"—the acts are brought up in memory. He resolved to take this course, and all was right. "Jehovah forgave the iniquity." 1 John i. opens this out Christianly. There, also, we cannot say we have no sin, and we confess our sins. The connexion of the absence of all sin on the conscience

and no guile in the heart, because it is entirely open through conscious non-imputation, is very instructive. It can be in no other way, only man is brought to it in truth by confession, and to confession through confidence. Thus only is the heart opened to God through grace, thus only is truth in the inward parts, though forced to the humiliation as regards our will, by forgiveness being known by promise. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared."

This revelation of God awakens the thought and feeling of all the upright and gracious minded to look to God in the time when He reveals Himself as the forgiving God, when He can be found. So for Christ Himself in Isaiah xlix. ; it was the accepted time. When He had been perfect, when perfectly proved before God, then He was heard, for He had been made sin ; and the apostle cites it thus, " Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation." The revelation of forgiveness and the joy of such relationship with God awakens the desire after and delight in such a God in gracious souls, and they seek unto Him. Supposing they have not the sense of sin at the moment, they know they are sinners, and God is so revealed, has a character which is their delight, and their soul links itself with Him. They seek to Him, not simply for forgiveness. It is in their character of graciousness they are spoken of here, but it is such a God—a God of this character, and these ways—which draws their heart ; and note, God so acting, so revealed, makes the time the finding time. This connection of the graciousness of the heart with the graciousness of God, and the power of attraction it

has, is very beautiful, and it is very deep in the gracious mind. There must be the sense of need, of dependence, and in us of the need of grace as such in the whole character of our relationship with God. But it is withal a deep realization in proportion to godliness, when the conscience is not bad, of the perfect and divine grace, the loveliness, yet the sovereign goodness of God's ways in this. Happy in goodness, we feel that this grace suits us and suits God; it draws us, as godly, to God. Hence we are there sheltered, come what will. If we think of the remnant, the principle will be plain. Israel, the Jews, have been deeply guilty in every way. God holds out, as in this psalm, and everywhere in Moses and the prophets, forgiveness. This is felt; God is so revealed; the godly remnant are touched by this: sins, no doubt, are confessed, but the heart of the godly draws to God. When the flood of judgments break in, they are preserved. In every case, the soul thus acquainted with goodness can count upon God. God Himself, thus known, is its hiding place. In the end songs of deliverance will be its portion.

But then promises come. We have to go through a wilderness in which there is no way; and in the midst of snares and dangers of false ways, God guides and teaches. The eye of God rests on us and guides us. It is not a way marked out and left; it is God Himself who watches over and guides us in a way that suits Him, and is the fruit of His wisdom, a divine way for us. God Himself it is that is brought before us here: God's goodness, God's leading, God interested in us to forgive when needed, to lead with

the undistracted eye of love. But then it supposes that the heart pays attention to the eye of God. It is attention to Him, and the following it with understanding that is the way; and thus the soul is inwardly taught in what is agreeable to Him, and is formed after Him in knowledge. This the New Testament largely unfolds. (Phil. i. 9—11; Col. i. 9, 10; iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24.) Even Moses says, "If I have found grace in thy sight, teach me thy way, that I may know thee and find grace in thy sight." It is the spiritual learning of God's way through His guidance, and communion with Him founded on His favour. Hence they are warned not to be like an unintelligent beast, who must be outwardly held. God can guide us thus, does graciously sometimes by His providence; but there is no spiritual understanding, no moral assimilation to His nature, and growth of the delight of our new nature in Him; no increased capacity, by this means, for knowing God. The result is declared in the judicial ways of God in the last two verses: only that we have to remark, that it is in Jehovah Himself that the soul has to rejoice, not in the consequences, though they that trust in Him be compassed about with mercy. He Himself known by forgiveness, known by ever accessible kindness and goodness, as a hiding place for the soul, as one that guided with His own care, with His eye, was the one to whom the soul thus taught was taught to rejoice. So Paul—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." We joy in God through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have received the reconciliation. He fills the soul, and He is above all.

Psalm xxxiii. I have only a few principles to note in speaking of this psalm. All the psalms to the end of xxxix. unfold the moral state of the Jewish remnant in the last days. I say the moral state, more than their condition under oppression, and the thought of forgiveness gives in general a brighter tint to the colouring of them, though the sense of their condition is found also, as elsewhere. Psalm xxxiii. follows on the last verse of xxxii., and the thought of forgiveness having put a new song in his mouth, he can look out with clearer confidence on the principles on which men should act, looking to the word and works of God. The earth is viewed as under God's eye and direction—His government as applied to it. This, fully displayed at the end, has its application to the lower part of a Christian's life, too. (Compare Psalm xxxiv. 12—16; 1 Peter iii. 10.) We get some general principles. "The works of the Lord are done in truth." I may perfectly reckon on His acting on the known principles of His holy will. Hence His word, which is essentially right, can judge me now. This is always an important principle. The Lord, though not visibly and publicly, does govern all things. Hence I can act on His word, and be sure of the consequences. I may, no doubt, suffer for Christ—that is a still better blessing; but the result of acting on God's word will be blessing. From the 6th verse, the power of the word is shown in creation. The earth should fear Him, "for he spake, and it was done;" again, He subverts the counsels of men, His stand fast. Another principle then comes in, the blessing of being the chosen people of God, His inheritance. This is Israel: still

H

faith has to walk in the strength of it now. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved." We are not God's inheritance, but heirs of God; but the greater elevation of the position does not destroy, though it may give a deeper application to, the principle. We have to walk through the world as the elect of God; and this is a most blessed position. It is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; but we walk in the consciousness of being the elect of God. He orders and fashions all hearts. What a thing to say, if I have to say to men! And He makes all things work together for good for me. Thus, while all human strength is nought, I can wait on the Lord with sure confidence. His eye, too, is never withdrawn from me. (Compare Job xxxvi. 7.)

But, Psalm xxxiv. goes further. It takes up the case of sorrow and trial in the most beautiful way. Jehovah himself, as ever, is the blessed burden of the psalm. In the first four verses, it is the spirit of Christ in an especial way which speaks, but as for the heart of every one so tried, and belongs to every one who has this faith, that every one may have it. The point of the psalm is, "at all times." It is easy to praise the Lord when He makes all flow softly for us. Yet the Lord is not as much praised really for what He is. In the midst of trouble the soul is seen humble and subdued in spirit. He has sought the Lord, and he found Him a ready friend. This made the Lord intimate and precious to him. The saint's heart was tried; exercised; difficulty and wrong pressed upon it, and his will did not rise up in pride and anger, but he

lays his matter with confidence on the kindness of the Lord, and He interests Himself in him. It is not high and sovereign providence making things flow for outward blessing—no doubt, we should be thankful for this—but the gracious interest of the Lord in his tried heart. This is much nearer, the interest greater, the link more sweet and stronger. It was not pride of will in trial or in success, but an oppressed and humble heart finding the Lord's ear and heart open to it. Thus consoled himself, he could console others with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God. He was delivered from all his fears. Oh, how often this happens, even as to the removing not unreasonably expected evil entirely. This knowledge of the Lord leads to the exercise of love in encouraging others, while the heart experiences it, and is filled with it. It is applied to the remnant by the Spirit in verse 5. They recall the case of Christ, in verse 6. In verse 7, we have it as a general truth; in 8—10 his own blessed experience enables him who has trusted the Lord, to assure others of the certainty of finding this help.

The experience of the Lord's kindness is very precious. It is not only that one is assured of it for all trials, but Himself is known. He is blessed and praised. The heart dwells in Him, and finds its joy and rest in Him, and in the goodness of one who is alone, and none like Him in what He is. The blessedness is infinite and divine in its nature, as He who is the source of it, yet as intimate as what is in the heart can be—more intimate than any human being who is without us. We dwell in Him, and the Lord

is our stay and the rest of our heart. There is nothing like it. None can be so intimately near us as God; for He is in us. Yet what an intimacy it is!

But there is another principle brought out here—what the walk is in which this blessing is found (ver. 7—10). We have fearing the Lord, trusting the Lord, and seeking the Lord. Ver. 11—16 take up what the character of this fear of the Lord is, in a passage most of which is quoted by Peter only. The end of 16 is left out as inapplicable now, though the general fact of government for the Christian is not. It is important that we should remember this. Not only is it true that God is not mocked—that what a man sows he will reap—that God has governmentally attached certain consequences to certain conduct; but He also watches over and directly governs His children—may cause them to be sick, to die; may deliver them from it, on confession or intercession. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, his ears open to their cry.” Not only that, but “nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Then there is a path marked out by God as the path of peace in a world like this; not simply in itself the path of spiritual power, but of quietness and peace in this world, going peaceably through it under God’s eye. And that is very precious for us. Grace is a means of doing it, as the heart is elsewhere than in idleness and passion. The feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. As far as in us lies, we live peaceably with all men. This is true even of unconverted men. Those who walk in this way, in general, see good days, because such is the conse-

quence of the public government of God. It becomes the Christian so to do, but others may do it. This government of God is always true, as we see in Job ; only the saint should understand it. But there is yet a word which remains. This government is not such now as that the righteous should not suffer (comp. 1 Pet. iii. 14—17), still more for the name of Christ. But Jehovah watches over him. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. It seems strange to us to hear, “Some of you shall they put to death ; but there shall not a hair of your head perish.” But the government of God now is, not the public government applied to the suppression of all evil but to the case of the righteous under and through the power of evil. When Christ appears, there will be this suppression of evil. In general, they who live peaceably will live in peace ; but in a world where Satan’s power is, the righteous will suffer—have many afflictions, but none without the watchful care of the Lord. And in some way deliverance will come. Who would have said that, in the seemingly unbridled rage of men, when all, Jew, priests, or Gentile, were united against Christ—when, to appearance, they had all their own way, this psalm should be literally fulfilled in Christ ? Not a hair of our head but is counted. I doubt that this verse, 20, in the psalm is exactly a prophecy, though literally accomplished in Christ. I should rather suppose that the passage in John’s Gospel referred to Exod. xii. 46. But Christ is a perfect example in any case of the declaration made in the psalm, as a great general principle, if the passage be not cited. God’s care never fails, and is shown in the

smallest circumstances, and in spite of all man's thoughts, though God may allow many afflictions to come upon those that trust Him. These, too, will surely be a blessing. The soul, thus learning the Lord's ways and trusting Him, can bless Him at all times. Christianity, indeed, can teach us deeper fruits of spiritual life in this respect. But it is precious to know the Lord as one that watches thus over us in love—a Father's tender care, in which we can confide, and in which we can walk peaceably in this world, seeking the good of those around us.

Psalm xxxv. is the direct demand for judgment of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, so that I have not much to remark upon it. But Himself was the first to suffer what here will be judged; but, as we have seen, never personally looks for judgment. Still this psalm shows us the spirit in which judgment is demanded. It was after patience and unwearied grace, and when this grace was of no avail, when there was no self-revenging, but casting themselves on the Lord, that at the end the Lord is looked to for deliverance. This is important to remark, as regards the judgment looked for. (See verses 12—14.) And it was only when he would be swallowed up that he looks to the Lord Himself to interfere, and so He will. The poor will not always be forgotten, nor is it right that heartless, unjust, and cruel evil should always have the upper hand unhindered. It is right that the saint should be patient, bear all till the Lord Himself interferes; and this is the spirit of this psalm, and then it rejoices in the Lord's salvation. There is a

righteous feeling that the Lord's recompensing the cruel wickedness is right, and so it is ; besides this, what we have is the character and way of the wicked, and the preceding entirely gracious walk of him who found the wicked too strong for him. Verses 26 and 27 have a special application to Christ, but the whole psalm, in the mouth of any one forward in faithfulness, was to bring the tide of evil on himself. I would refer to one or two passages to show the working of this spirit, and how far the Lord points to it as to the remnant. As to Himself, save to prophesy the fact, He did not ask for it. He never does. See 1 Samuel xxiv., xxv., xxvi.—the spirit in which David was kept, though weak, yet still, then, the instrument specially fitted by grace to attune the mind of Christ in these psalms to the circumstances in which the remnant, cast out like him, will be, and rising up, when God pleased, to the prophetic declaration of what Christ Himself should pass through, and provide words, wonderful honour ! in which Christ could express Himself, (see particularly xxiv. 11-13, and the end of xxvi.,) for so many of the psalms. So Abigail keeps him in this spirit through mercy, but there is no self-avenging, but casting himself on the Lord.

The way in which the Lord directs His disciples in Matt. x. marks the spirit, too, in which the remnant are to bear witness for His commission, and goes on to His return. (ver. 13—15. Comp. Psalm xxxv. 13.) It is important that the Christian should understand that while the Spirit of Christ in His own walk in the world was quite different, and so ought the Christian's to be,

from the desire of judgment expressed in the psalms, yet that that desire is righteous and right in its place, and that the desire of judgment is not self-vengeance, but an appeal to a delivering and righteous God after the perfect patience of the heart under unrighteous oppression, as bowing to the will of God, and learning the lesson He had to teach. (Comp. Psalm xciv. 12, and following.) Still the Christian is on quite different ground. In this point of view this psalm is an important one. It is one in which the spirit of the remnant is exercised before God by trial, and, inwardly subdued, is cast upon God to look for deliverance, according to the way in which it was promised to Israel and to the remnant under the divine government revealed in the law and the prophets.

Psalm xxxvi., while spoken in connexion with what is a very great trial, is yet, and indeed, for that very reason, full of very deep comfort. The trial is this, that the ways of the wicked prove to the heart of the servant of God that there is no restraint of conscience, nothing to reckon on in them, no check to malice by the fear of God. Flattering himself in his own sight, he is devising mischief, has no abhorrence of evil. How often does this, alas! come before the saint when in conflict with the power of the enemy. It is hard to believe this absence of conscience and planning mischief; malice reflected or advisedly; yet so it is. The heart knows it is true. The word points it out as characteristic. But then the consolation is very great and blessed, while it casts the soul entirely on a faithful and all-

gracious God, who is above all schemes of man, so that we can be perfectly peaceful. "Thy mercy, O Jehovah, is in the heavens." What can malice do, then? Its schemes cannot reach there, nor frustrate the plans or government which are established there, nor come between the soul and their effect. Mercy is out of the reach of the wicked's devices. But there is another quality in God—faithfulness. Mercy is the spring of and disposes His doings. That is a comfort. Upon His faithfulness I can count. It lifts its head above the machinations of the wicked. The immutable principle of God's government in faithful love, His dealing in righteousness, is as firm and towering in strength as the mountains; His ways of judging and dealing as profound but as mighty as the great deep. Not fathomable beforehand by us as to how or why, He is working above the power of evil, but beyond the reach of puny man, so that He can bring about His purposes of blessing by the malice of men. He preserves man and beast. The moment we introduce the Lord so known, all the effect of the malice of men, unrestrained though it be by the conscience of God in the wicked, is to make us trust God and not man. This is a real trial, but it is perfect peace; a breach with man, i.e., of the saint with man, as alienated from God, but a knitting of him to God in confiding cleaving of heart. And this has the highest moral effect. This effect is unfolded in verses 7, 8. "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God." It is not merely now a defence against unconscientious malice that is found, but the positive goodness of Him in whom it is found. The children of men put their

trust under the shadow of God's wings, because His lovingkindness is excellent. This is the right and fitting condition of the creature, but yet supposes evil and the need of this goodness, but this goodness as a resource. But this carries the saint yet further. The goodness which has sheltered and protected him becomes his portion. Such is the blessed effect of being entirely cast on God and driven away from man. Brought under the shadow of God's wings, they enjoy the fatness of His dwelling place. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." There are joys and pleasures that belong to God's house, yea, to God Himself. This is characteristic of the joy of the saints, and can only be when we are made partakers of the divine nature. This must have its joys where God has His; and this is the special proper blessedness of the saints. And God gives us this in the fullest way. He gives us His own presence, He gives us Christ. How rich is this blessing, to receive a nature capable of enjoying divine joys, and these having the fullest divine objects in every way, for it is in every way to enjoy! Looking up, our calling is to be holy and without blame before Him in love, to enjoy God and be His delight according to the divine nature imparted to us, and in relationship to be adopted as sons to Himself; our place of inheritance God's own house, our home: and as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, all that is subject to Him. But this is the inferior part; but as it is as redeemed and made perfectly happy under Christ, it is a divine joy. We have it, too, in fellow-

ship one with another. All this the Christian enjoys in the highest way, because Christ is become his life, and that in the highest and nearest relationship with the Father. Hence—and that through the power of the Holy Ghost—we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Our joy is full. I have referred to this on Christian ground. The principle is stated in the psalm; and, in principle, it is true of all saints, though not in the Christian degree, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. But in principle it is true. The psalm continues, “With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.” Up to this it has spoken rather of what God is for us, looked at as shelter, and protection, and comfort—in a word, a resource; but having brought us into the fatness of His house and the rivers of His pleasures, it refers to what God is more intrinsically in Himself in blessing; still more as what He is for us than in us—that belongs by the Holy Ghost to Christians. What is in us is here seen in Him as its source. “With thee is,” says the psalm; “it shall be in him,” says the Lord of the Christian. God is that, however, and so revealed here and known. With Him is the fountain of life—a word of great import, though never fully revealed till Christ came. In Him was life. There was a tree of life of which man never eat, an instrumental ordinance of man’s life. In the patriarchal times life is not the subject, but what the Almighty is to His beloved and blessed ones. The law connects life as a promise with man’s doing, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was

to be one. Life is a living connexion with the source of blessing, or at least a living enjoyment of His favour—not necessarily heaven. No law could give it or was it. God promised it to him who kept the law. God is the fountain of it, but the law given to a sinner on the principle of his responsibility could be no means of life, but a ministry of death and condemnation. It spoke of life—was with life in view, as promise on obedience; but in fact was found to be unto death. The psalms are where, though heavenly things are spoken of, the connexion of the heart of the remnant with God is brought out, and all its throbs and beatings in its need, and what God is for it are felt; and that according to the working of the Spirit of Christ, though temporal deliverances are, as for the remnant, the main desire. Life and resurrection as the hope of faith necessarily come in, though it be but in the depth of their most intimate thoughts; and they will meet the need of those who may be slain. It is not life and incorruptibility brought to light by the gospel; life in a man, the Son of God, a quickening Spirit; life in us by His becoming our life. Still as Christ's Spirit speaks in the psalms, He who had life was sure of the path of it in this world; and, as it led through death in the purpose for which He came into this world, sure of the resurrection too, that His soul would not be left in hades nor His flesh see corruption—but here in dependence on God as being man. So here, where the saint's heart is separated from man, as wholly separated himself even from the fear of God, not only protection and lovingkindness are looked for, but the fountain of life is seen to be with God.

We know death is overcome, its power rendered void, *κατηργουμένη*. We know that the eternal life which was with the Father is come down from heaven. We know it is communicated to us, that Christ is our life, that having the Son we have life, that we are quickened and made alive according to the exceeding greatness of His power, according to the working of His mighty power, in which He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places; so that life for us and in us, (for Christ is our life,) is final triumph over death, and reaches into heavenly places. This has been brought to light by the gospel, John giving us life descending and manifested here in Christ and communicated to us; and Paul life more fully completed in result up there, according to the divine counsels in glory. All this, of course, is not here entered into, and could not be till Christ's resurrection. There could have been even no righteousness in it. Who had a title to be in a heavenly place till Christ entered into it? In whom could it be displayed in glory till the Head so entered into it? Still the principle, source, root of it is seen and revealed here. The Psalms are not law, though law be yet owned; but the working of the Spirit of Christ and of life, in those who are under it or in Christ Himself, and in those too who have to confess themselves sinners under it, could not hope for life therefore by it, but whose eye is opened on mercy, forgiveness, and grace, if not on heaven, though this, so far as the sense of the joy of God's presence expresses it, is reached where life is most fully expressed, as in Psalm xvi. Hence the source of life is seen—a blessed thought—

when all was condemnation and death under law. They could not say, The life has been manifested, and we have seen it; still less, *our* life is hid with Christ in God; but they could say, and are taught to say, and know, With thee is the fountain of life. Hence, there is a drinking of the river of His pleasures. For where should this life be satisfied, or the cravings of the heart even unconsciously animated by it, if not at that river, the river that makes glad the city of God? We have in us who have drank, come to Christ and drank, have drank of the water He gives, a well of water in us, springing up into everlasting life; yea, through the Spirit, rivers flow out from us, and that from the inmost consciousness of blessing. But all this is the power of life in the Spirit. But it is equally precious to know its nature is divine. I have remarked elsewhere, that what is spoken of as life and nature in Colossians, is referred to the Holy Ghost in Ephesians. Here we have God as the fountain, a blessed expression; blessed to know that the fountain is God Himself. The Father hath life in Himself; that is true of Christ as man; then we that have the Son have life. It shows, I think, that it is looked at as something flowing forth. What our hearts have to rest on is, God being the source of life, that we may feel and know what life is—how divine a joy it is, that, having a life which is divine in its nature, this is capable of rejoicing. It is its nature to rejoice in what is divine. It can, indeed, enjoy nought else, save, as the expression of it, in goodness or truth, but finds its joy in these rivers which flow unexhausted from divine love, and in which we drink the blessedness

which is in His nature—in a nature which, being spiritually the same, must and can enjoy it according to that nature itself in its own perfectness. We joy in God.

But there is another thing. “In thy light we shall see light.” God shines out, as well as He is a source. He has life in Himself, but with Him is the fountain of it. He is light, but He shines forth, gives light. So Christ; in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And even we, Christ is our life, and we are light in the Lord. Here, no doubt, light is looked at more as comfort in the darkness of trial, when man, under Satan’s power, was in the fullest sense manifested darkness; but this, as we have seen, has led to the discovery of what God is Himself. In the abstract principle, nothing indeed in the psalms leads us more to what was fulfilled in Christ. Only here it is seen in Jehovah as its source, and the one in whom it is displayed. But this gives it its divine perfectness. “In *thee* is the fountain of life, and in *thy* light shall we see light.” It is the confidence, in the midst of darkness and trial, that Jehovah in grace was a source of life, and that in His light they would see light. In Christ we get every way deeper truths; because, when the life was the light of men, not for mere outward help, but shining in the moral darkness of this world, the darkness was darkness still, did not comprehend it. As long as He was in the world, He was the light of the world. Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The closing verses return to the present hopes of deliverance by the government of God, and the assurance of

its accomplishment. What characterizes the righteous here, is the knowledge of Jehovah and uprightness in heart—the enemies, pride and wickedness. He sees them, by faith, all fallen and unable to rise.

Psalm xxxvii. is very distinctly in connection with the display of the direct government of God in this world, as it will be made good when the meek shall inherit the land and the wicked be cut off. We have already seen that the epistles of Peter especially furnish to us the application of this to the christian estate as far as it is so applicable. The beginning of Matthew v. gives us also, only with a much fuller evangelical character, though not going farther than the kingdom of heaven, the application in the way of promise, as far as the temper pleasing to God goes. But there are some most interesting and instructive exhortations in the psalm as to the spirit in which the believer is to walk and the character of his confidence in God in the midst of the evil which surrounds him. For though the time of the direct display of God's government be not come, and no doubt the power of evil will be displayed more oppressively just before it is put down, still it is even now the time of patience, and the evil is there. Till Christ comes, it is in principle the evil day, and the patience and kingdom of Jesus Christ go together in the heart—not His own kingdom and glory. They are all founded on the certainty that after all Jehovah is above all the evil, loves judgment, does not forget the righteous and those who trust in Him, and that, in the end, His way would have the upper hand. Meanwhile, faith is exercised and all

that is in the heart judged, which would, by selfwill, mar the spiritual character and hinder the confidence in the Lord which becomes the saint.

The first exhortation is to peacefulness of spirit, (and it is general and applies to the state of the mind.) "Fret not thyself." When selfwill and the desire of present satisfaction mingles itself with the love of righteousness, when one desires righteousness and partly, sometimes, through fear of the power of evil, and is selfish though peace-loving interests, one is apt to fret oneself, because evil has its way. All this is the same spirit of unbelief as that of the wicked—God hath forgotten—though with other desires. But it is unbelief and selfwill. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. We are neither to fret, which is distrust; nor be envious, which is even worse and self-interest. Then comes the positive direction in what spirit we are to walk. What is the resource against the power of evil? "Trust in Jehovah and do good." You will reap the fruit of it according to promise. Next, delight thyself in Jehovah: He will give the desires of the heart. Holy desires, which have Himself for their object, will be satisfied. But opposition, shame, perhaps calumny, is there. "Commit thy way to Jehovah." How true is this! He has always, as men speak, the last word if we have only faith to wait for it. He will bring the result the righteous heart desires and make evident its righteousness. Next, patient waiting for Jehovah in heart and desire, the surest character of trust. Circumstances may thus be in turmoil around one—violence and efforts: The soul waits for Jehovah's coming in when He will. The

wicked may prosper ; Jehovah has His own time, a time which is always right and sets all right. He may chasten for good, have plans bringing to maturity, patience Himself with the wicked, His own glory to bring out, which is our everlasting joy. Hence, no anger, no wrath, no fretting, no uneasiness. It leads to doing evil, indulging our own will in evil to meet evil. This is not the patience and faith of the saints. Evil doers shall be cut off (the *saint* must not be among the number). They that wait on Jehovah shall inherit the earth. So of the meek, so of such as are blessed of Jehovah. This is Jewish undoubtedly, but as we have seen, the government of God is still exercised, though not in public manifestation ; and when the soul has waited on Him in patience, it has its blessing even here. The latter part of the psalm is a careful declaration of this sure government of the earth to be publicly manifested in connexion with the Jews, more secretly carried on in the time of heavenly grace—still ever true. There are one or two points of blessing to note in it. The steps of a good man are ordered by Jehovah. This is a vast and precious blessing, to think that in this wilderness, where there is no way in the midst of confusion and wickedness, our Father directs our steps. A young Christian may, in confiding zeal, not so much see the value of this, but through how many experiences will he pass ? But when one has seen the world, its snares, what a pathless wilderness of evil it is, it is beyond all price that the Lord directs our steps. Also the humble young Christian *is* directed through grace, if he waits on the Lord, though he may not see the wisdom of

it, nor the greatness of the privilege and mercy, till afterwards. But this is not all. Being so directed, the path is a good, a divine path. There is indeed no other, and the heart is directed in it. For the Christian is led by the spirit of God. His heart is in the ways; as Moses says, Show me *thy* way, not a way, but thy, that I may know thee. If I know a person's ways, I know him. God leads by His Spirit acting on and in the inner man and the word sanctifies. Then God has delight in the saint's way. He delights in seeing a divine path trodden by a man in this world of evil. This Christ did perfectly and God delighted in it. So far as we follow Him, the Lord delights in our way, has positive delight in it. It meets His heart.

Remark that there is no way but Christ. Adam did not need a way: he had to abide, enjoying God's goodness where he was. In a sinful world there is no way—all is confusion and sin. But Christ was Himself, according to God, in the world, and in passing through it manifesting divine life and its path through the world when not of it. This was a wholly new thing, partially manifested in every saint in his walk of faith; but existing in itself and perfectly manifested in Christ. This is our path. We have to follow His steps and He is the way to the Father, and it is to Him we are going. It is an immense privilege to think our steps are ordered of the Lord, as a guarding from evil and guidance; and, then, that the Lord delights in our way. What a path in a world like this: How fast should we hold it, and seek none else, and seek to keep it! Here the precepts, as in Col. iii., or Eph. iv. v., come so preciously in. There

is another mercy—God watches over him. He may fall, i.e., in trials, not carnally, (comp. 2 Cor. iv. 9 and following,) but he is not utterly cast down; the Lord upholds him by His hand. It may be a part of this government of God that he should be brought low, set aside, but the Lord's hand is in it, not he out of it, and that hand upholds him. The vessel may be broken or put to dishonour by men, the power is of God.

There is a moral reason for God's ways—He *loves* judgment; besides that, there is the assurance of sovereign love. He loves his saints. They are preserved for ever: but, then, according to the ways of this judgment, we have besides some traits of the righteous. He speaks wisdom, that is, the mind of God; and talks of judgment, the uprightness of the divine ways in God's sight, how God judges of right and wrong; his heart is in the walking in God's known will: his steps will not slide. We have then to wait on the Lord, and to keep His way. The end of the perfect and uprightness is peace. And so it is, practically, with a Christian; he may be chastened for particular faults, for God's ways are, through mercy, unbending and right; but when a man walks with upright purpose of heart in his life, that life closes—if it close this side of glory—in peace. The fear of God and walking in His presence is a great means of peace. I speak not of peace for a sinner's conscience through the precious blood of Christ, but the peace of God filling the heart when all comes before Him. Finally, the *Lord* is the strength of the righteous in the time of trouble. That cannot fail.

He shall help and deliver them, save them from their enemies because they *trust* in Him. This is always true.

Psalm xxxviii. presents to us a special state of soul. The relationship of the heart with God is known and felt, and that even in confidence, as the soul pursues the expression of its feelings. "In thee, O Jehovah, do I hope. Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." Yet the soul is in the depth of sorrow and distress, and this looked at as the chastening of the Lord. It is under it, but deprecates it; that is, being in profound distress and sorrow, in loathsome disease, and friends abandoning, and enemies lively (as Job's state partially), Jehovah is looked to in it. The heart attributes it all to sin, but first of all looks to Jehovah and His hand. It is that shows faith and a right mind. The order of thought is thus remarkable. First, Jehovah judging, then sin as the cause, then personal misery, then abandonment of friends, then liveliness and ill-will of enemies, and the consciousness of all resulting in the heart confiding in Him that smote, turning to Him that smiteth it; and then comes out what at bottom was in the heart—hope in Jehovah, the consciousness of such belonging to Him as that the triumph of faith's enemies could not be, and that in the sense of the need of His intervention, because the poor sinning soul had no strength in self. All this leads to the expression of unfeigned integrity of heart; acknowledgment of sin, not merely owning it to be the cause of judgment, but judging self for it before a trusted Jehovah, and thus

able freely to look for help from Him. The soul, in disengaging sin from itself, through grace, in judging it can disengage, so to speak, its enemies from the pressing judgments of Jehovah, and seeing them only in their own malice and hostility to the servant of Jehovah, and what was right, can now look for Jehovah's help against them. For the believer, though he had grievously sinned and been brought righteously low for it, yet really followed what was good. And though Jehovah used the malice of the wicked as a rod, it was not the evil which the wicked hated in the saints, but their connexion with and owning the Lord. Yet the judgment was righteous. This will be the true history of the remnant when, under the terrible chastisement of Jehovah, they earnestly turn to what is right. But what an instruction also for us when under chastisement for what is wrong! Perhaps complicated chastisement for an extreme case is supposed here.

But what instruction for us when discipline comes upon us, where to look, where to begin! There may be the sense of God's chastening hand for sin and deserved wrath, but the reference of the heart to God's faithful love in relationship with us will lead just to deprecate wrath and His hot displeasure. There is a government of God according to His nature, and though the chastening hand of God does not destroy the faith and knowledge of our relationship, (to us of Father,) nor the reflective certainty that there can be no imputation to the believer, yet the soul does not quiet itself with this under the sense of the governmental hand of God in it. It is

of immense consequence, no doubt, and is at the basis of confidence, is a real sustaining directing power to the soul, but it is not directly objectively thought of. God's holy nature, with whom we have communion, and what He is necessarily as regards sin, is before the soul. And the government of God is according to that nature; which indeed has been glorified by the work of redemption as to the imputation of sin. And though this last be true, the former point is what is rightly felt at the time: not a doubt of redemption but a sense of the way God, in His very nature and as Lord in His government, looks at sin with wrath, not reasoning about it, but because one has a nature that knows Him and an awakened conscience, one feels it, and feels it as to self, the goodness of God making self-judgment more terrible. It is not despair, it is not doubting justification: but it is not using this to screen the soul from the sense of the aspect sin has in the sight of God. It deprecates, because it knows the Lord, wrath and hot displeasure, which its sin had deserved, and, because it knows Him, looks to Him of whom it has deserved it. In the circumstances of the trial one looks to the hand and thoughts of Him who inflicts it, and interprets the ways of God because all comes from His hand, and looks to His thoughts in it. And hence, the conscious relationship being present, the heart gets into the power of it as a purifying, more than a wrathful, process. It can say, Lord, *all my desire is before thee, my groaning is not hid from thee.* This introduction of the Lord into His own chastisements, according to the full love and the relationship in which He is to us, is

very beautiful. He is, according to these, the key for the heart of His own ways. And the heart recovers its equilibrium, as we see in the end of the Psalm, where there is the consciousness of God being for it, as its resource against what before pressed on it, and as to which, in the sense of the sin which had caused it, it was deprecating wrath and hot displeasure. This is the effect of looking straight to Him, and confessing simply, and in true depth of soul, the evil as against Himself, settling it between the soul and God; then it settles matters between the heart and the enemies with God. The secret of all is looking directly to God Himself as He is in relationship with us, and this is the true confession of sin, but looking to and casting all on Himself. Confidence in Jehovah is the spring of every thought in all these psalms. The relationship of Father in which God stands to us, and which is realized by faith, modifies, in a measure, the kind of feeling which the heart has. We have more sense of tenderness and graciousness in His thoughts towards us when we look towards Him, more of compassion and love; but this does not hinder its being substantially the same, and God as a God of government, according to the holiness of His nature, being before the soul and conscience, though His love be trusted. It will be remarked that the soul, with its desire before God, is entirely submissive, and silent as to the mischief and wrong of the enemy; and that because it referred to God and hoped in Him, trusted in Him as having carried the whole matter in the spirit of confession to Him, and looks at it as coming from His hand. It would not otherwise have put

Him between itself and the enemies. (Ver. 13 and following.)

Ps. xxxix. is more the nothingness of man in presence of all the evil, and the pretensions of power in which it showed itself, the heart referring itself to Jehovah. The heart kept a check on itself in the presence of the wicked, lest it should speak foolishly or rise up against it, as if it had strength, too, whereas all in man was vanity. Then God's hand is seen in what the heart was undergoing, and He is looked to for deliverance, and all the pretensions of the wicked disappear, so to speak. Jehovah was correcting for iniquity. The believer in this world is a stranger, sojourning with God—for how long He alone can say. It does not depend on, nor is it to be vexed by, the bustling pretensions and arrogance of the wicked in their success. This would be to make ourselves of this world with a claim to something in it. Is that true? Ver. 12 takes this place of Abraham and David, and all the walkers by faith, though looking, as the believing Jew would, for present sparing, though of God and as from God, and this is in chastening, (see 9, 10,) the soul can now do. As to the government and ways of God, it is a New Testament wish.

Psalm xl. In all these psalms we have had the failing saint (the remnant) looking to a God known in relationship and faithful grace, though in failure. In psalm xl. we have Christ taking the place of patience without failure, and so furnishing a ground for confidence even for those who failed, by taking His place with them

(who, after all, were the saints upon the earth, the excellent) in their sorrows, and the path of integrity on the earth. Nor does He fail in this to place Himself under the burden of evil and sins under which Israel had brought itself. We, though this be in every sense true for the redemption of Israel, know it in yet a deeper way—such a glorifying of God as gives a heavenly place. This is not looked at here; but the way in which Christ identifies Himself with Israel, though in the integrity of the upright remnant, is profoundly instructive, and leads us into a wonderful apprehension of a special part of His sorrows. His death, and the sorrows of His death, are not viewed as atoning, bearing of wrath, but as sorrows and suffering and grief. And so they were; though, besides that, atonement was in them, viewed as the drinking the cup of wrath. But there Christ does not bear sorrow with, but for His people; here God is viewed as helping Christ when in sorrow, in which He is, and in which He waits on the Lord. It lay on the remnant, as in Israel's opposition, because of their faults and departure from God. Christ, who had been, as He states in this psalm, faithful to God in everything, enters into this sorrow in heavenly grace. It is not His own relationship to God, but His entering into the remnant's as connected with Israel. His own had been perfect: theirs, though founded on Jehovah's faithfulness on one side, actually the fruit of sin. It is further at the close of His life. It is morally closed as to service. During that He had been doing God's will in the body prepared for Him, and faithfully declaring God's righteousness in the

great congregation, i.e., publicly in Israel. Now, and as regards man, (and so it will be with the remnant: their trials will come upon them from the proud, because of their faithfulness and testimony, only they will have deserved it, as themselves involved in the sins of the people,) because of this faithful testimony, the evils come upon him. So we know it was with Christ historically. His hour was come for it—the hour of His enemies and of the power of darkness. Here (as it is not the atoning character of His suffering and sorrow, but His association with the remnant—with, as I have said, not for), we have not, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” as in psalm xxii., where the foundation of righteous grace was to be laid. It is Christ’s perfect life, and sorrows at the close of it, in which He refers to the faithfulness and goodness of Jehovah, so as to lead His people to confide in it, instructing them in this in which His perfection was shown. “I waited patiently for Jehovah;” patience had its perfect work—an immense lesson for us. Flesh can wait long, but not till the Lord comes in, not in perfect submission; and confiding in His only strength and faithfulness so as to be perfect in obedience and in the will of God. Saul waited *nearly* seven days, but the confidence of the flesh was melting away—his army; the Philistines, the proud enemies were there. He did not wait out till the Lord came in with Samuel. Had he obeyed and felt *he* could do nothing, and had only to obey and wait, he would have said, I can do nothing, and I ought to do nothing till the Lord comes by Samuel. Flesh trusted its own wisdom, and looked to its own force, though with

pious forms. All was lost. It was flesh tried and which failed. Christ was tried : He waited patiently *for Jehovah*. He was perfect and complete in all the will of God. And this is our path, through grace.

This is the great personal instruction of this psalm, save that Christ's own perfectness is always the greatest of all. Here He gives Himself as the pattern. "I waited patiently for the Lord"—for the Lord—that is, till Jehovah Himself came in. His own will never moved, though fully put to the test. Hence it was perfectness. He would have no other deliverance but His. His heart was wholly right—would not have a deliverance which was not the Lord's. This is a very important point as to the state of the heart. It would not have another than the Lord's. Besides, it knows that there is no other, and that the Lord is perfectly right, when His moral will has been perfectly made good, and His righteousness vindicated when needed. There is the known perfectness of His will—His only title, and then perfectness of submission and the desire of only Him. As this is a pattern for the saints, trial is looked at as such, and death is not spoken of save as it may be trial—a horrible pit, miry clay—images of distress, terror, and, humanly speaking, danger. The resource was a cry to Jehovah, and He was heard in that He feared. Here Christ speaks in His own person, but in verse 3, deliverance enables Him to speak to the remnant—"a new song in my mouth"—even for deliverance from what had come upon them because of their sins. "Praise unto our God," "many shall see it and fear, and put their trust in Jehovah." This

would let in Gentiles. God had come in to deliver out of the effect of evil, and set His feet upon a rock above it and all its effects. This sure faithfulness of grace—the deliverance of God manifested in one who had gone to the depths of trial, would be a resting place for the faith of others, the rather as He had gone into it as the consequence of the state of the people in the sight of God. Hence it is applied to the condition of the remnant, though thus true of every saint in trial by others' wickedness and the power of evil, perhaps brought on himself. "Blessed is the man that maketh Jehovah his trust, and respecteth not the proud," the high pretensions of man, and apparently successful wickedness, "nor such as turn aside to lies," abandon God for other false refuges, and the falsehoods of infidelity. Then, as man, Christ begins to recite how this most excellent proof of God's faithfulness to His people came in, though owning them to all others. They were numberless towards His people, "to *us*-ward." He puts Himself with them. Verse 6, the special and glorious One comes in view, He who could discourse with Jehovah in eternity. The Son and Word, who was with God and was God and in the beginning with God, according to what was written in the roll of the book, has the place of obedience prepared for Him, ears dug, a body prepared, and, according to the divine counsels (and love for us), freely and willing undertakes the same place, the place of obedience; His delight when He has taken it, and is man—has taken the form of a servant, is to do God's will. God's law is within His heart. Such is Christ as man; obedient;

who in free-will had come, taking the body prepared for Him, and entered into the willing servant's place, the place of willing and glad obedience. Verse 6 presents the thought and counsels of God, ver. 7 His willing coming to do God's will according to these counsels. But we must remember He speaks when man, and verses 6 and 7 are the revelation of what passed in the everlasting world (wonderful thought!) telling us how He became a man. But, as in verse 5, so again in 8, Christ speaks again as actually in the place on earth. "I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart;" that is, His perfectness as man. In ver. 9, 10, we have the perfectness of His service. He has preached righteousness before the whole people of Israel; He has not shrunk from it, nor hid it within His heart—a lesson to all of us, though to be used with divine guidance. It was God's righteousness, His ways, nature, judgments, judgment of evil, what He was in judging it, His faithfulness, too, and salvation—for Jehovah was this to Israel—His loving-kindness and truth. He had preached righteousness to man, and that perfectly; and he had fully declared what Jehovah was, in all the perfectness of His nature and character towards Israel. All this was accomplished. He appeals to its full accomplishment. But now, He who had freely undertaken this service for God's glory towards Israel, finds Himself in another position. It has brought the hatred of the nation upon Him, the wishers of evil against Him. But this great controversy, and the need for the saints' deliverance, raised the question of the state in God's sight of those that were to be delivered. And with-

out entering here on the ground of atonement, the governmental expression of the view God took of Israel's sin, in which the remnant had been involved, comes pressing on the soul of Christ, as it will really on the remnant; the iniquities of Israel will take hold upon them as reaping what they have sowed—not condemnation (the burden of that Christ indeed underwent for them in atonement,) but trial, distress, and felt (or, rather, making them to feel the) displeasure of God, but in which true faith looks for the loving-kindness, and truth proclaimed and trusted—in the righteousness proclaimed is felt as a witness against sin, through the distress flowing from it, as Joseph's brothers before Joseph.

Psalm xli. The 40th psalm presented to us the blessed Lord coming to take the place of obedience in the body prepared for Him, to be the poor and needy one on the earth, and waiting patiently for the Lord. The 41st speaks of the blessedness of those who could discern this place of the poor. The Lord was in it above all, and understood it above all; but we know in the beatitudes how He pronounces blessed those who through grace are like Him poor in spirit. For in truth these beatitudes are nearly the whole of them just a description of what Christ was, though given as a character to which blessing belonged, poor in spirit, meek, pure in heart, who was such like the Great Peacemaker. In Luke we have more directly to His disciples: Blessed are *ye* poor. But He entered into the sorrows and place of His disciples, and when He put forth His own sheep went before them.

Although a psalm taking up a general character, it is specially fulfilled in Christ, who used the 9th verse as specially fulfilled in Himself. It is indeed this identification with the remnant which gives such a deep interest to the psalms. This poor man cried. What is looked for in the psalm is the understanding of this place. With this we have the sure confidence that Jehovah would uphold him in his integrity, and set him before His face for ever. Blessed is he who enters into, and who has spiritual intelligence of, and interest in, this place of the poor man who waits, though in sorrow and lowliness, on Jehovah. If malice pursue him, he looks to Jehovah and His mercy in integrity of heart.

In the early part of this second book of the Psalms there is an element which gives a very distinct character to its spiritual as well as its prophetic import—the absence of the covenant-name of God (the transition to Jehovah, is in psalm xlvi). Whatever the distresses and sorrows of the first forty-one psalms, the heart of the psalmist always looked freely to Jehovah in them, was in fuller relationship with Him and the enjoyment of public services, in which His name was celebrated. Here he is cast out. He remembers these things. He is an outcast and can only, in the secret of his soul and in wilderness circumstances, look to the nature and essence of what God is. We have still to remember the difference of the nature of relationship of Jehovah and the Father, and the looking for outward deliverance and judgment in order to have that deliverance. Still this change will furnish deep re-

ligious instruction. Psalm xxii. furnishes us with the expression of this difference in the strongest way. There Christ Himself was out of the enjoyment of His own relationship with the Father, having been made sin for us. In human sorrows He for once does not find divine comfort. Now as to present wrath, no godly soul, of course, ever goes through this; but as to sorrow, God's face is hid from Israel, and when they are awakened they feel that it is because of sin, and though faith is at work, which is just what these psalms describe. It is faith looking at God when all circumstances are against him who exercises it and they are driven out from the present enjoyment of revealed communion and covenant relationship; it is the position God sets His people in when covenant relationship is broken—as it will be, and is—with Israel, or not known: and faith, acknowledging the justice of this, looks through all to God's own faithfulness as such. It is, so to speak, naked faith, without anything to sustain it, of what God gives to His people, as the witness of conferred favours. The result is, a full trial of the soul. The question for the soul here is not how far it is enjoying His gifts, but, how far its state can link itself with what God is in Himself, and count on that. This probes it to the bottom, because all flesh is completely judged; for it can have no connexion with God at all. It is true that this is never understood but by a new nature—that nature which can understand what God is, and, through grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, cleave to promises; but the flesh is thereby fully judged, and the difference of that and the new

K

man known and discernéd, but redemption is not known. Because of this new nature there is the consciousness of the desire to do good, and of God's favour, but no peace. It is a searching process that we may be cast in naked dependence on grace. It is practically as to principle Rom. vii.

In speaking of Psalm xlii., we can only take the great principle, unless in a very special case of Christian experience ; because the psalm supposes the person's enjoyment of common blessings, he remembered them. The special case is this : when a soul has believed in forgiveness, owning, no doubt, its sinfulness, but not really searched out, or the entirely sinful nature of the flesh discovered, the first joy may be lost, and the soul only know enough of God to feel the dreadfulness of not having the light of His countenance ; but this gives the earnest desire to enjoy it. It may also happen when a soul has supposed itself christian, but finds out, through the operation of God's Spirit, that it is not. In either case, the true blessed effect of the position in which we are placed by redemption is not known. The psalm goes no further than hope, but it is a hope much deepened and made more true by the trial. It expresses more the result of the trial than the process ; and hence it is we have so blessed an expression of the state of the soul, however forlorn it is. It thirsts after God Himself—the difference of the christian state is that, as in Rom. v., he joys in God. Still, this state of thirsting is, in certain respects, deeper than the first joy, because the joy is partial in its realisation : the want is complete, and God Him-

self, in Himself, the thing desired. No doubt the psalm refers to the circumstances, and it is the souls' loss of God in happy circumstances which supported the soul, more or less, which obliges it to lean on and look for God Himself more absolutely: and, as we shall see, draws its joy thence. And it is this the spiritual soul has to look to in this psalm. His soul is athirst for God. He had lost the joy of the multitude, but he now panted after *God Himself*, where there was none of this. The change was sensible; but what he felt the loss of for his heart was God Himself. That was what he panted after. People and happy circumstances disappear from the mind as from the scene, though they were enjoyed with God. The individual heart wants God for itself. The divine nature in us craves after its delight in God, the objective fulness that satisfies it, because it is the divine nature. Its thirst is perfect after that—that one great, blessed object, which fills all the desires and excludes every other. Previously the soul had enjoyed the blessings from God and God Himself in *them*. Now God Himself becomes consciously and necessarily the whole blessing itself. The trial has judged all flesh as to the subjective state of the soul, all mediate enjoyment of God in circumstances; and the divine life, in order to its full blessing and consciousness of what that blessing is, has its perfect delight in God only and God Himself. This is a wonderfully deepening process. It is not that the soul will not have joy; but that the *source* of joy, pure, moral blessing, has a much fuller place in the heart, and, as we shall see, henceforth characterizes it.

Hence it is that we see persons who have been deeply tried by the loss of blessings, which in their place were given of God, far more calm, possessed of a deeper consciousness of God being their portion; and hence more withdrawn from the influence of circumstances to that blessed centre of rest.

The enemy, though in a painful way—and so is it even in God's discipline—contributes to the furtherance of the soul in this path. They said, Where is thy God? They have driven them out from the public enjoyment of conferred—and in Israel covenant—blessing. (So Job.) And where was the sign of their having blessings from Him? But as they had ascribed it to God and proclaimed His faithfulness and power to secure, they taunt them with it now and say, What can you say now?—where is thy God? This, really, the unhappy Jews did to Christ. But this only casts the soul on Him. There was nothing for it, but what God was Himself. The enemy had driven them away from all else—from mercies which by abuse tended to shut God out. These the enemy succeeded in depriving the soul of, and left it only God. And the soul hoped in Him; but what was the consequence? Crying out for the blessing? No. Often the soul, by seeking joy, cannot get it, this would not purify and bless it: and to bless God must purify. When emptied of self and seeking God, we find joy. So here, while remembering the past joy, he says, I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. But some other traits must be noticed here. Pride and stoical resistance to sorrow will not do. That does not draw the soul to God, but effectually

and specially keeps it from Him—teaches it, or pretends to teach it, to do without Him, as the stoics held in fact that the virtuous man was God's equal. Here the soul had felt the sorrow and was dependent, and now can be open with God, because of His goodness and faithfulness. Sorrow, when it is complete and helpless, gives intimacy with him who is willing and able to help, and this is now with God. He tells his sorrow to God. (Ver. 5.) He reasoned with himself. Now he says, "Oh my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember *thee*." But this leads to another point. The troubles themselves come from God. Inward self-judgment and looking to God bring Him and Him alone into everything. Enemies have disappeared with blessings. *Thy* waves and *thy* billows are gone over me. God began the matter with Job and told neither Satan nor Job what He was about, and uses Satan's blind malice to break Job's unsubdued, and of himself unsuspected, nature, and bring about a blessing. Deep called to deep, but it was at the voice of God's waterspouts. But this seeing God's hand in purpose leads to the consciousness of covenant relationship; to us of Father, here of Jehovah; and he is reckoned upon according to that for the future. Jehovah will command His lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night shall His song be with me and my prayer unto the God of my life. Confidence is thus acquired—boldness with a faithful God. "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?" He does not say, forsaken here. That Christ alone was, and faith knows it never can be. But because of this

confidence in the unfailing love of God, he asks Him who is his rock—why He has left him in the power of the enemy. Note how when once we see the hand of God in our sorrows we can look for deliverance, because it is God, and His hand is on us in love. And now the reproach of the enemies becomes a plea with God; for when they say, Where is thy God? the only answer is, God's manifesting Himself. Meanwhile the soul has been deepened in its desires after God Himself. All carelessness of heart removed, so that manifestation has infinitely more value. Here the assurances of blessing are enlarged, before the distressed soul has said that he was assured of the help of His countenance as the theme of his praises; but we have seen that his heart, purified and exercised, had been drawn up into confiding in the sure faithfulness of God in known relationship. The heart, though not yet outwardly freed, is fixed on God in desire and in confidence. Hence he says now, Who is the health of my countenance—his countenance reflects in joy the outshining of God's in love—and my God. Distress and the deprivation of all given, even religious blessings, had cast the heart upon God and drawn it to look to Him as the alone source of joy, and with the confidence which must spring up when the soul is near God, known in His own relationship by faith. It cannot be otherwise. There may be delay as to full peace of heart and enjoyment, if the Lord sees purifying and sifting still necessary; but there will be a confiding leaning on Him, and the soul then is brought to thirst evidently for Himself. My soul is athirst for God. It addresses itself to God,

but it is the soul panting after Him. We do not get the answer here, but the state of the soul looking purely for God Himself, brought to do it, and assured of the shining of the light of His countenance and of the joy and health it would give. Remark as to the detail that it is when the soul has been broken down and its force of pride has given way, that it then remembers God. (Ver. 6.) So when God's hand is seen in his trials, (ver. 7,) he sees that Jehovah, God as known in relationship, will command His lovingkindness, and God is the God of his life and God his rock.

Psalm xliii. In psalm xlii. we have seen the soul internally restored and animated to an earnest thirsting after God Himself, seeking all its joy in Himself. Being brought to that, psalm xliii. is looking out for a deliverance, which shall enable it to enjoy God freely and fully. God has become, for the heart, its exceeding joy; and it will be recalled, thus restored, to free worship of Him, to express its joy and thanksgiving fully. God is not here characterized as the living God, but as the God of his strength. Till the soul was fully fixed on God Himself as its delight, this cry for deliverance, though natural and not wrong, if subject to His will (yet it would rather desire purification than escape from affliction), was yet more a reference to comfort and ease; though from the hand of God this is not to be slighted. But now it is identified with the desire to praise and glorify God. This change has to be noted, when under trial, righteously and graciously from God, perhaps unrighteously from man. The heart naturally desires freedom; but,

as Elihu says to Job, if it is not as subject to God's gracious dealings, it is choosing iniquity rather than affliction—there is a want both of uprightness and submission. When once the heart is fully restored, (and with an upright conscience we shall pretty well know this, and God will perfectly, that if there be subjection to Him, and the desire of perfectness of heart, the deliverance will be surely at the right time) the desire of deliverance has its fully right place. It is the desire to be manifestly with Him in peace, and to glorify and praise Him openly. Outward enemies had been reproaching in psalm xlii., but they were God's waves and billows. But "where is thy God?" was the terrible thing. His soul became athirst for Him. Now he desires judgment of his cause and deliverance. There was a nearer trial than outward oppression, though he was still under it, the direct wickedness of injustice with which he had to do. He looked for God's light and truth to come out and lead him and bring him to God's holy hill. It is not the consciousness that God was his secret delight to which he had been brought, but that He who was would, by His power, lead him now to open praise and worship. The God of strength would bring him there; he would be present with Him who was his exceeding joy. This hope encourages his heart and brings him back, too, to that which was the secret and fulness of his joy, and which he possessed in hope that God would be the health of his countenance. He was morally his exceeding joy—now it would shine forth in glad worship, and be reflected in the gladness of the countenance of him who enjoyed it. The panting after God

was the result in the last psalm, though looking out for blessing. Here this is wrought in the soul, and, though not restored yet to outward public blessings, God is his exceeding joy, and God—his God; and the outward restoration is presently looked forward to.

Psalm xlv. We have certainly in this book of the psalms moral exercises more deeply and fully developed. The soul has to do with God; but the application is not the easier to the christian state, for this simple reason, the exercises flowing from relationship under trial are not the theme of this book, but exercises of soul with God, when the enjoyment of known relationship is lost. Hence, while in the former part, in order to apply it to the christian, it was only needed to apprehend the change of relationship from Jehovah to Father; having in christianity a relationship founded on the destruction of all in flesh; one in that relationship has passed beyond the whole position in this book. The state of the christian reveals, and is known in, the exercise of a heavenly one. Hence the proper state of the christian is found less here even than in the first book. But the relationship of an exercised soul with God, on the other hand, comes out into relief. In this psalm the faithful one recognises that through divine favour and power alone they had enjoyed the blessings of which they were now deprived, the signs of God's favour. The direct government of God is owned, "Thou art my king, O God," in the language of Israel, but always true, though the authority now, without being less absolute, is infinitely sweeter. He is our Lord by

redemption. We do not deny the Lord that bought us. This was still the faithful one's trust. In Elohim he made his boast, and praised His name for ever; but they were given up, and their enemies had the upper hand; yet they held fast, and did not forget God, nor were unfaithful to the Covenant. Two great principles, faithfulness to the will and authority of God, whatever disaster and seeming desertion there may be, and looking for no other help than God Himself, who seems to have deserted the faithful, are here in play. This puts integrity utterly to the test, and personal faith, and that is just what is needed for the soul to be in the state in which it can be restored to the full joy of positive blessing. The fact that God thus tests His people, and He does so now spiritually before peace be obtained, is one of deep import. It brings out what we have seen characterizes this book—absolute trust in God, in Himself; and it shows that uprightness with Him is before all comfort or ease for the heart: for if nothing is got from it they hold to Him for His own sake. He Himself is the object, and Himself morally, and in His claim upon them. Hence the heart cannot turn to anything else for it is not God—nor help which would relieve it from His ways. This brings in another point which this psalm leads us to, that the trials which accompany this apparent desertion are attributed to God's own hand. "Thou makest us to turn our back. . . . Thou hast given us like sheep." There is another thought connected with this psalm besides the individual application. When God confounds and rebukes His people in their public con-

licts with the power of evil, when, in the exercise of His government, He allows the power of evil to get the upper hand, and so orders it, this is a deep trial for His people, not only for their own sorrow in it, but because the name of God is dishonoured. The enemy triumphs in this; but surely the government of God is shown in it. Here we learn the meditations of the upright soul in these circumstances. It had not forgotten God, nor behaved unfaithfully as regarded His covenant, though smitten down in the place of dragons. On the contrary; though it might be the needed public government of God, as regarded the profession of His name, and to separate out the faithful, who may be in the midst of His professed people; yet, as regards those faithful, it was for God's name they were suffering. This is still, I judge, somewhat different from Jehovah's name. Of course, it was Jehovah, as with the Father, but here it is for what God is as such. Not only faithfulness in not denying the revealed name is there, but it was for what God is that they were suffering. There was no turning in heart to idols. They preferred suffering anything, or suffer what they might, for owning the true God; they would do it for His own sake, for the attachment of their heart to Him, for what He was when they got no blessing; because the God who was in covenant with His people was the true God, and they would be tried, not only for the covenant blessings, but for their heart-attachment to what He was in His nature: and so in principle with us. And this is joy; because the love of integrity, the partaking of the divine nature, by which we

delight in what is good, in what is of God, gives the consciousness of itself, the conscious delight there is in that nature in rejoicing in what is good and right. It is not self-righteousness, but the conscious delight in good of the divine nature, proper divine joy in its nature, only in our case it must have an object, God Himself, and this is tested in us by suffering for God. Hence the true 'case is—for the enemy hated God—"For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." To test it fully, and make it real suffering for God, the blessings which belong to His power must not be there. Hence the upright are left for the time to the oppression of the enemy. This, while it searches the heart, if there be any false way, makes it here suffering for what God is; and on the cry for mercy in due time brings in the answer from Him; for He cannot leave what answers to His nature—integrity towards Him needlessly in the power of evil. And so it ever is, though our joy *may be* in another world altogether. Yet, as a rule, God as to His covenant, delivers in this. As regards the earth, this cry brings in Messiah. There is progress, I think, in psalm xliv., as compared with the two preceding psalms. There was deprivation, and the light of God's countenance looked for; and all right. Here God Himself is held to in heart-integrity, in spite of everything. It is the same in principle, but more absolute. And this is what is needed. This clinging to God Himself in spite of all is to be learnt. And the heart is herein fully tested for God.

Psalm xlv. The object is evidently the celebration of Messiah the King. The heart feels it is inditing a good matter. When Christ is before the soul, it is enlivened and roused. Here, doubtless, as king, and in His victories, so that there is more of human triumph than in the Christian's estimate of Him. The power of evil will then be put down, and the heart exult in it. Now the joy is deeper and more divine. Collectively, we expect the Bridegroom; individually, the Saviour, who is not ashamed to call us brethren. When we think of Him as a divine Person, we feel the depth of that divine work in which God met sin, and in which it has been put away for us—a work which none can fathom; and dwell on that glory into which He is entered, and of which He is worthy, both in His person and by His work. Still, we can understand the exultation of the delivered Jew, or, at least, one anticipating deliverance thus by Messiah. But there is, besides this joy, a principle of deep importance contained in this psalm: the call to the daughter to forget her own people and her father's house—so shall the king desire her beauty. So, as to blessing, instead of father's she shall have children's. Association with Christ breaks off previous associations which nature has had, and forms wholly new ones. This is, of course and evidently, a principle which is of an absolute and decisive character. But this is put in the strongest way here: "so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." For the Christian, then, that he may walk so that the *Lord* may have delight in him, there is an entire breaking with all that nature is linked up with. The doctrines on which this is founded are not laid down here: that

L

would not suit the Psalms. It is the state of the soul. It was to *forget* all that had a claim on it according to nature. It is the coming in of Christ which calls for this. He has Himself done it—broken with the world by death, and entered on a new world in resurrection. His claim is absolute, and in contrast with all others. According to nature, there was *no* link, no association with the blessings He brings into. It was another order of relationships. These claimed the heart naturally in their place; but Christ takes to Himself, founds new ones, of which He is the centre, and has a divine claim. The old ones are left, and the new ones entered on by redemption out of them. He must have the whole heart, as a divine claimant, who, by giving Himself for and to us, brings us into a new scene of relationship with Himself. No counter claim can be allowed. It is not owning his. It is giving up our nature and place, and going back into the old things. Being His is all our being. As Scripture expresses it, "Christ is all." This is denied if concurrent claims are allowed. This is true as to religious claims. The Jew, when Christ reigns, must give up his glorying in his fathers to glory in Christ. So we; whatever legal or fleshly religion may have been indulged in, is all given up. All that was gain is loss. The past is gone—we are taken out of it. Christ, and the future He gives, are all. *Christ* may place in present duties connected with human relationships, and He does; but he who looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. All was failure before: Christ is joy and gladness, and that stably and in power. See the full doctrinal and experimental statement of this as to the Christian in 2 Cor. v. :

“Yea, if I have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know I him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

Psalm xlvi. gives us one most simple truth, but a most solemn and weighty one—one much needed by Christians in the heavings of this world, and in the tendency to seek relief by human effort. “Be still, and know that I am God.” That is the exhortation. The encouragement is this: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” But if God takes this character, the waters may rage and be troubled, and the mountains shake with their swelling; we can be still. For no matter what power or swelling there is, if God be there, our refuge. Only we must wait, and wait till He comes in: and here it is faith is tried. Hence, “and know that I am God.” This may be by the exercise of patience, or the resisting the tendency to human effort. But the truth contained in the psalm is a most blessed and precious encouragement, which no one trouble can touch; for trouble is at the utmost from the creature, and God is God. But it implies that nothing else is a refuge, and this is perfect reliance, and implies that all else may be against us.

The great point is, that it is God as such who is our refuge and strength. He does not say, “The Lord” (Jehovah). Further on in the psalm, where relationship is in question, he does. Here the point is, that it is God in His nature contrasted with man—indeed with every power; for if God be for us, who can be

against us? Faith gets hold of this. He is a refuge, where we may resort for safety; and He is strength, so that no adverse power can reach or succeed against us. It supposes that trouble, yea, insolent swellings of power, are there; but He is a present help. This secures fully; but the help is not always a present, apparent one. But God Himself is looked to; and the fact that we are left wholly to Him, and that no other resource is there, makes all the power of evil immaterial to us; for it is nothing against God. "What is this confidence?" said the King of Assyria to Hezekiah. Other help we might calculate and compare the value of. This only requires faith. "Ye believe in God." Against this help all effort is unavailing; only we must wait for it. Human effort shuts this help out. It is another kind of resource which is not faith. God may command activity, and faith acts confidently. But this is never man's way; and when the matter is in God's hands, when there is not a duty, then our part is to be still, and we shall soon know that He is God. Human effort only spoils all. No human planning is ever right. God will come in, in His own time and way. There *are* duties. When there are, do them: but when the power of evil against us is there, and there is not a duty, the path is to be still. Human efforts prove want of faith and restlessness, and planning is mere flesh. Elsewhere we have seen that integrity is needed to trust God, because it is God's holy nature which is trusted. This absolute trust is called for when the power of evil is rampant, and endurance till deliverance is the path of the saint. There is another thought here.

God (the Most High over all the earth) has a dwelling-place, where the rivers of His grace refresh: then the city of God, Zion and the temple; now the Church. There the streams of refreshment run, and He will preserve her (not now as Zion, the city of God's solemnities, but in a better way), and there He enters into the proper character of His own relationship. And there He gives peace, having destroyed all the power of the enemy. Then will he who has waited know who is God—we in yet brighter and holier scenes.

Psalm xlvii. I have but few words to say on this psalm. It is the triumph of God's people when deliverance is come in, prophetically announced. That which will be useful to remark is, how entirely the government of the world is connected with Israel. God Most High is a great King over all the earth. Then the peoples and nations are subdued under Israel, and God chooses the inheritance for the remnant of His people—His beloved Jacob. But this issues in the praises of God Himself, awakens praise in His people. And whatever the blessings and glory of God's people, their great delight is in the glory of God Himself. First, the power of God is celebrated, and the peoples, there in relationship with Israel, are called upon to triumph in it, for it is their deliverance and blessing, and that, at least, Israel knows, and is the proclaimer of it to them. There Israel gets its place. But this makes God pre-eminent in Israel's thought. Thus it ever is when the soul truly knows blessing. It turns to the blesser. But this draws

out, not merely thanksgiving, but the celebration of all that God is as known in blessing to those He blesses. But His own proper glory is their joy. I say, "known in blessing;" but not simply because of blessing, but in His own glory as so known. Thus ver. 5—8 celebrate what God is, as thus displayed and known. So in Rom. v. 11, it is not only the statement of salvation, but "we joy in God, by whom we have received the reconciliation." Further, praises with understanding are called for. The relationships of God are stated in verse 8. This, too, is a point neglected by the saints—the living and praising in and according to the relationships in which God stands with us. We have to say, "The Father" and "Christ the Lord." Here, in the kingdom, it is He sits upon the throne of His holiness, and He reigns over the heathen—only, now, that which is power on the earth. The princes of the peoples are gathered in recognition of, and association with, one peculiar people—the people of original promise—the people of the God of Abraham. The shields of the earth belong to God: He is greatly exalted; for this must be the last and possessing thought of the saint. I will only add, that this takes up the reign of God in its great general principle and connected with divine exaltation, though in connexion with Israel who celebrates it. The following psalm connects it more with local details, and the judgment by which His throne is established in Zion. Psalm xlix. is a full commentary upon all this, showing man's place in it.

Psalm xlix. gives a commentary, showing the empti-

ness of the world, connected with the judgment of God at the end, but which is applicable in all times, though publicly proved then. Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and foresight, of all human grandeur—a common observation, little acted on, but always true. As it is said of wisdom, death and destruction have heard the fame thereof with their ears. They cannot give positive wisdom, but they can negatively show that only what does not belong to mortal man has any value. Man establishes his family, perpetuates his name, but he is gone: nothing stays the hand of death. Ransom from that is out of man's power. There is a morning coming when the righteous will have the upper hand of those who seem wise as regards this world. Death feeds on these, or, as neglecters of God, they are subjected to the righteous, when His judgment comes. But the power of God, in whom the righteous trust, is above the power of death. He saves the remnant from death. So those who are alive when Christ comes for the Church, will not die at all; those who are will be raised. Such is the confidence of the believer: death does not alarm him, because he trusts in One who is above it, who redeems, frees from its power altogether, or raises. But the Christian goes yet farther, though this be true of him. He can say, "That I should not trust in myself, but in God that raises the dead." But he says more: "I had the sentence of death in myself." He does not at all take, as the remnant, his portion this side death; so that deliverance from it to live here is the object of his soul. Christ having died, his connexion with this world has ceased, save as a pilgrim through

it. He has the sentence of death in himself. He knows no man after the flesh, no, not even Christ. His associations with the world are closed, save as Christ's servant in it. He reckons himself dead. He is crucified with Christ, yet lives; but it is Christ lives in him, and he lives the life he lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him, so that he is delivered from this present world. This, while it puts the believer on the ground of this psalm, as far as it goes as to its great principle, yet sets him in a totally different position. There is not a question about escaping death (though outwardly he may, for we shall not all die), for death is a gain, and he reckons himself dead and his life hid with Christ in God and Christ to be his life. Yet this only shows still more what the psalm insists on, the folly of laying up and making oneself great, and counting on a future in a world where death reigns and in the things to which its power applies. Man being in honour abides not. How difficult, even if happy and heavenly-minded in Christ as to one's own joys, not to look upon the things that are seen, to think that the wisdom, and talents, and success, and approval of men is simply nothing, the food of death; and that all the moral question lies behind, save so far as these may have deceived men! The saint has to watch still, not to be afraid when success accompanies those who do not accept the cross. We await God's judgment of things in power—we exercise it in conscience. There is no divine understanding in the man whose heart is in the glory of the world. Men will praise him. How well he has got on, settled his

children, raised himself in his position ! The fairest names will be given to it. He has no understanding. His heart is in what feeds death, and that death works it. *All* the motives of the world are weighed by death. After all, in them man is only as the beasts that perish, with more care.

Psalm l. But if death tells this tale, divine judgment is executed ; and this brings in other considerations too, the contrast of ceremonial religion which God may have ordered in His goodness to man, and that practical righteousness which God must have in order to own man. But this will be found in special relationship to God, and that in His own way. Saints are gathered by sacrifice. Redeeming grace and the sense of its need must come in to be owned as such by God ; but these are gathered to God. Judgment proceeds on the ground on which man stands ; for abuse of privileges if he has them, but on the moral ground on which his conscience stands. So here as to Israel, God does not complain of want of sacrifices. No ceremonial religion will be in question, but wickedness. Because God had kept silence in long patience, the world may fancy he is to be dealt with as man is, with outward forms, sacrifices, ceremonies, and no conscience, and that God sees no further ; but God sets before man *what he has done*. He who so knows God as to praise Him, who owns what He is, blesses Him for what He is, and orders his conversation aright, he will have the governmental blessing of God. Him who makes offerings as though he would quiet God so, and goes on without taking

heed to Him in his conscience, He will reprove, and set in order before him all he has done. If here, for salvation ; if in judgment, there is none to deliver.

But where there is a work of God it goes much deeper, and this we see in Psalm li. *God* had announced judgment. Here mercy is looked for by the divinely-moved soul, that He who alone can do it should make us clean, as is suiting to Himself ; for the soul thus taught, feels it has to do with God, and looks for cleansing suited for that. Compare John xiii.—a “part with Me.”—(He came from God and was going to God, and the Father had given all into His hand.) The sin, too, is confessed. Having to say to God Himself is what marks this psalm, and the feeling of him thus concerned ; and, as I have said, it goes much deeper than what is spoken of in judgment. From verse 5 the inward principles are looked at, for it is a question of having to say to God, not merely of judgment of acts.

There is the sense of sin in the nature and in the origin of our being ; and that God must have truth in the inward parts ; but confidence in God that He will give divine wisdom to be known in the heart, that which the vulture’s eye hath not seen. This is precious to understand. The soul looks to humiliation with pleasure as against, and the breaking down of, an unholy will ; for as it hates it, so it desires it to be broken. The bitterness of humiliation is in this respect sweet. There is the blessed consciousness, that, when the Lord washes us, we are clean every whit, whiter than snow. A blessed thought to be

clean before His eyes: how little believed, because men do not believe in His washing! Thus far it has been more the intrinsic preciousness of being clean, clean for God—what is necessary for God and what the heart delights in. Now, gladness is looked for, but from God; as all is seen, the humiliation and chastisement, as the rest, from God's hand—joy, gladness, God's face can be rightly looked for now, not before. That would have been selfish comfort, though natural enough; but God does not give it till the heart is right. The heart must be real, truly purified in accord with God to enjoy here favour and joy. Nor, while looking to God to hide His face from its sins and blot out its iniquities, is this separate from the desire after cleanliness of heart; only now it is looked at, God's goodness being in view; not as the requirement of His holiness, to which the heart assents, but the work of His grace, something from Him. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Give it me, and renew (not a right, but) a fixed, settled spirit within me—one that calmly, settledly thinks on God, the heart's only object, and peacefully counts and waits on Him. The soul thus taught cannot do without the presence of God. Its dread is to be cast out of it. It is not yet intelligent in grace and the sureness of God's favour, but cannot do without His presence. To be removed from it would be everlasting misery, as indeed it would, and felt the more, the more the eye is opened upon Him. It craves, therefore, this above all, not to be cast out from His presence; known in truth, desire, and the necessity of the soul; if not, no joy.

The action of the Holy Spirit is known as the

power of joy; His indwelling is not. The soul pleads not to be deprived of the former. Here a difference must be noted with the case of a Christian, whether we consider his first conversion or his restoration to communion. Hitherto we have been able to weigh the great essential principles of the communion of the soul with God. In these verses the occasion comes in. An intelligent Christian could not say literally, Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; he views the effect of his sin quite in another way. He has grieved the Spirit, he has sinned against love. He does not believe that God will ever take His Holy Spirit from him. If the extreme of chastisement is on him, and the shield of faith is down, he doubts or disbelieves he has or perhaps ever had it, but does not ask that it should not be taken away. He despairs, all but; thinks himself a reprobate; and if he thinks he had it outwardly, as Heb. vi., thinks it impossible he can be renewed to repentance because he has lost it. But, save in this extreme case or the use of Heb. vi. (common before real peace is obtained) to our own condemnation, there is no such thought in a Christian. A man may doubt whether he has the Holy Ghost, but an intelligent Christian does not think of God taking it away. It is quasi-despair, or grieving because he has grieved the Spirit which is in him. Its present action in Israel, inasmuch as God owned the nation, or the returning remnant hoped so, that remnant may plead for. Compare Haggai ii. 5. And David in the same way, having sinned, could so speak; but a Christian could not. The cry might come from an inexperienced Christian who had not found peace,

nor knew that God does not take His Spirit from the Christian, but not from one who knew the truth. A Christian knowing the truth, but having failed in walk, and assaulted by the enemy, might deprecate the practical loss of that action of the Spirit which alone keeps us in communion, and the shield of faith up, and this would be all right. So could one who had thus lost it, say, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, though in the extreme of such a case; neither is that the state of soul, but only where it is getting back. In the extreme case it is the thought of being lost, though, after all, hope is never absolutely given up. But on the returning of such a soul verses 11 and 12 are practically used, though never "take not thy Holy Spirit from me." But there is a constant action of the Holy Ghost which keeps faith alive—may be, a source of great joy when we walk with God, but, when we have not joy, keeps the enemy from bringing doubt on our souls before God; keeps, as I said, faith alive. He is not between our souls and God, the power of darkness. This is, practically, what is desired here, and the sensible joy of God's salvation to be restored, but without the knowledge of the indwelling Spirit founded on redemption. What verse 12 looks for we may have to look for, the joy of salvation to be restored, and the having the heart established with God's free Spirit, that liberty before God and in His service which is enjoyed through the ungrieved Spirit by the soul that knows redemption and the blessed light of God's countenance. In David there was the uncertainty of repeated forgiveness, abiding acceptance being unknown, and of great sin. In Israel, in

the latter days, the knowledge of long-enjoyed relationships, all now in question, though God be trusted for them. But this is not the Christian's state: if he knows that the Holy Ghost dwells in him, he knows it abides there. The soul in which God's Spirit works may, as to this, be in the following states. First, exercised, but ignorant, having a general idea of mercy, it may apply all these consequences of sin to itself vaguely but with terror. When forgiveness is known (and specially when it is known with little depth of conviction of sin), but the righteousness of God not, the soul losing the sense of forgiveness through failure or carelessness, sees judgment before it, without having righteousness, and all previous joy becomes bitterness, and the sense of loss (Heb. vi.) is applied, and all the passages which speak of continuing as a condition or of falling away. But the soul is not really set free here. It has known forgiveness, not righteousness. It has known the blood on the door-post, not the Red Sea. It is in the path of learning divine righteousness and abiding peace before God in Christ risen. There is yet the case, where, with the truth known, sin has been trifled with, and there the enemy gets power—a case I have already spoken of, where there is no power to apply the word or promises, and every bitter sentence is applied to oneself. Yet, God's justice seen to be right, Satan, so to speak, is the interpreter of the word, not God. Yet this God uses as chastisement, to set the soul right; and the soul, through grace, clings to God in spite of all.

I have said rather more on these verses than might

seem natural, because they are so often misused to put Christians on the ground of Old Testament knowledge, and deprive the Christian of the truth of the constantly indwelling Spirit. All this is a misapplication of it. I close with some remarks on the last verses of the psalm.

The soul is not yet restored in the psalm, nor free before God; it is looking for it. When it is, it can teach others freely. But while a clean heart is looked for, there is another character of sin which presses on the soul rejecting Christ, blood-guiltiness. We cannot, of course, kill Him, but the sin is the same. Thus there is not only uncleanness in sin, but the affections are wrong—there is hatred against God shown in enmity to saints, but above all to Christ. We can understand how Israel will have to look for this: they have called for His blood on them and on their children. But practically our hearts have rejected Him, and would none of Him. Yet the soul, brought near in grace, can look for cleansing from this also: more than this, in forgiveness of this, sees that God is indeed the God of its salvation, not of judgment; but in the extremest of sin is a Saviour—saves in love. Then it sings aloud of God's righteousness. In its actual relationship with God there was only sin. The cross was God meeting sin, and sin meeting God in man. Man, *i.e.*, the sinner, had only sin. There he showed what he was in respect of God present in love—hatred and violent will. This was all he was; but there God became, not a restorer, but a Saviour—a complete Saviour, and showed His righteousness in respect of the work of Christ by setting man, Him as

man, at His right hand. God's righteousness only now is known; and as it has triumphed in salvation, the soul sings aloud of it. This is true freedom—the Holy Ghost, thus given, the power of it. The necessary consequence is, sacrifices have no place. Where would they be? How would they own God? A broken spirit is what suits the cross, suits Christ's broken body and forgiven sins. Nor does God despise this. It answers to His mind in the cross, to His grace towards the sinner. Then comes peace, blessing, and service. Here, according to Jewish millennial order, of course, but true in spirit in the Christian.

Psalm lii. requires few words. It looks to judgment in Israel, but there are some principles which directly concern the believer at any time. Where he looks in the prevalence of evil power—not to circumstances. Evil boasts itself in power, but faith sees another thing. The goodness of God, before whom men are as grasshoppers, endures, however evil prevails yet continually. There is no moment where it is not fully in Him, no day when anything escapes Him or anything is out of His reach. It is not only the power of God, but His goodness. This is a great general truth; but we say, Our Father. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without *your Father*. Yet on the other hand there is something specially precious in the thought here. It is not the goodness of the Lord in His relationship with Israel, but what is in the nature of God. The goodness of God, what a resource against evil! It cannot cease or be interrupted, if it be thus. The end of pride is ruin, but

he who trusts in the Lord and His faithful love shall be green, when all else withers, and planted in the courts of God's house.

Psalm liii., as we know, convicts those who have the best advantage of entire sinfulness. But the secret of this course is old too, and on that a few words. All the path of the wicked comes from this. For him God *is* not. Faith does not exist, and God is not seen. This is the secret of all error in practice and in human reasoning. The more we examine the whole course of human action, the faults of us Christians, the various wanderings of philosophy, the more we shall find that an Elohim is at the root of all. Here it is the case that the conscience takes no notice of God. The heart has no desire after Him, and the will works as if there were none. He says so in his heart. Why should he say it? Because his conscience tells him there is one. His will would not have one; and as He is not seen in His workings, will sees only what it will. God is set aside, and the *whole* conduct is under the will's influence, as if no God existed. He takes pains to prove there is not, if he thinks, because he cannot get on if there is; but he lifts himself up, and, deceiving himself, comes in practical condition to will there should be none—and not to think, but to act as if he thought, and that in purpose as well as act, as if there *were* none. In a certain sense, he even thinks so; for, being entirely occupied with present things, and blind through his alienation from God, his moral feeling dead, judging from present things, he can draw conclusions, not

M

believe that there is one, and living in his own thoughts thus formed, live in the thought there is none—says so in his heart. If conscience awakes, he knows well there is; but he lives in his will and the thoughts of his will, and for him there is no God. But it is wonderful how habitually human reasoning goes on as if this were so. Man cannot look at all that is around him without feeling the mass of evil there is. If he does not accept the fall and salvation, what can he think when there are no immediate present interventions, as in Israel? Men leave God out, and account for all as if there were none. Men will not put all on the ground of truth. If not, they cannot bring God in it at all, and account for all without doing so. And this is called philosophy, and it leads on necessarily to the power of evil, for evil there is, and consequently the power of evil; and if God be not brought in, the power of evil must have the upper hand, for who is to hinder it having so? God does till His time is come, the time when no more good is to be done by waiting. Evil then comes to a head, which is embodied in this psalm; and the result is, the judgment spoken of at the end. But the principles of the world are such at all times. Whenever I act as if God was not (that is, without reference to His will), I so far say in my heart, "There is no God." If the fear spoken of in verse 5 be of the congregation of the just, as I suppose, there we see how needless the fear of the godly is in the day of the power of evil. The more it increases, the more the question becomes God's. At its height it is wholly so; consequently, the less reason there is to fear. It

is when at their height God despises them. The psalmist, as a Jew, longs for this time—the time of the restoration of Israel. In a certain sense we desire it, for we desire the disappearing of evil and the rest of the earth; but it is not the highest good.

Psalm liv. gives one, but a most weighty, practical, principle—God alone and His name; that is, the revelation of Himself is the resource of the soul. Strangers have not set God before them, the believer has, and all hangs from His name. Dependence is expressed, and God is sought according to His name. This, the name of God, holds the first place in the psalm. We must remark that God is not known here in subsisting covenant relationship. It is not Jehovah until the end of the psalm, but God, as such, in contrast with men and all else; and in Himself known in what He is—the source of mercy and good, on which we depend. But God has revealed Himself—made Himself known to men; His name, that which expresses what He is, is known, and the heart trusts in this. And how sweet it is to do it! In itself it is joy and rest; and what can man do when God is for us? I may not know what God will do, but He is trusted. God says He is mine helper. When delivered, or in the thought of deliverance, all that God is in relationship with His people comes into the soul for praise; but what God is as God is the resource of the soul.

Psalm lv. is the expression of intense distress of spirit. Outward enemies were there. This was the difficulty

in which he stood ; but it was but the occasion of what pressed upon his spirit. This was the hatred of those who stood in the closest relationship to him. This brought him into the presence of death, and divine judgment, because as special instruments of Satan they would bring the effect of guilt upon his soul between him and God. How completely the Lord Himself (though the psalm be not properly prophetic of Him) went through this, I need not say. They sought to bring the guilt upon Him and triumphed in His being forsaken of God, did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. Directly it is the remnant in the last day, but, as we have seen, in all their affliction He was afflicted. But this bringing iniquity on the soul by wicked men as instruments of Satan (which the Lord went through deeper than anyone could, because He took our iniquity) is a very solemn thing. It is not the wrath directly that Christ bore, and we never shall ; but the bringing it on the soul by the power of Satan by wicked men. The Lord may see it needed, but it is only a special case with Christians. There is confidence in God, an expectation that His ear is open to the cry of the heart that trusts Him. But till the Lord is looked to, the power of wickedness, and the wickedness itself distress and bow down the soul. The existence and power of evil, of what is opposed to God, weighs on it. This is united with the deepest wounding of confidence in man, for it was not an open enemy, but a friend, who had done it. What in man was to be trusted when the nearest betrayed ? It gives isolation of heart. Nothing can be trusted. Now the Lord went through this power of evil. We only feel it when flesh is not

broken down and has to be broken down. It is there, but its power is broken by Him for faith. But inasmuch as we are sinners, this kind of power of Satan brings the character of judgment with it. We may get above this by grace and confide, for this it was that Christ prayed for Peter; and he was kept, when failing under the power of Satan, from going on to doubt the Lord's love, and despair. The most terrible thing here is wickedness coming as the power of evil. But the spirit itself shrinks from the heartlessness of it and would flee; for a gracious spirit would rest in peace when evil is all around. The heart meanwhile is conscious that it has no association with it, and would only flee away and be alone in quiet, for the condition is that it has none to trust in. But this casts the mind on the Lord, for after all it has not the wings of a dove in this world. The effect of this is to bring up the wickedness before the Lord, that is, in its full light. This necessarily brings (in the aspect in which all is looked at in the Psalms, of patience under evil, and righteousness which must view evil as evil; for though Christ's sufferings under it even to wrath are brought in, and so grace, in judgment, passed, yet, in general, as to the government of God) —this necessarily brings in the thought of judgment; for the judgment of evil and the deliverance of the oppressed are in the nature of God as governing and seeing all things. The heart groaning under oppression and suffering before, while thinking of evil sought to be charged on it, and so with horror and oppression of spirit, can now, as looking to the Lord, judge all the evil more calmly as to itself in its own character, and

the judgment which must follow. And full confidence in Jehovah, a known covenant God springs up. And then, free in spirit, one can, from verse 19, look calmly at it all and see the end. The full and blessed conclusion in the deepest sense of the most pressing evil is, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Here end all the exercises giving the ground of our constant faith. And although the psalm looks for judgment, if we take the principle of this declaration, it is the blessed sustainment of faith in all trial. There are two points in this. "*Cast thy burden on the Lord.*" Whatever the trial or difficulty may be, cast it upon the Lord. It is not that the trial goes always—here it would not till judgment came; but "He shall sustain *thee.*" It is better than the trials going. It is the direct coming in of God to ourselves, to our own souls, the sense of His interest in us, His favour, His nearness, that He comes to help us in our need. It is a divine condition of the soul, which is better than any absence of evil. God is a sure help to sustain us. The second point is the infallible faithfulness of God. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Tried they may be, but He cannot suffer evil in the world to prevail, nor will He. We may learn to trust by the evil, but in trusting we know the Lord will keep, and the extreme character of the evil only shows the rather that God must come in—makes His intervention necessary.

Psalm lvi. The soul has got out of the depth of inward distress in which it was in psalm lv. For, though the faithful one's enemies lie in wait for him, it is not

the unfaithfulness and treachery of friends. They are enemies who seek to wrong him. He is afraid, more than distressed, and looks through the difficulties to God. Faith is readily in activity. In the previous psalm his spirit was inwardly deeply depressed. Here he is only tried. Hence he soon can trust in God, and His word is the testimony of certain deliverance to him. In psalm lv. it is only at the 19th verse and at the end he can bring God in. Here God is at once before his soul. In truth outward trials are little compared with inward breaches on the spirit. The spirit [even] of a man will bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear? The saint's trust, then, is in God. But this trust in God is not without some revelation of God. Hence, when the soul can look at Him and trust, that by which He has revealed His mind, the testimony which in His love He has given to us, becomes at once the guide and confidence of the soul. It is a blessed thing to have it. God cannot but make it good. These two points are the hinges of thought in this psalm—God Himself and His word. "In God will I praise his word." His word gives us the sure witness of what He will be, what He is for us. But if it be God, what can flesh do? This is the conclusion that the soul comes to. It has enemies, perhaps mighty and strong ones, nor is it insensible to them. They hide themselves and plot against the faithful one; and he has no resource in flesh. All this is good for him. It makes him know the world he is in and weans him from flesh. But what can he do? He can do nothing. This casts him then on God, and this is as positively blessed as

it is useful. In truth, if God be for us, what can flesh do? The worldly man may have fleshly resources against flesh. The saint cannot have recourse to these. It would take him away from God just when God is leading him wholly to Him. He cannot say "confederacy" to all to whom the people weak in faith say confederacy. But he is not to fear their fear neither, not be afraid, but sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and He shall be for a sanctuary. It is out of the occasion of fear that the faithful one looks out to God here. *Then* what can flesh do? God disposes of everything and has His plans, which he will certainly bring to pass. But there is another blessing accompanies this, and a deep one. The soul is in trial, the wicked plotting against it. But God is with it *in the sorrow* and takes account of it all. He tells the wanderings of the saint, for he is here looked at as deprived of outward privileges, with God's people and in His house; but God counts all this up, and the saint can look, as it is beautifully expressed, to His putting every tear into His bottle. Every sorrow of the saint is in His book. It is a blessed thought. So the heart confides in Him and knows that when it cries to Him all its enemies will be turned back; then, as it praised His word in faith in the midst of its fears and sorrows, looking to it, sustained by it, counting on it. Oh that saints knew how to do it! So now the soul will do it in counting on deliverance by His sure intervention. Another principle is found in this psalm (in a Jewish form of course) connected with these exercises of heart, and which are ever found in them, and indeed one great object of them as coming from God, the sense of belonging to, and

being given up to, consecrated to God. "Thy vows are upon me." It will be in the sense of praise and rendered in praise when delivered, but the heart learns in these trials what we are apt to forget, that we do not belong to ourselves. It is, in its lowest stage, connected with the want of deliverance; in the highest, with the joy that God owns us for His own. The foundation being the redemption which has made us wholly His in fact, as indeed Israel was externally as redeemed from Egypt. Hence praises are in the heart of the oppressed one already. He receives what he prays for, believing. But the soul uses mercies and deliverances to count for more. It has been delivered from death; hence it looks to be kept from falling. It was under the power and oppression of the enemy, him that has the power of death, the devil—it is set free; but now it has to walk without stumbling and falling in the way, but it has learnt its dependence in the trial and it looks to God for this. Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling? But the soul has learnt more in its distress, the comfort of walking before God in the light of His favour and the safety of His presence. It looks to this as the object of its being kept. It does look for its own peace and comfort, but it looks for it before God. The light of the living was the light of divine preserving favour for Israel. It is not the highest order of joy here, but it is the soul's looking out of distress and oppression to that faithful goodness of God which shall make it walk before Him in safety and in peace.

In psalm lvii. there are the same trials, but more

confidence. But his eye seeing more brightly God's power and help, it sees more of the evil and wickedness of its enemies and less of its own oppression, and this is constantly true. We have to watch this, for our heart is treacherous. If it gets out of its own oppression and fear, it is apt to dwell *too much* on the wickedness of its enemies. Looking more at God, it must see this more. That is not the evil, but dwelling on it. It is dangerous to merge evil and go on comfortably, but it is injurious also to dwell on evil. It does not nourish the soul—how should it?—and a spirit contrary to the gospel grows up. We shall see it, if we are near God, but we shall soon be occupied with God and not with the evil. He is above it all.

Thus there is progress in these three psalms. Between psalms lvi. and lvii. the first verse shows the difference: the former, "for man would swallow me up;" the second, "for my soul trusteth in thee." There he was trusting God's word, here he is looking for the accomplishment of it by the hand of God, and trusts under the shadow of His wings till the tyranny be overpast. Hence he is able to look out to God's exalting Himself above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. It is not that the power of evil is not there as much as it was. It is, and the soul is bowed down through it, but the mind rests more on God. Remark, too, that there is no thought of resisting the evil and getting rid of it by one's own strength. It waits on God, and this it must do to have its own path perfect. And this Christ did. The former psalm felt more God's entering into the sorrow. This looks more to its own escape out of it, but by God's sending from

heaven and accomplishing deliverance. He sees, too, the evil taken in their own plannings. There is no thought of counterplanning. But casting himself wholly on God, he sees their own plans to be their ruin, and this is a striking way of judgment and confirmation of faith. He gets through faith, so to speak, praise ready; and in the Ammim and Leummim—peoples and tribes: it is not specially among the heathen as adverse and opposed. His trials are within the people, the men he was associated with; and it is not triumph over adversaries, but deliverance where he could only bow down his heart. But the result was praise among men in a wider sphere than that he had been tried in; and so it ever is, for He who delivers is great. In fact he looks out to millennial glory, when all will be gathered together in one in Christ. But I use it now as seen here in God's ways.

On psalm lviii. very few words will suffice. The force of the psalm is this: the wicked as such are hopeless as to amendment, but God will judge them; so that men will see that there is a reward for the righteous and a God that judgeth the earth. Is there upright, just judgment among men? is the question. There is wickedness in their hearts: they plan and plot in it. It is in their nature and will, and characterizes itself by falsehood. It is of the serpent, in its nature devilish; and they refuse any and every attracting power and influence, whatever it may be. God comes in and Jehovah judges, let their power and strength be as lions. They melt away to nothing when His hand comes in. Vengeance—and this explains the joy in

it—does come in, vindicates the just man and shows him right, however he may have seemed helpless and been oppressed, and God righteous, and that there is a judge in spite of oppression.

Psalm lix. I have not much to say on this psalm in view of our present object in commenting on them. It refers directly to the desired judgment of the heathen. I may only note that absence of all conscience and all heart is to be expected from the world when the Lord and His saints are in question; a terrible judgment, but which these psalms, as well as experience, prove to be true. The simple refuge of the saint is in God. "God is my defence." It is not counter-plotting, nor using human means to meet the power of the enemy. We may partially, perhaps, and for a time so succeed, but in using carnal weapons we have lost the dependence which calls God in, and the perfection of walk and testimony which waiting on Him gives. We have played into the hands of the enemy by acknowledging the power of the world as competent to settle the question of good and evil, a power which after all, till Christ comes, is in his hands, though under God's sovereign rule. The heart of the saint has to say, "the God of my mercy." He knows Him as such. His favour is what he cares for, and he trusts His faithfulness. He expects the wickedness which has no fear of God at all. They will return heartless and impious, but the godly will sing of God's power. And not that only—mercy, tender consideration of the afflicted saint, of him who has need even of mercy through his failure, has been experienced at the hands of God. He will sing aloud of

God's mercy, and that when brighter times come; for in the trouble that mercy has been shown. God is his strength too, and to Him he sings. The saint thus encouraged not only sings of God but to God. The wickedness of the wicked is viewed as pure wickedness here. As between God and the saint there may be occasion for discipline; but between the saint and the wicked, the former had given no occasion to the malice of his enemy. Still, towards God, in the sense of the power of this evil, he looks for mercy. His heart loves to turn there in the sense of weakness and nothingness. God for him is the God of his mercy.

Psalm lx. is one which we can only apply in principle to our outward conflicts with the power of evil. There God can leave us as to His government for the time to defeat and scattering. And it is the deepest kind of chastening in these conflicts. For as we serve in God's cause, we see that it is defeated on earth through our fault or failure. No doubt, in us pride may be mortified too, as we are in the conflict; still, the feeling of grief and distress is a genuine feeling, a feeling which must fill the heart of the servant of God. It is a terrible thing to see those who stand in the place of God's people and witnesses, put to the worse before their enemies, the cause of God for the moment defeated. God has given a banner to them that fear Him, to be displayed because of the truth. He has set *His* ensign among them, and it is terrible if with this they are defeated and driven back; if when saying Jehovah-Nissi, the enemy has the upper hand. Jehovah had war with Amalek; but if Achan

was in the camp, He did not go out. For if God contends, it is in and for the exercise of His people. But when thus cast down, faith does not lose its courage though drinking the wine of astonishment. It looks to God, judges the evil if it be there, looks to God, owning there must be some if it does not discover it. But God has spoken in His holiness. The very unchangeableness of His nature, which allows no evil, gives the certainty that He will make good His word in their favour. To this faith looks—on this it counts. And when it has to say, Who will go out with our hosts? it says, Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? Then all is right. The one who had thus disciplined His people would be their sure and faithful deliverer and strength. Through Him, though erst scattered, the saints will do valiantly. For faith looks through *everything* to God, because He is faithful, and His favour better than life. This confidence is fully brought out in the psalm which follows.

Psalm lxi. The soul is still removed from the enjoyment of present blessing. It is at the end of the earth, but looks to God. The heart is overwhelmed within itself. There is no resource within in the pressure of circumstances. Pride may stand up against difficulties and be haughty even in destruction, but this is not the path of the saint. Besides the fortitude which maintains itself in adverse circumstances has always some result to hope for. But in the circumstances of the saint here before us, there were none. He is driven out and no ground to hope for human deliverance, and pride is far from him. He

bows to God's hand; but he has a resource—God leads him to the rock that is higher than he. Faith gets to what is above circumstances, when nature is overwhelmed by them. And if God be for us who can be against us? God takes an interest in us; we know it; He has shown it. The heart can look to Him with whom all circumstances are nothing. The heart trusts God and self disappears overwhelmed, as it may be. God is the securer and portion of the believer. All else is, then, simply nothing. It is the contrast between God and circumstances, instead of between ourselves and circumstances. God has heard the cry of distressed faith, and as it trusts now so will it abide for ever in the tabernacle of God. It is the secret of all peace in trial, the rock higher than ourselves. The spies saw themselves grasshoppers. Was God so? The walls were up to heaven—what matter when they tumbled flat down.

Psalm lxii. Waiting on God is the subject of this psalm. It implies dependence, confidence; and both in such sort that we abide God's time: dependence, because we cannot do anything without Him, and ought not; because what He does is what the soul alone desires; because action without Him, even in self-defence, is only the action of our own will, and so our being without God so far. Saul did not wait upon God. He waited nearly seven days; but if he had felt he was dependent, and nothing could be done without God, he would have done nothing till Samuel came. He did not; he acted for himself, and lost the kingdom. Deliverance from God is sweet; it is love;

it is righteous, holy deliverance—becomes the revelation of the favour and grace of God. It is perfect in time, way, place. So where the soul waits for it, will not being at work, it meets and enjoys the deliverance in this perfectness; and we are perfect and complete in the will of God. But it implies confidence, too; for why should we wait if God would not come in? The soul is thus sustained meanwhile. And this confidence is such that we tarry the Lord's leisure. Patience has its perfect work, so that we should be perfect and complete in all the will of God. There is, too, an active reckoning upon God. But this leaves the soul absolutely and exclusively waiting on Him. It is not active for itself; it waits only upon God. ("Truly" in verse 1 and "only" in verse 5 is the same word in Hebrew.) The two points connected with it show the state of soul: "from him cometh my salvation"—"my expectation is from him." He only is the rock and salvation; so the confiding soul waits for Him, and seeks no other refuge—looks for deliverance only from Him. Hence, in principle (in fact, in Christ), the heart is perfect in its confidence, and meets in dependence the perfectness of God—accepts nothing but that, because it is assured that God is perfect and will act perfectly in the right time. Faith corresponds thus to the perfection of God. On the other hand, there is no working of self-will at all, no acceptance or saving of self by an intervention inferior in its nature to God Himself. This makes patient waiting on God a principle of immense moment. It characterizes faith in the Psalms, and so Christ Himself.

But there are a few points yet to remark. "Trust

in him at all times." There is constancy in this confidence, and constancy in all circumstances. If I look morally to Him, He is always competent, always the same, does not change. I cannot act without Him, if I believe that He only is perfect in His ways. But, note, this does not suppose there is not exercise and trial of heart; or, indeed, waiting upon God would not have to be called for. But if God is faithful, and awaits the time suited to the truth and His own character, so that His ways should be perfect, He is full of goodness and tender love to those who wait upon Him. He calls upon them to pour out their hearts before Him. How truly was this the case with Christ, too! How in John xii., and above all in Gethsemane, He poured out His heart before God! God is always a refuge: He acts in the right time. He is always a refuge for the heart; and the heart realizes what He is when the deliverance is not come: and in some respects this is more precious than the deliverance itself. But this supposes integrity.

But yet another point. The effect of thus waiting on God's deliverance is to make us know that it will be perfect and complete when it does come. "I shall not be moved." He had to wait, indeed, till God came in in perfectness; but, then, His power secured from all. Man may think there is a resource in man, or in what man possesses, or in man's strength of will; but power, faith knows, belongs to God. The last verse shows that the soul is looking to the perfect, divine righteousness of God's ways, but in the sense of integrity. The final intervention of God, the judgment He executes, will be the deliverance of the righteous.

He has identified himself with God's ways on earth in heart, and waited till God makes them good, perfectly good, in power. But this will be the end of evil, and mercy to those who have sought good, and waited for God to avenge them. It will be a righteous reward to the expecting, righteous man: his waiting will be met, and the power of evil set aside. In this path we have to walk. God deals so now in government, though not in its final accomplishment; but we have thus to count and wait upon Him.

Psalm lxiii. supposes the full knowledge of the blessings of relationship with God, but not the full enjoyment of those blessings; on the contrary, that he who thus knows them is in a place entirely the contrary of all their blessedness. But, then, the thing sought and desired is not the blessing, but God Himself, and the revelation of His glory where He dwells. The whole being thirsts after Himself. The effect of being in the world, in the dry and thirsty land, is not complaint, nor even looking for deliverance; but thirst is thirsting after God. This sense of nature which craves after Him gives us the consciousness also that He is our God. It is the perfect delight the divine nature in us has in Him which gives the sense of this relationship. They cannot be separated. To have any knowledge of God, and not know Him as ours, is despair, or near to it as may be. And God even so is not known as the spring of delight, so that we desire Him. "*My* God," and this thirst cannot be separated. It is not Jehovah and blessings, but the divine nature and God its delight; but with

the dependent sense of appropriation expressed in "my God." The soul which has the same desires in their nature as God Himself, hence (desires after Himself), feels morally and really that He is its God. This was perfectly so in Christ only; and we never lose the sense of relationship and retain this. Still, it is true in the nature of the delight, when that delight does not take the form of relationship, but of nature; when I do not say, Father, but "my God."

But, then, this very thirst and desire after God longs to see Him possessing His full power and glory, and must. We cannot love much one we look up to, without desiring Him to enjoy all the fulness of the glory that belongs to Him, and to see Him in it. We owe our delight in Him, and feeling of indebtedness to Him; we must desire He should have all that is due to Him, and that we should see Him have it. And this feeling even Christ meets: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." But the main desire, the spring of all this is, the desire after God Himself, and known as our God, come what will. Not only the heart can appropriate it, as has been said, but would have it so, and none else. The nature which is of God would have none but Him, and would earnestly have Him. Where God is truly known thus, and the soul identified with Him in desire, the fact that it is where there is not one drop of what can refresh it, as is the case in this world, only renders this longing after Him more intense. But it is because He is known, known as He reveals Himself in the intimacy of His

own nature, in the sanctuary where He displays Himself and makes Himself known. But with this there is another thought—that is, when God is thus known as He is in the sanctuary, His loving kindness, His grace, and favour, and goodness, are felt by the soul. The sense of them rests upon it. That is better than life. Life is life here, the present enjoyment of it in this world; and as to that, he had absolutely nothing of it—as Paul: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” There, indeed, it was more outward pressure—here the inward, necessary sense, from the life in which he speaks and feels here, that there was not the smallest thing in what was in the world which could meet and refresh that nature. So perfectly with Christ. Still, though connected with trial, this was remarkably unfolded in Paul. He rejoiced in the Lord alway, when nothing refreshed his spirit.

Hence, in the sense of this loving kindness, in a dry and thirsty land his lips praised his God. This is very sweet: and, note, it is perfect in its nature, because it is simply God; for in the land the saint is in, there is absolutely nothing. God, his God, is his desire; His loving kindness is the refreshing of his soul. Now this is perfect, divine life in one having the divine nature, but in the place of dependence, known only to the soul born of God, or in its perfection. So Christ. This gives, then, exclusively its colour to life. “Thus will I bless thee while I live” (down here in the dry and thirsty land). This is all his soul lives in *here*. Hence, in this life he blesses God, his God. His whole life in the dry land is, in spirit, out of it.

Nothing attracts his soul in it at all. It finds its refreshings, because the land is altogether such to the new nature, wholly in God. Yet he is not in the present, full enjoyment of God as present; he is still in the dry and thirsty land, but blesses while he lives, and owns and worships the God he thus knows. But there is perfect happiness and satisfaction of heart when separated from the turmoil of the world, and when nothing is there to engage the flesh's attention, which is perfect misery to the flesh, but real deliverance to the renewed spirit, the soul can meditate upon God Himself. The soul finds in God Himself the fullest and richest food. The soul is satisfied, does not want anything else, when it can be thus alone with God, in which is its delight—it is filled with it.

So in coming to Christ (only there negatively, which is what human nature in this world wanted—here positively, because it is the new nature's delight in God), "he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." There shall not be the unsatisfied cravings of men's hearts in this world. But here there is the full satisfaction. The delights of the heart are created and satisfied with the revelation of God Himself. God is essentially delighted in and enjoyed. And as the soul is full, so it overflows in praise; the mouth praises with joyful lips. There is not the need here of weighing how far we are enabled, or entitled, to praise in the state we are in. It is the new nature finding its own proper delight in God, and thinking (as the new nature does not) of nothing else; and because thinking of Him simply, has not itself to think of, and praises because He is a

source of praise. And this is true simplicity. When the eye is not single, the thought of God detects it, and comes as a claim, and forces us to think of ourselves; but when, as is here supposed, it is simply the new nature, its whole delight is simply in God, and the lips praise joyfully. This simplicity of heart is very blessed. Remark here, that while it speaks of this, the psalm supposes one exposed to the distractions of the world, and hence looks to the condition of the soul in loneliness, where, instead of feeling that, it is only delivered from distraction to delight in God.

Next, the psalm takes up not merely distractions, but adverse circumstances—the force of enemies. The soul sees God, its God, as its help, that is, as having been so. God was his joy; and his soul, in this wholly desert world, where no water is, was satisfied as with marrow and fatness. That was taking it in spirit out of the world, making it joy in God. But the Blessed One was what he needed for this world too, its conflicts and trials. And this is very gracious of God. We rejoice in the Lord always as looking to the source of our joy. But if without are fightings, and even within fears, He comforts them that are cast down. “Because thou hast been my help.” But here is described as already experienced what Paul speaks of himself as experiencing. Hence it is the aspect of the soul towards God because of this. The soul would rejoice under the shadow of God’s wings. It was the known place of refuge and confidence. There is the comfort of feeling at all times, the favour of God, and the security in which we thus dwell. I know not what may arise, but He will be there; nor this only, but

the sense of His goodness and active interest in the soul is a source of sweet joy to it. The soul rejoices in having this divine favour its refuge, and actively interested in securing it. Thus the soul's condition is this: in its activities it follows hard after God. It would follow Him, come to Him, enjoy His presence; and it had the sure certainty that His right hand upholds it. The latter verses are the judgment on the enemies of the godly men, according to the government of God, and particularly the enemies of Christ. But our present object is the former part. Still, as we have often seen, God does govern, and we may reckon so far upon His interference as is needed for securing the blessing of His people who depend upon Him, though it may not be at the moment our nature could desire. On the whole, the psalm shows us simple faith, the soul making God Himself its joy, and rejoicing in the sure care of the Lord, whose favour protected it as a shield. If we compare this psalm with psalm lxxxiv., which in many respects resembles it, it will be seen that there the present enjoyment of covenant blessings is in view, and the way up to them; here, more what God Himself is, as away from them in the dry, thirsty land, and His protection and care in the difficulties and dangers we are in there. If we think of the remnant driven out, which is the character of this book prophetically, it makes this view easily intelligible.

Psalm lxiv. shows a peculiar course of things in the world, yet one with which every one exercised in the service of God in this world is familiar—that of the wicked, who hate righteousness, seeking to charge evil

on the upright. This shows the universality and power of conscience, and another truth too—that the principles of those who trust God and confess His name are expected to produce what is purely good. This is really the strongest witness to the principles of faith on the one hand, and to the utter wickedness of the human heart on the other. The wicked recognize that faith ought to produce, and, as its own proper fruit, does produce, what is right and perfect, and expects it from him who walks by faith. But they show their hatred of that principle, and of those who cleave to the Lord by it, by searching out iniquity and inconsistency. This is a terrible proof of the wickedness of the world; and yet it is universal, not only found, yea, not so much found among the openly ungodly as in decent unbelievers. Here it is indeed in those who pursue iniquity wilfully, not evident immorality, but wickedness, who are pursuing it in their secret counsels. Yet it is the spirit of evil in man. Plotting is characteristic of evil, but its extreme character. But there is concurrence of feeling and acting with a like mind when it has not gone so far as plotting, because a like spirit animates them. Then their tongues are the instruments of attack and injury. The saint has no outward defence or remedy; but as to this, as with regard to violence, God is his refuge. Remark, he speaks of the fear of the enemy. This malice tends to produce fear. The godly is no equal match for it, he can use no weapon against it. He leaves it to God in representing it to Him. God exercises His saints; but in result the wicked bring His judgment on their own heads, and even fear and see and own God's work. For that the godly must wait,

and then joy will be complete, though their deliverance, being a divine one, must wait till the divine time of judgment arrive. So Abraham was kept a stranger and his descendants under oppression, "for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." It may be that the trial is not complete for us, but in all events, when God intervenes, it will be the perfect time for us. But another thing than our deliverance results. The deliverance being in God's time, and so according to His perfect judgments, His ways are displayed in it. And God's judgment being in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. That is the full accomplishment; but even in particular cases, men glorify God in the day of visitation, and own that they who trusted God were right; that God, who seemed not to interfere, only awaited in His holy righteousness, and that He does care for the righteous, and thus His ways are perfect. And this is an immense gain. God is glorified.

Psalm lxv. refers directly to the blessing of this creation, and the praise and joy which will spring forth when He sets aside the power of evil, but looks, as witnesses of it, to the present effect of His goodness. It looks, for the groaning creation waits, not only for Israel as here, but much more in order to its deliverance, for the manifestation of the sons of God, for the blessing of God's people, that this universal blessing may take place; but the heart is ready, and this leads us to a general principle instructive to us at all times. The readiness of heart to praise in the midst of trial, and the almighty power which is looked to, whose nature is

to give blessing. But this psalm again applies only to the circumstances of the believer. The Christian is never, *according to the Spirit*, in a state of soul in which he cannot praise. His heart may have got away from God, so that the Spirit has to rebuke him and humble him, but then praise is not ready at all. Here the thought is, that though the heart be ready, circumstances do not furnish occasion to praise. Praise is silent, though there is the consciousness that praise belongs to God; the vow will be performed. This may be the Christian's case. He may say in trying circumstances, I am sure I shall yet praise and thank Him for deliverance. And this is a right spirit. As to our highest praise, this is always the case. In the heavenly courts our praise is yet silent, and we wait and long for it. Verse 4 plainly shows that is the Jewish form of it: this is the thought of the psalm. The general thought there is, we only await the blessing to be fulfilled for praise to break out. God's faithfulness and power are celebrated as assuring this. Here in judgment and for earthly blessings; but the Christian, whatever hindrances and adverse powers there may be, counts on this faithfulness and power of God to bring him into the heavenly city. Transgressions will not bar the way; through grace only, we say, "thou hast purged them away." He hears our prayer and helps us. Further, it is a question of the necessary glory of the Lord, and even in the earthly part, but the principle is there. All flesh must come to Him. This the Jew looked to as a part of the glory. God's purposes must be accomplished to His glory, but He has in grace identified them with us. As Paul expresses it, by the

Spirit, All the promises of God are in Him (Christ) yea, and in Him amen, to the glory of God by us. Hence faith, assured that God must be glorified, looks to our own glory and blessing in it. This marks faith, not believing that God is glorious, but connecting His glory with the blessing of His people. So Moses, "What wilt thou do to thy great name?" "The Egyptians will hear of it;" and so ever in his pleadings with God. What a source of security and ground for praise, that God should have thus identified His glory with our blessing and His promises to us in Christ!

Psalm lxi. There is one point in this psalm as to its moral force which is of great interest to notice: the way in which, when deliverance comes, all is ascribed to God. And God is seen all through. It goes back to original redemption, the unequivocal source of all (verse 6), while the final blessing of God's people is the blessing of the world. Even when all seemed to have been darkness, it is now seen His power was above all. He rules by His power for ever. His eyes behold the nations. Woe to him that exalts himself. But not only this God is seen in the trouble itself, and as the author of it; though our failures may have been the occasion of it. This is the true test of the heart being right—what is called (as to Israel, in Leviticus), accepting the punishment of our iniquity. Two things are seen in it: God brought them into the trouble; He held their soul in life through it. So with Job in both points. Nor did He suffer their feet to be moved out of the divine path of faith by the trial. Verses 10, 11, recognize this; and if instruments were employed,

yet they were but instruments. The trial was, and they see and feel it, very great; but it was God's doing. Nor was this all. God has a positive purpose in this: a path, a place of love which He carries through, and of which the trial was a part to fit the soul for the place of so great blessing. "Thou broughtest me out into a wealthy place." God sends the trouble, preserves the soul in it, purges the soul by it as silver, brightens its hope which rests more entirely on Him, and looks with purer eye for what He has promised, and then brings out into a wealthy place. But some other points come out as to the state of the soul meanwhile. The trouble had cast the soul on God. And though to us all such things as vows are wrong, yet the reference of the heart to Him, the turning of it to Him as the source of hope in a better way, though under chastisement, is just what hoping in Him produces. Have confidence in, and wait on Him when tried and chastened; till the will is broken, we cannot; when it is, we can, though conscious the sorrow is the fruit of our fault. This supposes integrity; it issues in thanksgiving. The heart can then, too, bear testimony for God to others; it has known what He has been for itself. It cried and He heard. This, says the apostle, is the confidence we have in Him. For what is here learnt through sorrow, should be the constant state of the soul without it. Still the governing feeling of the soul is its own thankfulness, and so it will be. It will turn back to that, that is, to God—to the secret of its own thankfulness to Him, which is the joy of the heart. The force of the psalm is recognizing all this after deliverance; but

what it produces when received into the heart, is answering faith when the trouble is there.

On psalm lxvii. I have only a remark to make. The glory of God is the spring of the desire of the heart for blessings even on His people. Then blessings flow out and praise goes up to God. This psalm explains Romans xi. 15.

On psalm lxviii., striking and interesting as the psalm is, I have, for our present object, little to say. A remark or two, by the by, present themselves to me. It is specially God's character as regards the Jews in grace, but in His own sovereign grace, not in covenant relationship, but as establishing them, as once in Sinai, only now in grace and power. Jah is not the same as Jehovah, I am fully persuaded. It is the absolute existence of God, not His continuous existence, so as to reckon on His faithfulness, who was, and is, and is to come. He is here, lives for ever and ever. He is only called Jehovah in the psalm when He speaks of His dwelling on the mountain of Zion and His abiding. Because there He takes His covenant place and name. We have Jah, verses 4—18; but, Lord, elsewhere in the psalm, is Adonai. It seems to me to connect Christ with the restoration of Israel, to give Him the place of Lord, but more associated with His being also Jehovah than psalm cx. Verse 18 is naturally the centre of this, only where, as He is Jehovah in Zion according to promise, here ascended on His rejection, He receives gifts as man. He is beyond all Jewish promises. Yet it applies to Jews, the rebellious. But

there it is not Jehovah, but Jah Elohim. Christ's exaltation will bring back God in sovereign grace into the midst of Israel.

Psalm lxi. is so fully prophetic of Christ that I make no remark on it here. It is a full description of His sorrows in life and death. I have spoken of it fully elsewhere.

Psalm lxx. calls for only one remark. The willingness to be anything—poor, needy, despised—provided the people of God be happy and in a condition which draws forth their praise: The Lord's blessing is not despised, but for it the Lord is waited for. But the heart set on the happiness and blessing of God's people—this is the true spirit of faith in the saint.

Psalm lxxi. will not detain us either. It rests on two points. God's righteousness—the psalmist claims nothing on the ground of his own; but God will be consistent with Himself—not desert or abandon him. Hence he counts on His faithfulness.

Psalm lxxii. is Christ's glory as Solomon, so as not to call for our remarking anything here on its contents.

Although psalm lxxiii., which begins the third book of Psalms, refers directly to the temporal judgment of God in Israel, as satisfying the anxieties of heart among the faithful; yet, as these anxieties are of all times, we shall find something to note here. We see the ungodly having their way, so that God seems to have forgotten,

and the heart is envious. But it shows, in our case, too often, that the heart would yet have its portion here—at least a portion here as well as one to come. The sorrow at the power of evil in the world is right, but it mingles itself in our minds with liking to have one's own way and judgment in setting it aside. When the will mixes itself up with the sense of the success of evil, it is either irritated or disheartened so as to give up perseverance in good. The ungodly prosper in the world. What a riddle! Where is God's government? What is the use of good? No doubt it was more directly trying where temporal blessings had been made a sign of divine favour. But Christians are seldom separated enough from this world not to feel the success of wickedness, and a desire to take vengeance on it. Mere indifference to it is utterly evil. Thus the path is narrow, and grace must work in the heart to lead us in it, to feel the evil in itself, to feel God's glory cast in the dust by it; but to bide God's time and way, as Christ did when He suffered. There is no place of learning but in the sanctuary. There the will is bowed—there God is known—there the eye is not obscured by the passions of the world, and an ignorance of how to do what God alone could do—make allowance for any good, have perfect patience with evil, so that judgment shall be simply on evil, and be true judgment on evil without excuse. Our impatience would be nothing of this, even where the evil as such is justly judged. But in the sanctuary will is silent and God is listened to. His ways are right, and we see things with His eye. The evil is worse, the compassion right, the patience adorable, yet the judgment sure;

so that the sense of righteousness is not crossed in the heart, though the will of vengeance is; for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The judgment is righteous because patience is perfect—far more terrible because there is no passion in it. It refers to God. When we desire that fire may come down from heaven, self is in it. We do not know what manner of spirit we are of. Yet, in one sense, they really deserved it. When God awakes, in His own just time, they are as a dream. Their pride, pretensions—all is as a departed image. Faith has to believe this, and leave them there.

But another blessed truth comes out here. He had been foolish, ignorant—"as a beast," as he says, "before God;" yet there had been integrity and conscience. If he had let his thoughts loose when half disposed to say godliness was no use, he would have offended against the generation of God's children. This checked him. How beautiful to see in the waywardness of man's will these holy affections, this conscience of putting a stumbling-block in the path of the weakest of God's children, check the heart, and show where the affections really are, and that fear of God which shows He is lovingly known—that the new nature is there! It is a great mark of good that God is owned. But what he knows of himself is that he was as a beast in his heart's reasoning as it did. But, then, mark what is seen. He comes to see that, in spite of all this, while owning his folly, he was continually with God. O how the full knowledge of self, when we know as we are known, will show the patient, unvarying grace of God waiting on us all the way in

adorable love and interest in us! Through all his foolishness he was continually with God, and God had holden him by his right hand. Blessed grace! God loves us, cares for us, watches over us, is interested in us; because of His sovereign love, we are necessary to His satisfaction. He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous. This is a wondrous thought of constant grace. But He is God, and not man. And so the heart here counts on Him. Up to this, through all his shortcoming in faith, he could say, "Thou hast holden:" now he says, as in communion, "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel." This is not merely holding up unconsciously; it is the mind and will of God guiding us in communion. Hence it is seen when he has judged himself and is in communion, it is not that God does not guide us, make us go according to His own counsels, when we are not in communion—holding our mouths with bit and bridle; for He does. But the soul does not understand it—then cannot speak, as here, in the knowledge of His doing it by His counsel. This He does. Here we meet, in the full force of the passage, the plain distinction of the Jewish position. "After the glory, thou wilt receive me." It has been altered to make more of it for Christian ideas, and the true meaning lost. (Comp. Zech. ii. 8.) After the glory, when that is set up, Israel will be received; but in that glory we shall come with Christ. The heart is now set right by this visit to the sanctuary: "Whom in heaven but the Lord." We, indeed, may have our thought expanded by the knowledge of the Father and the Son; still, the truth abides only better known. Who in heaven but God, the centre and source and all

o

of blessing. On earth, where, with such as we not thus fixed on God, there might be distracting desires, there is no source of delight with Him; that is, He is the only one. Singleness of eye is complete. As we are in the world, it does make us feel alone, but alone with God. So the blessed Saviour. "All ye shall be offended in me this night and shall leave me alone; but I am not alone, for the Father is with me." In one sense the heart accepts the dominancy of evil and is blessedly abstracted from all to God. See thus the blessing of this seeming evil. Were all peaceful and good, prosperous in the present and imperfect state of things, the heart would sink into that imperfect state and be really worldly; but the prevalence of evil, though pressing on the spirit, the will checked by the feeling that one cannot dissociate oneself from God's people, drives to the sanctuary of God. The heart is weaned from this world, and, in a world where evil does prevail, looks up to God, has Himself for its portion alone in heaven, and so nothing along with Him on the earth. He holds the one sovereign place in the heart. Nothing competes with Him at all as in the New Testament. "Christ is all." But this brings in another blessing. This endures. Heart and flesh fail. Surely they do. God is the strength of my heart. He stays with divine strength and goodness and sustains the heart, and is not only a present stay, but an everlasting portion, our portion for ever. This leads to a sweet and earnest conclusion. It is good for me to draw near to God. There we learn truth; there we find comfort. He has put his trust in the Lord Jehovah, in One, sovereign in power, abiding and faithful in promise.

He who does will surely have to declare all His wondrous works. He will be in the place to see and experience them, have the heart to notice and understand them, the joy of testifying the faithfulness of One the heart has trusted. In verse 20 we have only sovereign power; in the last verse, covenant faithfulness also.

As to psalm lxxiv., for our present purpose I have only one remark to make. We find in it confidence in the faithfulness of God, when as to outward circumstances, the power of the enemy seemed to make all hopeless and on the ground of confidence in Himself. But then what He is for His people. Redemption has proved His deep and profound interest in them. They are His own. He has, though taking them in sovereign grace, now bound Himself up (though in grace) with them. And the heart says, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." This is very blessed. So Moses continually. "*Thou* hast brought them out." Hence if the people be brought utterly low and the tumult of enemies rise higher and higher, this is only an additional motive, because it is grace, and faithful grace; and power over *all* things is with Him. The heart calls on God to remember the attacks and reproaches of the enemy instead of being alarmed by them, for the reproach is on His name. And this is true. For the world's enmity is really against the Lord in being against His people. Were they not His people, they would not trouble their heads much about them. God's people have to remember the same thing, and in their own weakness to remember what is in question.

Psalm lxxv. is the certainty and righteous government of Christ's kingdom. Only remark, faith gives thanks before it is set up, warning the presumptuous wicked, for God is the judge. Human pretension is no use against Him. Remark, too, that when Christ takes the kingdom, all is confusion, the earth and its pillars are dissolved. Our hearts should even say, God's name (for us the Father) is near. That is all in which He reveals Himself—is close to us. So that we can ever trust and not be afraid. The ways and dealings of God are according to His name. We believe in His name of Almighty and Most High, and that He will avenge the persecuted church on Babylon and its power, but it is not God's name directly with us. That, as I have said, is Father. Hence, save of His children, it is not government. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. All the power that is in that name so displayed, or all the grace and faithfulness of it for those who are risen with Him and loved as He is, is that which is ever near to us; and that wondrous work of Christ's resurrection declares it, were death itself upon us.

Psalm lxxvi. The general subject is still judgment executed in connexion with Israel. But there is a general principle we may notice. First, that the seat of God's blessing and throne, or its manifestation on earth, low as it may fall, is more excellent than all the might and violence of man. At God's rebuke these fall and man has no strength. When God arises, what can man do? But God's execution of judgment on the earth has an immediate effect and purpose—the deliv-

erance of the meek. He saves all the meek of the earth. His love and faithful goodness are even here in exercise. Then comes another principle, applicable at all times by faith, and an encouraging and consoling principle. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. He turns everything to His own glory and purpose, and then stops all the rest. Where faith is in exercise, it counts on God, through all, sure that God will have the last and final word in the matter.

In psalm lxxvii. we have some instructive points to notice. The complaint goes further, perhaps, than that of any Christian ought to go. The seventh verse for us would be simple unbelief; whereas for the Jew, whose people are cast off as regards all their privileges, the question justly arises, as in Romans xi., "I say then hath God cast away His people?" But if we keep this in mind, there is much to instruct us as regards the time of deep trouble, as when the pressure of very adverse circumstances, or even our own fault, may have brought the soul into deep distress, as to that which surrounds it. The subject of this psalm is that he actually and actively sought the Lord. It was a direct appeal of the heart, not merely a wish nor submission. He went with his voice to God about it. This is more important than we are apt to suppose. I do not think it altogether just, "that prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." I surely admit that there may be a sigh or a groan where the Holy Ghost's intercession is, and that the lifting up of the heart to God will never find repulse or coldness there. All that I admit; but there is an

actual carrying a known want or trouble to God, the expression of the need we are in. The heart expresses itself in a distinct application. Thus it brings itself before God, and this is very important in our relationship with God. There is truth in the inward parts, and true confiding dependence. Up to this there was gnawing trouble, the working of the heart on the trouble, the soul refusing to be comforted. The will was at work, and could not get what it wanted. The soul *thinks* of God, but no comfort was there. There was but its own thoughts of Him; there was complaint, not prayer, and the spirit overwhelmed. So when awake, he cannot be occupied naturally with ordinary matters, he is silent through trouble. It is a strong picture of a thoroughly distressed soul, only fully realized when a soul, through the chastening hand of God, has lost the sense of divine favour, or does not know peace, but which in degree may be with any one. But the soul turns to God. It has enjoyed mercy and songs in the night. Would the Lord cast off for ever? For the Christian this question has no place, but when the shield of faith is down, and the fiery darts of the wicked have reached the heart—a terrible and sore chastisement. The only thing like it is when a soul has lightly received the Gospel in its mercy (without, however, being insincere), and the work of conscience goes on afterwards. When, instead of communing with self and reasoning with its own misery, it looks to God, the heart sees all this is in itself, not in God. This is the turning point. But the Christian does not go back to former mercies (as the Jew would, and rightly would), because he always stands in present favour,

even if Satan have got hold of his mind for a time and he returns into the sunshine of it, when the cloud that arose out of his own heart is passed. The Jews had early sovereign blessings, and are right to remember it when they had been cast off, though it be not for ever. The Christian is never cast off. Hence he has not to remember but enters again into the enjoyment of divine favour which has never ceased. In the rest of the psalm the Christian learns God's way is in the sanctuary. Let His favour be ever so unchangeable, His *way* is always according to His own holiness, though for the very same reason—according to His own faithful love. Whenever Israel turns back, it is to sovereign grace and redemption. God's way is in the sea—untraceable and in power. All the movements and power of what seems ungovernable and not to be got through are in His hand. On the whole, the psalm is the contrast between the working of the soul in restless anxiety in thus indulging its own thoughts, and turning, when it has recollected God, to cry to Himself. If the Christian apply it to interrupted favour, he is all wrong. But he may learn in respect to overwhelming sorrow when the will is at work, that there is no rest till the soul remembers God and cries to Him.

Although psalm lxxviii. be evidently a recapitulation of the history of Israel, convicting them of their disobedience and unbelief—the uselessness as to their hearts of all God's dealings with them, and then, so magnificently, His turning to His own sovereign grace to bless, yet there are some of the marks of unbelief,

and warnings as to it, which it will be profitable to us to note. The great principle of the psalm which I have noticed is itself of the highest interest. Sovereign grace is the only resource of God if He is to bless man. All dealings, however gracious, fail of their object. He loves His people, but He has no resource for blessing them but His own grace. If He acted on the effect of His dealings, He gives them up; they only turned aside like a deceitful bow. So ever. But when all was at the worst, He awakes in His love to His people, because of their misery and His love to them. Then He accomplishes the purpose of His own grace in His own way. "He chose the tribe of Judah. . . . He chose Mount Zion, which He loved. . . . He chose David his servant." Such is the general instruction of the psalm. But there are the characters of unbelief which are instructive. The past mercy and faithfulness of God will not give courage for a present difficulty. God must be known by a present faith. No reasoning from former mercies will give us confidence. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? He smote the rock. Can He give bread also?" Experience of goodness and power will not make man trust it, when some new need is there, or lust is at work. Nor was it better, though He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them. Nor did the correction of their lusts in the matter of the quails stop this unbelieving will. When under His hand, man remembers Him. A little ease brings forgetfulness and self-will. But He was full of compassion, and stayed His hand in judgment. "They tempted God,

and limited the Holy One of Israel"—mistrust of God's power to effectuate all His grace, to do what is needed in any case for His people, and carry out His purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all He has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled; surely He will save to the end. He did not spare His Son; how should He not give all things? This, however, is goodness infinite; but doubt of power is doubting He is God. It hinders setting our hope in God. Experience ought to strengthen faith; but there must be present faith to use experience. The gracious Lord keep us from limiting God in His power, and so in His power to bless, and lead us not to remember Him only when His hand is upon us, but for His own sake, and in the midst of present blessing, because the heart is set on Him! Then, in trials, we shall be able to count upon His goodness and have no disposition to limit His power.

Psalm lxxix. looks for judgment on the heathen. That I leave aside here. The only point I have to notice is the way, when brought very low, the heart turns to God. It does not even here avenge itself, but—the extreme of evil being come upon it—turns to God, and thus remembers its own sins. Nor has it any plea but God's own name. "Remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us. . . . Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name! Deliver us, purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." Such is the effect of

chastisement. It supposes that we know God. It produces lowliness of heart, true confession, no pretension to any title to deliverance but God's own goodness and name—what He is. Yet the soul rests on that: there is compassion—that God attends to the sighing of His prisoners; and (however strong the hand that holds them appointed to die) will act in the greatness of *His* power to preserve. The enemy had reproached the Lord, in injuring His people. "Where is their God?"—their confidence. And the Lord showed Himself; and this is looked for, and His people praise Him. This, too, shows another point we may often notice in Scripture—not that God simply is glorious, and must maintain His glory; but that He, having taken a people in the earth, has identified His glory with that people. Faith feels this, with deep sense of it and thankful, entering into it, and reckons on deliverance and grace. God delivers and secures His own glory. But for the very same reason God allows no evil, because His name is connected with His people, as we see in Israel: "Thee only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." Here the punishment was on them, and the name reproached. So, humbling themselves, and looking for mercy and purging, they look for deliverance, because God's people were brought low.

Psalm lxxx. is bold in its appeals. It passes from Egyptian deliverance to the knowledge, not of Christ, but of the Son of man. Still it looks at Him as the branch which God has made strong for Himself. It is not, "I am the true vine, ye are the branches," which

makes the introduction of that 15th of John clear. Still it goes now far in owning the man of God's power, the Son of man, whom He made strong for Himself. But if, in this confidence in God, and looking to the Son of man, it speaks boldly, and refers all to grace. It is thoroughly Jewish. It refers to the order of the tribes in the wilderness. It knows God as sitting between the cherubim. Israel was His own vine; but it takes the fullest Jewish light—the Son of man. But it has no hope but God's turning them again. It is this expression, which characterizes the cry of the psalm, which we must examine a little. It is found in verses 3, 7, 19. We may find it again in the same use in Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, and Lam. v. 21—a similar cry. This gives it much interest. Mere discipline in itself does not turn to God. It may break the will, humble where God is working, and so do a preparatory work; but it does not turn to God. So they are brought here; and in the desolations of Ephraim and Judah, when they are down to the lowest, because nothing less would do, to say, "Turn thou me," "Turn us again." It is not simply godly sorrow and the consciousness of sin. Nor is this exactly the thought or feeling here. There is the sense of belonging to God, being God's people, and the rebuke of God being upon them—"they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance." It is the dealing of God with His people, or a saint in his testimony as now, when God deals with him in it. There is the sense of being His, but God's work, which is repassed when it was carried out in blessing by God, is seen foiled and a witness of the enemy's power; but this power is not what faith rests on, but the rebuke of

God. Faith turns to Him, to Him as the original source of blessing and power that wrought it; as the One whose work it is that is always interested in His people. It rests on the beauty and delight of God's work to Himself, as He had planted it, and now it was rooted up; and hence draws the conclusion of His present intervention in grace. But it looks for this first as a turning of themselves. The state they are in is connected with the ruin, though not the main thought; they cannot separate their own state from God's interposition. They needed it, but His first act must be restoring them, turning them. Blessing is their thought, but God's blessing them as He blesses; hence beginning with them and turning them. But with this God's face would shine on them, and they would be saved. How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that He may turn us, and so His face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance on His people. It looks to God; remark, too, returning and visiting the vine, but it does not look for the restoration of the original state of things (that is not God's way), but to the setting up the branch God had made so strong for Himself. And so we now; we look to Christ's being exalted even in details. If we have failed, it does not become us to look to God's setting it right as before, as if nothing had happened—this could not be for His glory—but to the coming in of Himself to show His goodness in that which manifests His own grace, and hearing the cry of His people. "Let thy hand," says the faith of Israel, "be on the man of thy right hand." Here they see their strength and safety—their being kept right. "So

will we not go back from thee." So it will be fully with Israel in the last day, and so with us practically. His presence is what keeps us. There is another thing that faith seeks. Dulness and death are in turning away from God, and going their own ways. They need, in being thus turned, to be quickened—the reviving life-giving power which calls the heart back to God. It then, with increased seriousness and new confidence, calls upon Him. It is more than the prayer which cries in trial. It is the heart confidently calling on God, as turned again to Him. The prophetic scene is clearly the restoration of Israel. God does not hide His face from His saints now—He has from Israel: but in their work, and service, and state, as a body, they may find these ways in government.

But I would turn for a moment to the connexion of this with personal turning and repentance in the similar passages to which I have alluded. In Jeremiah, we have first, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned." First, then, we have the action of God in grace turning the sinner round, converting him. He was looking away from God, had turned his back on God, and now in heart and will turns round towards Him. Repentance comes after this—"surely after that I was turned I repented." I set about, and as brought into the light, my heart towards God, I judged all my ways in my departure, my state of heart, and all. Instructed, then, in true blessing, having the mind of God as to good, one is confounded, one could have thoughts of such vanity and evil with desire. But another thing is brought before us in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The turning of God brings into sorrow.

(2 Cor. vii.) The apostle's first epistle came with the power of the Spirit to their souls. It was not yet a full judgment of their state in the light, but the will being divinely arrested, there was grief in the sense of having gone wrong: conscience, not will, began to be at work; self may have partially mixed itself with it. Still it was godly sorrow, a broken will, brokenness of heart; the feeling—I have been following my own will, I have forgotten God. The illusion of a perverse will is gone, and the effect of having to say to God, the working of God's nature in us begins. It is not with fear where rightly felt; no thought that God will impute, condemn, but sorrow and grief of heart at the perverseness and delusion of self-will having been followed. This works a far more active, deliberate judgment of evil, called repentance here. Godly sorrow worketh repentance which we shall never regret. The soul by being turned, having by the operation of God's grace been brought to grieve at having listened to will, now re-enters (or enters it at first) into the natural effect and working of the new man at liberty. It judges with spiritual energy the whole evil as God judges it in principle. The sense of fault is not gone, but what characterizes the state is judgment of the fault—of self as far as self is in it. The heart is *clear* of the evil when it judges it as God judges it, and separates it from itself as a thing external to itself, as God does. And this is holiness, often deeper from better knowledge of self than before. We see an example of this in Peter's address in Acts ii. Their sin was set before the people. They were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter, What shall we do?

The boisterous will was gone: no more, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Sin has done its act, and can no more undo it. The folly of it comes home with distress to the heart. "What shall we do?" They are turned, have come to distress and godly sorrow. What are Peter's words? Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins. Turned they were, grieved at heart at their folly in sinning, they had yet to repent. It is a larger, deeper, fuller thing of a soul brought into the light, and the new man exercising its judgment on what self had been. Not now as pressed on by God, and bowing in sorrow of heart to the effect of His grace and presence in the sense of the evil, but in our own spiritual rejection, with God, of the evil as such from the standing ground of the new man with God. This is accompanied with brokenness and lowliness of heart, but the soul has re-entered into its own liberty with God. True repentance is there when self is proved clear in the matter, when the new standing has possession of the judgment and will, and judges freely as a rejected thing all that the flesh delighted in and had been misled by.

From Psalm lxxx. I have only a few brief principles to state as to the government of God. On the restoration of blessing, the precious ways of God are considered. Had there been faithfulness, there would not only have been peace instead of trouble, but rich present blessing. Whereas the effect of not hearkening to God was, that God gave them up to their hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels and soon came under the power of their enemies, even stronger

than the people of God on their own ground. God has delivered us. We have been delivered from the bondage and burden of sin. Answered by divine power when in trouble and distress under it (a power which, while manifest in its effects, had its source of operation in the secret of the divine counsels), we are, as regards present dispensed blessings, put under responsibility, yet in the place of fullest ministered blessing. "If thou wilt hearken"—truth of heart to God is that which is looked for; not merely avoidance of actual evil, but no idol in the heart. This tests the heart—truth in the inward parts with God. But God calls to this as being already our God—now we say Father—who has delivered and saved us: and calls us in the path, no doubt, of obedience; to open our mouth wide that He may fill it. It is to this we are called, to enlarge our hearts to receive blessing. God has largely and richly for us, and calls us to open our mouths wide. All His mind is to fill it from His own riches. But of blessings of grace from His own hand, the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours, and dispensed to our souls. But, alas! very often we are like Israel, "My people would not hearken to my voice." There is then as chastisement, a giving up of the saint to eat the fruit of his own ways: a terrible judgment sometimes to be humbled and feel the bitterness of the power of the enemy; sometimes, what is worse, to think he is finally given up. This is seldom the case when the soul has really been already emptied of self and subtle self-righteousness. Still the flaming darts of the wicked are terrible to the soul. It is not at all the same thing as the legal doubts of an exercised soul, but the dread of God as

now against the soul; not the uncertainty whether He will be for it, whether it can escape. This last is legal doubt; the former, despairing doubt from Satan. If the saint walks faithfully, he has surely enemies, Satan and his machinations, to contend against; but the Lord really subdues them. It is after the patience of faith, the encouraging proof that the Lord is with the believer in his way. Our adversaries are the Lord's: the consciousness of this is an immense force. Those that oppose us in the Lord's path are, at any rate in that respect, the haters of the Lord. They are found liars, and empty in their pretensions. And at peace through the Lord's power, the saint would walk in a constant path. "He that doeth God's will abides for ever;" he is fed with the finest of the wheat, with the most precious knowledge of Christ; and the sweetness of divine grace refreshing and satisfying the desire of the spirit.

On Psalms lxxxii. and lxxxiii. I have no remark to make in connexion with our present object in commenting on the psalms. In psalm lxxxii. the reader will observe that God judges the judges, especially those who in Israel had the divine law to guide them. They fall thus from wielding God's authority in the earth, into the place of responsible man, and God arising judges the earth. Here iniquity towards man, the reparation of judgment entrusted to man from righteousness, is dealt with by God. In psalm lxxxiii. it is the way in which man is guilty of active enmity against God in his hatred against God's people, using craft, conspiracy, and violence to destroy their remembrance off the earth—the result being that Jehovah alone

P

(the God of Israel) is the most high over all the earth ; for such is the effect of man's efforts. Oppression downwards in those who represented God in the earth, rebellion upwards against God shown in hatred against God's earthly people: such are the characters of man, and the object of God's judgment on the earth.

Psalm lxxxiv. Though God be necessarily the centre of all our desires, the desires of the new man, yet it is not in this psalm the desire after God as such, which is spoken of as in psalm lxiii. Jehovah is owned as the living God, but He is owned as a manifested God in relationship with His people. It is not, "my soul is athirst *for God*," but, "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts." They would not have been so, if He had not been there, if they had not been His. Still it is the enjoyed public relationship with Him, dwelling in the midst of His people, which is delighted in, not abstract delight in Himself. The tabernacles of God are a resting-place for the heart, as the swallow had a nest from God where she might lay her young. And this is just. The root and essence of personal piety is the soul's own desire after God. The secret of God is there, and the soul is kept in the holiness of His presence, and exercised in it before Him. But where God displays His glory, where He is worshipped, is the just resort of the pious soul. In His temple shall every one speak of His honour. There praise is drawn out.

It is not exercise, but the soul in its piety as in the new man, alone goes forth in praise and worship where all do, where there is nought else, and with others of the same spirit also. For the altar of God is the centre

of the heart's desire and outgoings. There God displays Himself, and there the heart is at home from exercises and trials. Hence it is known to the heart, that there they will be still praising God. They that dwell there have nought else to do. Such is the full accomplished blessing.

But there is another thing (ver. 5 and seq.) in which blessing is known on the way thither, the way through this world, the valley of tears. The strength of him who passes with an undisturbed heart towards God's rest and dwelling-place, is in the Lord. Hence he too is blessed. If the dwelling-place of God, where His glory is manifested and fills the place, is the object of the heart, where its desires tend, the way that leads there will be in the heart too. It may be a rough one, a valley of tears, a valley where the cross is found, but it is the way there, and the heart is in it. Besides, the heart trusts God—has His love as the key to all. Hence it says, "by these things man lives, and in all these things it is the life of the Spirit." They turn the valley of tears into a well, and find in the sorrow the refreshments of grace. For we need the will broken, the movement of will in the desires of the heart judged, that grace, that God Himself (that well of joy and blessing), may have His full place. And this the trials and exercises of the wilderness do. It is not called the valley of trial, but the valley of tears; that is, it is not merely the facts which form the well, but the exercises of heart which flow from them. No doubt the character of the valley was the source of this; but Christ perfect in His way was a man of sorrows, therein manifesting and exercising His love. We need humilia-

tion and breaking down that we might get into this state, but this is what makes it a well to us. He had meat to eat in His sorrow as cast out, by the well of Sychar, which His disciples knew not of. But this is not all. There is direct supply and ministration of grace from above. God sends a gracious rain on His inheritance, refreshing it when it is weary. The rain fills the pools. The communications of the Spirit of God, the revelation of Christ to the soul, the Father's love, all refresh and gladden the heart, and fill it with that which makes the world a nothing, turning the heart elsewhere. The new man is in its joys, and goes cheerfully thinking of that through the valley. It goes from strength to strength. It is not accumulated strength, though strength is increased, but never in any sense so as to diminish dependence on God, but on the contrary to increase the sense of it. Self is better known and more thoroughly distrusted; we are more simple, and have a more simple consciousness that power belongs to God. As Peter, "when thou art converted (brought back), strengthen thy brethren"—an extreme case, as to the means, but showing how self-judgment and the lesson of dependence is the way of having strength, because strength is really in Christ. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus the strength we have and feel at a point where we are brought to realize the grace and presence of Christ sets us forward on our journey across the wilderness; we use it (I do not say lose it) in travel, but it is not the conscious enjoyment of deriving blessing from Him, but employing that strength in the way. This leads us to a further apprehension of our need of Christ, increased

knowledge of self by what we pass through, but which is discovered not always in a judgment we form of ourselves, but in such emptying of self, and the decline of its deceptive power in our heart, as casts us more simply on Christ. We go to a further place of strength thus; Christ is more all. If there be failure, it will be in the positive judgment of self and restoring the soul. The result is our appearing before God, where no self will be at all, and in the place where He has set His blessing, and where all go up to worship and glorify Him. Even now there is a partial realization of this, but its accomplishment will be surely in glory—in the heavenly Jerusalem and the Father's house. But all this turns to supplication—supplication in the sense of divine majesty, but supplication in the consciousness of blessed relationship. He is Jehovah of hosts, but He is the God of Jacob. But it goes yet farther. Till we are actually in the courts of God, we depend on this majesty and covenant faithfulness—for us the Father's name in union with Christ—but also on God's looking on Christ; but this secures us till then—indeed, in one sense, for ever. We are assured, are confident, and pray because God looks on Christ. But this confidence on the way through Baca is connected with the desire to be in the courts. "Look on Him our security; rest in Him: for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Better be at the threshold there, than enjoy all that the tents of the wicked can afford, with the right to abide there. God enlightens with His glorious majesty, and protects. He will give in perfect, unhindered grace all we need in the trial of the way, and in our weakness, when it is sweet to

count on His help. And He will in the end, when brought home capable of enjoying it, give glory with Himself. We can count on Him for everything. He is good; nothing good will He withhold from those who walk before Him. The soul closes in the conscious feeling—"Blessed is the man that trusts in thee." And how true it is! Nothing can disturb, nothing is beyond, His power—nothing of which His love cannot take charge for us—nothing which His wisdom does not know how to deal with for blessing. And the heart knows His love to count on it, and that "blessed is the man that puts his trust in Him."

Psalm lxxxv. brings out a principle of great practical importance, the difference between the forgiveness of what belongs to our former state, and the blessedness into which the believer is introduced in the enjoyment of relationship with God. Here, of course, it is in the restoration of Israel to blessing in the land in accomplishment of the promises of Jehovah. I shall now speak only of the principle as regards ourselves.

Forgiveness is known as the fruit of Jehovah's goodness, and His sure goodness to His people, and hence full blessing is expected. But the two are distinct. So with us, forgiveness applies to all that we are, looked at as in the old man and his deeds. We are brought back and all the fruit of the old man is put away for ever by the sacrifice of Christ. We have thus full forgiveness. Wrath is gone as to it. All our sin is covered; but the distance from God and from the enjoyment of communion with Him is not removed. Fear of judgment and the Judge is gone; but the

enjoyment of present blessing with God, His favour as upon those with whom is no question, and the going forth of divine favour in natural though righteous relationship, this is not entered into. Joy there has been, great joy there is, in finding oneself forgiven; but it applies to what we are in flesh, and is not communion with God in a nature capable of enjoying Him and none else, because coming from Him. Though forgiven, this distance, this want of enjoyment of God in the new and divine nature, is felt to be in its nature anger. It is not being *brought to God*. Nor can we rest without the enjoyment of His favour. For this the appeal in the psalm is made. The captivity of Jacob was brought back, but he looked for more, to be turned to God, and that *all* anger might cease. This is a large word; yet, knowing love and communion at least in hope, we cannot rest without it. We may have desired it, *i.e.*, the sense of favour, but we cannot get it by progress or victory; we must get it by forgiveness and deliverance, for we are sinners. But when we have found there is redemption and pardon, there is then not merely the want of the conscience by which we must come in, but the spiritual desires of the new man. "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" The soul is revived by the presence of the Spirit of God, and rejoices in God Himself. So Romans v.: we have peace with God: not only so, we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. "Show us thy mercy, O Jehovah (for it is mercy, but mercy from God known in relationship with His own—for us the Father known in Christ), and grant

us thy salvation." But the soul has learnt grace and listens for the answer, because it looks for grace. It is not legal agony, but desired knowledge of God in favour. "He will speak peace. His salvation is nigh them that fear Him."

Now this is all-important for the soul, not to rest in forgiveness (its first urgent necessity, that applies to what it is as a sinner), but to understand that it is called to the enjoyment of God, in the cloudless communion of a new nature, which being, morally speaking, the divine nature, has necessary and full delight in God, though a dependent and growing delight—we joy in God. No doubt it is and must be founded on righteousness—divine righteousness, as we shall see. It would not be God, were it not so; but it is not the settling that point with a God who is calling it in question, but enjoying God's presence, communion with Him, according to the perfectness in which we have been placed before Him, enjoying Him in the divine nature of which we are partakers. This is thus spoken of in regard of Israel: "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It is mercy, for it is granted to sinners in pure and sovereign mercy, but it is truth, for it accomplishes all God's promises to Israel. To us far beyond promise, for there was none of the Church; but it is a stronger case. It is being in Christ and as Christ, and so before God according to the favour in which He is before Him as risen. Righteousness seemed against the sinner and was, but through the divine righteousness it associates itself with peace to the sinner. They kiss each other. Peace answers to

mercy, righteousness to truth. They have—we have—peace through mercy; but righteousness by the faith of Jesus Christ brings us into the full enjoyment of the place He is in, or it would not be righteousness. Truth springs out of the earth; *i.e.*, for Israel all promised is accomplished there. With us, of course, it is sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It is not, glory shall dwell in our land, but we are in title and place in the glory of God on high. But in all cases righteousness looks down from heaven.* It is not for Israel or for us, righteousness looking up from earth to claim blessing from heaven. He has established righteousness in the very heavens. Christ is there. He is there by the righteousness of God. The righteousness was a divine, heavenly righteousness; He having glorified God, is glorified with God, and in Him, and that is divine righteousness. Our heavenly and Israel's earthly blessings both flow from it. Then comes conferred blessing, too, and so surely it is all the produce of that heavenly country, its joys and privileges are made ours to enjoy. The last verse properly applies to earth. But there is a truth yet connected with this I have not noticed. The present government of God applies to this walking in divine enjoyment, not to forgiveness and peace. We enjoy this blessed communion, dwelling in God and God in us by the Holy Ghost given to us. If we grieve Him, we are made sorry, humbled, perhaps chastened. It is always our place, but its realization and enjoyment

* Note how this sets aside legal righteousness; that looks up from earth.

depend on the revelations and action of the Holy Ghost in us, and these depend on our walk, and state, and obedience. So in John xiv. and xv. The enjoyment of divine favour and blessedness is made to depend on the walk of the saint. It must, if it is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; for how should we be enjoying communion in love in the midst of evil or idle thoughts? The presence of the Holy Ghost depends on righteousness—Christ's presence on high. That sheds God's love abroad in our hearts. We dwell in Him and He in us. But if evil is there, the flesh is at work, the Holy Ghost is grieved, communion is interrupted. It is not a question of title (that is, settled: Christ is in heaven), but of enjoying the blessedness I am brought into, enjoying God. Here all our walk with God is in question (though it is by grace I do so walk aright). What I urge here is the soul's getting clear hold of the difference between forgiveness—grace applied through Christ's work to sin and all the fruits of the old man, and our introduction in Him in righteousness into the presence and communion of God where no cloud or question of sin ever comes. We may get out of this (not out of the title to it, but its enjoyment in spirit—not that peace is destroyed with God, but communion), but in it no cloud of sin can come. We are loved as Christ is loved. All depends on His work. But one is the forgiveness of that out of which we have been brought, the application of Christ's work to our responsibility as children of Adam in flesh. In the other we are not in flesh, but in Christ, in the enjoyment of that into which He is entered—our life for ever.

Psalm' lxxxvi. This psalm, though it be simple enough in its expression, yet is pretty full of important practical principles, as correcting the feebleness of a soul drawn to God with His full glory and power. It finds its centre, not in embracing first the extent of the glory in its feeble state, but in being centred in God, and so praising and looking for strength and final deliverance into glory.

The ground it rests on, as looking to God to bow down His ear, is fourfold. It is *poor and lowly*, not of the proud of the earth; it is *holy*, really set apart to God; Jehovah's *servant* (with us the Father's name must come in here, as we have ever seen, and Christ as Lord), it trusts in Jehovah, and *cries* daily to the Lord. This is the state of the soul—poor and holy, set apart to the Lord; a servant, one that trusts, and the trust is not idle, it cries in the sense of need and dependence. This last is dwelt on in confidence of goodness, and a sense of the majesty of the Lord above all pretenders to power. He alone is God, is great, and does what to us is wondrous. It looks, then, to be taught God's way—has *no thought to walk its own*. The truth and word of God guides it. But here there is another need—the tendency of the heart to be distracted to a thousand objects, and wandering thoughts, and it prays the Lord to unite it. How we need this—to have the heart concentrated on the Lord! Here is power; here that presence of divine things which puts the mind in what is heavenly, and in direct connexion with divine sources of strength. When other thoughts come in, one is outside, in another world, from which we have to be delivered; not in the divine and heavenly one, so

as to be witnesses of it. The majesty and glory of God's name had been seen (verse 9), but this does not make the soul pass into the glory as if it was at home there. In a sense it is too great for one, and this is felt. How little we are! how we know in part! but it leads the soul to seek further concentration of all its affections, poor and lowly as it is, on God. And this is right, satisfies the soul, suits it. It is in affection and adoring thankfulness at the centre, through grace, of all this glory. Hence it continues—"I will praise thee, O Lord *my God*, with my whole heart." It is united here, and it can praise as it is called to praise, and as it sees in result will praise. We are called on to comprehend with all saints, the length and breadth, and depth and height; but we must first be thus brought to the centre—Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith and we rooted and grounded in love. Hence, knowing Him, we glorify His name for evermore. Our littleness has found, in His greatness, our place and our strength. We are, as I said, at the centre of glory. This turns to the view the great deliverance God has wrought. It is seen supreme grace is the source of it all. It is not merely owning His grace according to nature, where all is in order, but grace, sovereign grace—the activity of God's love—which has come down and delivered us from the lowest estate. This gives a special character to our knowledge of God. All dependent on even goodness, yet intimate in the character of our love to Him, because by our very wretchedness we know we are the objects of His love, thus known to be infinitely great. The soul thus confiding in God and occupied for itself with

Him, its first affair, sees the enmity of proud men, who fear Him not, rising up against it. It looks for God's interference. This is a great mark of faith, but, confiding in His accepting love, it looks for more. It delights in the manifestation that God is for it. This is not only deliverance but satisfies the heart. It is all it asks—that God should show Himself for it. It is this, the sure portion of every one who trusts God, walking with Him, which the Lord looked for (Psalm xxii.), and had not, lower than the lowest for our sakes but therein perfect in love, and glorifying His Father, and so higher than the highest. Therefore His Father loved Him, and He is glorified as man in a far higher way. Holpen and comforted *in* the trial, at that supreme moment, He was not—but there He stood alone. We trust and are delivered; He perfect above all, alone in this perfection. The Lord give us at least to have our hearts united, undistracted to His name and in the Father's love. There is our centre. We need not fear enemies there. (Phil. i. 27, 28.)

Psalm lxxxvii. God's foundation which makes all assured. It is not that her foundation is in the holy mountain that calls out the interest, or assures the heart of faith, but that the city of God rests on God's foundation—so we. The sure foundation of God abideth, and in the latter case it was when the Church was going on so very badly that the saint had to judge its state and purge himself from many in it. But God's foundation abides sure. So we say, His calling and His inheritance in the saints. But the psalm brings out another point, hard for the activity of flesh. Faith

attaches more importance to God's city, than to all that man has built. The sentiment of the psalm is essentially Jewish. In writing up the people, the saints and Messiah Himself are reckoned to Zion. These are his grounds for glorifying in Zion—God's view of the city. For us, no doubt, the thing comes in a different shape, as to the Church: Christ is of it, as its Head, not as born in it. God's fresh springs are there. But, practically, when the Church of God is despised, when it is formed of people who are of no account in this world, do we make our boast of it because they are precious in the sight of God, rich in faith? or do the grandeurs of the Egypts and Babylons, which God judges, eclipse it in our sight? Do we judge after God's mind, or after man's? Is the appearance and vain show of this world of weight with us; or does the faith of the Lord of glory lead us to estimate highly what God esteems, what is glorious? He has people whom He counts up. Is it the spirit of the world or the Spirit of God which forms our estimate of what is vile and what is valuable? Weigh the language of James's epistle. But may our souls especially feel the value of what in those heavenly places will be counted excellent by God.

On Psalm lxxxviii. I have not much to say. God is known and looked to according to His revealed name as the only Saviour, and it is just to this point that the soul is brought by the exercises spoken of in the psalm; cast by the pressure of all around to find it comes from God's hand, and more yet, God's judgment so as to be therein a pure and sovereign salvation from Him. Jehovah, God of my salvation, governs the psalm.

The state was this: affliction was present, nature could not find its account there, acquaintance put far from him. But this was but the negative and outward part, because nature found no relief, as it could from nature's sorrows more or less. The great point that pressed on the spirit was death, and death bearing the witness of God's wrath upon it. To this, the knowledge that the revealed God of promise was the only Saviour turns the heart; his life drew nigh to the grave. God's wrath lay hard upon him. Still God was appealed to. It was nature without its sustainments, nature with death pressed on it, that is, its destruction and end. And God being brought in, and faith in Him, so far there as to own that all depended on Him, His wrath was felt in it all. And this is true. This is death when seen in its truth. So Christ saw it in Gethsemane, though He would not have said all that is in this psalm. So the convinced soul sees it, whose eye is opened upon God, in its Adam state. The psalm, however, does not look beyond this life. In this it ends in nature—simple Judaism. But the faith in the revelation of God which has made it so feel what death is, as wrath from God, makes it look to Him who has inflicted it as a Saviour. And this is the value of such experience. It shows us our true state, our true relationship in God to nature. Nor is there way of escape, for it is our state by judgment before God. Hence self is done with if we are delivered. This makes deliverance known as sovereign grace, as God's deliverance, and the soul rests on revelation. And until the deliverance the soul cries to God. But when deliverance is obtained, the flesh, all that it is, remains as a judged

thing under wrath. There is no deception so far as to trust it really, though we may forget its evil for a moment, and even have to watch and contend with it. But its status before God is ever counted as a condemned and evil thing. The psalm is the description of the process which brings the soul to this. Sometimes the soul only reaches this on its death-bed. This ought not to be, but it explains what surprises many in godly persons. When it is not gone through really, the soul is not free. It stands on the ground of God's salvation, in spirit, not in flesh. It is not seeing this that has led many to live on experience, not on Christ. They speak of Holy Ghost work, and knowing the evil of the flesh, and the killing power of the law, which only means that they have not learned it. They are in this psalm. But they have not learned salvation and the gospel. They do not know that they are dead and risen with Christ. They are feeling death press upon them as wrath from God, according to this psalm—all well; but they have not received the sentence of death in themselves, through Christ's having died in grace for them, so as to reckon themselves dead, crucified with Christ, to be nevertheless alive, *yet not they*, but Christ living in them, who had died and put away all this for them. They are under the pressure of wrath for what they are in nature—all true in its place—but have not learned Christ, and through Him, that they are not in the flesh but in Christ, in that He has borne and passed through this for them, and that now through Him they are free in the new man as risen in Him.

Psalm lxxxix. has one remarkable character which it behoves us to notice here—reliance on the faithful-ness of God according to His original word of promise, when externally all is contrary to it, but the expectation of fulfilment founded on mercy, in fact in Christ, in whom all promised mercies concentrate themselves. “I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever, thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.” The accomplishment of God’s promises on earth shall be a source of praise for the inhabitants of heaven. Yet we see at the end that it was as if God had made all men in vain—a sad thought—the power of evil ruling, men its willing instruments, and the good having no place but reproach and sorrow. But God is called on to remember His saints’ weakness and their reproach. Still there is confidence; and, whatever the state of things may be, He has wrought redemption, broken the power of the enemy; and has He not in a far better way than for Israel? His arm is mighty, His right hand high, whatever state they are in. Heaven and earth are His, though till Christ comes we cannot say, Possessor of heaven and earth. Justice and judgment are the constant attributes of His throne. Mercy and truth announce Him when He goes forth. This form of expression is beautiful. God has a throne. There everything must be brought into consistency with it. But in His active going forth tender mercy and goodness announce Him, and faithful truth will tell His people He is there when He comes forth. His activities are mercy and faithfulness, because His will is at work and His nature is love. Yet His throne still maintains justice and judgment. How truly this has

Q

been shown in Christ!—will doubtless be so in the last days in Israel—but signally so in Christ, and even then because of Him. This apprehension of God gives the sense of blessedness in the midst of sorrow. “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength, and in thy favour shall our horn be exalted.” All this is realized in the heart in the midst of sorrows, so that it can be as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. This gives sweet blessing to the heart of the saint. Trouble does but increase it, because it makes him feel the preciousness of the faithfulness and favour of God, and that nothing separates him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The inward revelation of divine favour makes the path of sorrow full of sweetness. So Christ Himself was a man of sorrows. Yet He could say that they might have “my joy fulfilled in themselves.” The sureness of the promises in Christ are then insisted on. Read “of thy holy One,” and remark that “holy” here is the same word as “mercies” in the first verse, not as “holy” in the 18th. Mercy, then, faithfulness, the character of the divine throne and of the divine actings, past accomplishment of redemption, what the title of God is, and the power in which he has broken the hostile power of evil, all to us known as the Father’s love through the Son by the Spirit, brings the spirit in the midst of all trial into the enjoyment by faith, but the true enjoyment of the heart, of the light of God’s countenance according to all the favour He bears us in

Christ. In the psalm, of course, this is expressed as on Jewish ground. But Christ manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world. The Father and the Son come and make their abode with us. Joy is possessed; full, final deliverance counted on.

Psalm xc. is in a special manner Israel's cry for mercy and restoration in the last days, after their long affliction. But we will apply its principles as usual. It contemplates two things in the government of God: discipline; properly speaking, and satisfying mercy. But both are founded on another point: that God is the one unchangeable God—the same before the world, with which discipline is connected, was created, as now, and now as then; time being as nothing to Him, which to us may seem so long; and that He is the dwelling-place of His people, where is their rest and home, and secure abode, whatever wanderings they may have. As to man in time, He sets man aside with a word, and restores him. They are like grass growing up and then withering. But though this be true, if we compare God and man, yet faith gets hold both of the ways and purposes of God in dealing with His people. For Israel it is felt as wrath, because they do not yet know reconciliation. We know it is love, but the truth of the dealing is the same, and we can apply it. And first as to ways: "as His fear, so is His wrath." It is not arbitrary, but according to His own nature and character. Fear is knowing Him in truth, so that what He is, is applied to the holy judgment of all that is in the soul, so that nothing should displease Him or hinder communion. Now wrath as discipline—govern-

mental displeasure—is the expression of this as regards the state of the soul, where it has been unheeded, or the will has been in it. It makes good God's character as regards that which is opposed to it in us. Faith, divine teaching, shews us, that His wrath is, as His fear. But when the will bows, our very feebleness becomes not terror, but a motive in our appeal to God. And He owns it. He considers whereof we are made, and remembers we are but dust. But when once we feel our nothingness, and apply our hearts to wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of Jehovah, instead of God's having to enforce it by subduing our will, and correcting our carelessness, the heart gets courage, gets bold. It is not reasoning, but by grace confidence is restored, and the heart says, "Return; O Lord, how long?"

Now this, we have often seen, is the expression of faith. God purposes to bless, and in result will bless His people; and hence, when under pressure, faith can say, How long? Self is not faith, and the fear of God must be produced, but where faith is, it springs up again into the sense of known mercy and says, How long? And note, there is known mercy. It is not come, but "return;" not as if God had left them (though, as to His ways, it is true as to Israel,—He hides His face from the house of Jacob), but we look to His returning in the sense of known present mercies and enjoyment of favour. Then it brightens up into full confidence. Faith knows His purpose is to bless, to give delight and joy to His people, and that by His own favour. It knows He delights in them; it counts on this: "Satisfy us early." What a bold word with

God! But it is confidence now; the soul is morally restored in His love which He delights in. This is looked at as constant too. "Rejoice and be glad all our days," it says. Why should it not expect it from the God of goodness? It may be more outwardly with Israel, still the spirit of it is right. It looks for a refraining God; one who takes account of the sorrow of His people, though He has been found to inflict it. See how beautifully and blessed this is put, Isa. xl. (just what is sought here), "Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem; tell her her time of trouble is accomplished, . . . for she has received at the hand of the Lord double of all her sins." His heart counted it twice the chastisement needed, compared with her sins; for the answer to faith is ever more than the request. (See the prayers and answers in Psalm cxxxii.)

But faith, looking on the thoughts and purpose of God is blessing, goes beyond returning and refraining mercies. God has purpose in His love and works in its accomplishment; hence they say, Not only satisfy us with thy mercy, but "let thy work appear unto thy servants." God's own work will make good blessing, and so how good it will be? and it will be manifested to their honour and delight. So we, even for our souls; we seek not only restoring mercy, but thereon the positive work of God, in producing blessing in bringing us yet nearer to Himself. It is never then merely restoration; it is a soul better able to appreciate God, and God more fully revealed to it. Yet still awaiting, knowing as we are known, the result is the full display of glory (here for children, because it is

literally for Israel in the millennium); but we do look for the complete work of God in raising and glorifying us, and then entering into glory to abide. But another sweet thought is added to this: "that the beauty of Jehovah, their God, should be upon them." Their thoughts would hardly go beyond the manifest endowment of blessing from His own hand marking them His. With us how fully is it so! Shall not we be in the glory of Christ Himself? like Him arrayed in this blessed likeness before God our Father, a place of perfect delight! Nor do I exclude present blessing, how we may be as thus under grace as the lign-aloes which the Lord had planted; and that was when Israel was abiding in their *tents*. So the Church should be a spectacle of grace, to the angels, of order and beauty, and the life of Jesus as manifested in the individual believer. In this case, too, the works of our hands under divine favour are established for us.

Psalm xci. On this beautiful psalm, of the structure of which I have spoken elsewhere, I have not much to say, because it defines the names of God which are available, and the specific effects of faith going on even to what is directly applicable to Christ; so that the general principle is less justly deducible from or connected with it. It would be reducing what is purposely specific to what is vague. It takes Jehovah, as such, as God; and so he who owns that name, comes under the care of El-shaddai for a specific performance of earthly promises in the ways of God. This is not our place; one who acted on it would deceive himself. Yet a general faith, and trust of heart founded on it,

would surely be blessed. It does not take up a Father's chastenings with which the government of God connects itself.

Here, in trusting Jehovah, no evil comes nigh the dwelling of him who does so. This was what made it strange to David* till he went into the sanctuary of God. He saw the wicked prospering, himself plagued every moment. This is the certain result of owning Jehovah, when the government of God does come in.

Still we may learn some of the characters of trust. It is not merely the knowledge that there is an Almighty God, who is above all things: the secret place of His true revelation of Himself must be known. This, true faith has, and confers with God there according to it. His name is revealed to faith. To us, it is Christ as Lord and the Father. Faith thus, in its confession of His name, makes its refuge and strong tower, and moreover trusts in it: a great thing, for no power of evil, no cause of distress can be anything to upset the mind, if the Lord be looked to and trusted in. It has here the promise of ever watchful and protecting care. This is true whatever outward evil may come. As we see in Luke xxi. 16—18, the Lord says some of them should be put to death, but not a hair of their head should perish—they were all counted. Providential power is all at God's disposal. Faith is identified with the interests of God's people (ver. 9); but the Lord's own name is what has governed the heart, and the true name of God is known to it; that is, as I have said, the true revelation of God Himself known by divine

* Query—Asaph.

teaching. To us it is Christ Himself, and the Father in Him. Faith calls. It is not merely passive trust, right as this is in its place, but it communicates with God about its needs, because it trusts Him. God's presence is there for faith and the exercise of its power; and this is as true now, in its just application, as then, as hereafter. The way is different, because the object is different, that is, to bring in a heavenly state. It brings present blessing though with persecution, and is assured of eternal and heavenly salvation.

Psalm xcii. is really praise for the final deliverance of Israel, and Jehovah's millennial name is the key to it, as of the last. As the following psalms are the bringing in again the only begotten, there is one principle to note in it—the elevation of the wicked is finally for their destruction. The man untaught of God does not see this; but faith discerns in its adversaries and the power of evil which rises up and presses on it, darkening its horizon, the enemies of the Lord. Hence, though tried more than another, for the power of evil is very painful to it, it has confidence. For though it would be foreign to wish personally for vengeance (and we have to watch against this), is it so to the Christian to rejoice in the earth being delivered from the power of the wicked? On the contrary, "Rejoice now ye prophets and ye holy apostles." It is said, Faith gives a keen sense of the evil, because it is such and hostile to God and goodness and truth, and rejoices in the righteous judgment. But it is as the Lord's work, as the work of His hands, it rejoices in it; and that is perfect. It displays, too, the uprightness

of the Lord, but faith must wait in patience. The following psalms discuss and celebrate the coming in of this judgment.

Psalm xciii. In this psalm we shall find some very important principles. Though power be now exercised for the triumph of good, it is no new power. The Lord's throne is of old, Himself from everlasting. No inroad of evil has touched or weakened that. This had taken place. The passion and will of man had risen up as the angry and tumultuous waves in vain. The Lord on high is mightier. Rebellious man is allowed to do this, but the power of the Ancient of Days is concealed from unbelief in the days of patience, so that man thought all in his hand. When evil rises up so as to reach Him and call out His action, an instant suffices to bring about the counsels of God in power by their destruction. But this is not quite all. Faith has that on which it rests—the Lord's testimonies: they are very sure. God's word may be counted on as Himself, not only for final deliverance but for guidance along the path of difficulty. Nor is this all. There is a character which is a safeguard against delusion and a means of judging and discerning the right path: "Holiness becomes God's house." Oh! how these two principles do cheer and enlighten us in our path. How they strengthen us in the consciousness that it is of God's very nature, and cannot but be! Thus God's testimonies and God's holiness secure and fix the heart as to that which is of God. If the water-floods rise up, the Lord's power will settle all in His own judgment.

On psalms xciii.—ci., though they are very striking

ones, I have very little to say with my present object, because they treat not of the exercises of the heart in the time of trial, but of the coming in of power to put an end to that time. They are characterized by the title "Jehovah reigns, the world is established." I have, therefore, only a few remarks to make: first, that the result of all this patience of government in God is, that man rises up as the waterfloods against Him: but God is mightier. The termination of it is by power. But two great truths accompany this. God's testimonies are very sure; we can count upon His word through all. It reveals His nature, His purpose, His character. It gives that according to which He will act—no peace to the wicked, but infallible certainty of purpose and power. Man may be as the grass, evil rise up like the waterfloods, the word of Jehovah abides for ever, and he that does His will. Hence in all times we can go by it as a rule, dark as all may seem, mighty as evil may be. Israel or the Church, apostacy or hollow profession, persecution or seductive prosperity, His word is true and a sure guide, according to His own nature and character—His to whom power, after all, belongs. And if the time was when He to whom power belonged was counted as a malefactor, He was guided by that word, bowed to it, and fulfilled it; and judgment after all will return to righteousness. Thus far of all present government and future display of public power, the kingdom and patience, or kingdom and glory of the Lord. But there is another thing—Jehovah has a house, a dwelling. Take it as His heavenly dwelling, His temple where all speak of His glory, or in its place as the

Church, His habitation by the Spirit. It is always essentially characterized by one thing, because it is *His* habitation—holiness becomes His house for ever, separation to Him according to His nature.

These two points guide the saint through all circumstances till power comes in to sustain him, because he counts on God, through all the risings up of the power of evil: the word of God, and the holiness of His nature. God has graciously communicated His mind to men, has spoken. His word remains sure come what will. That is inherent to His nature, depends on His power as God. "Hath He said and shall He not do it, hath He spoken and shall it not come to pass?" If He be God, truth nor power to make it good *cannot* fail, or He is not God. His speaking obliges Himself, so to speak, by His nature. I cannot believe He is God at all, if, when He has spoken, it is not made good. He would not be God. It would be ignorance, or some one else would have power to hinder Him. His testimonies are sure. In the midst of evil this is an immense, a perfect consolation and stay. But the other test is of importance, the other claim on conscience, Holiness, if He be God, is in every sense necessary. No elevation of truth, no certainty of word to be reckoned on can alter this. It puts man subjectively in his place. He might boast of truth, may exult in sure promises, as if God had bound Himself. But God must be consistent with Himself; what is not holy is in no case of Him. He is supreme, and all must refer to Him, all be consecrated to Him in His presence, and, so far as He is revealed, suited to what He is. Thus a counter-check on man is furnished,

and the true knowledge of God. It is not holiness apart from the word, nor knowledge or certainty apart from holiness. The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth.

Note further, they are testimonies coming from God, the positive declaration of His mind and will (not a boasted knowledge of God by man's will, and his pretension to know what God must be, though there be a certain apprehension of conscience connected with, often perverted by, traditionary knowledge; but) the positive testimonies of God, so that man is subject to them, though sustained by them. It is not man's reasoning, or man's conscience, but the testimonies of God, His own active revelation of Himself, the utterance of His word. They are simply received by faith, the soul is subject to them as such. This characterizes the soul that owns God. Power will come in due time. This will make all publicly right. Till then faith rests in the testimonies; the soul-submitting, soul-sustaining revelation of God.

God, moreover, has a house, a dwelling. This, as noticed elsewhere, is an immense fruit of redemption. Neither with innocence, nor with the faithful did God dwell; Adam before His fall nor Abraham had God dwelling with them; innocence marked one, faith the blessed path of the other. A frustrated or gracious visit told of God's condescension and goodness to either. But in Israel's redemption we find that Jehovah had brought them out of the land of Egypt, that He might dwell among them. (Ex. xxix. 45, 46.) Innocence does not become God's house, but absolute consecration to Him according to His nature where good and

evil are known; so it is in heaven—this character and nature. But, there, testimonies are not needed. Knowledge of good and evil man has, but separated from God and in sin. But where God has redeemed man to Himself, purified him, and delivered him, then He dwells with him, in him—in Israel according to His then partial revelation of Himself, in the saint now by His Spirit, and in the Church; and so eternally, for now it is according to what He is in Himself, fully revealed in Christ, and by His death. Hence it is founded on testimony. For God must reveal Himself, and His redemption, and His ways, and what He is. Thus the Holy Spirit is given consequent on Christ's exaltation on the accomplishment of redemption, and in fact on the reception of the testimony of God by faith. When God is known (not merely truth), then there is the consciousness of what suits, there is the delight of His name according to His nature; and thus it becomes the test not only of truth being known, but truth and so God Himself—for Christ is the truth, and the Spirit is truth. Hence, as soon as Israel is redeemed, the holiness of God is spoken of, not before, because He was going to dwell in them, having brought them to Himself. The world will be established by power; but this is consecration to God by testimony and His own presence through redemption. It is not the pomp and order of His house here (that we have in psalm ci.), but a dwelling-place of delight and nature. (Comp. Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.)

In Psalm xciv. judgment is looked for and vengeance to set the world right. But we find the discipline and

comforts of the Lord sustaining the soul meanwhile, which must occupy us a moment. The triumph of the wicked is, for him who believes in God, a painful and oppressive thought, the power of evil is evident ; this is what just affects the mind of the saint, not in a prophetic but a moral way. But the blindness of the haughtiness of man away from God, presses on him who sees, from knowing God, the day of the wicked approaching. There is also the distinct consciousness of being God's people whose weakness and sorrow are but an occasion of oppression. Both are clear motives of judgment that this cannot go on for ever. He that formed the eye surely sees it all. Man's thoughts are vanity. These two things then are the foundation of the saint's thought. God's interest in His people, and His goodness which will not overlook the poor when oppressed ; yea, the very fact of the pride of the wicked.

But another element is introduced : God does judge evil, but He begins at His own house. God's hand is in the dealings which make His people suffer, as well as man's. It is to this the heart of the saint turns. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah." We have the interpreter here one among a thousand. God with the chastening teaches out of the law. God, by all this process of evil having the upper hand, breaks the will, teaches dependence, separates not only the heart but the spirit from the world where this evil reigns. How could there be union with a world in which this power of evil is seen and morally shrunk from ? Man thinks he can go on amiably in the world without its evil, but when the world itself is evil and felt to be so, what then ? Thus wickedness and

its rising up, discarding God, is its own remedy in the heart of him who owns God, exercises it, purifies it, removes it from the sphere in which its own will works, when it, if not in intention, at any rate practically, sought an outlet for nature. Divine life having given it thoughts of God; it is met by a world which will none of Him, and rises up against Him: all this is God's hand.

But there is more, there is, with the discipline of His hand, direct inward teaching by His word, which reveals Himself. Thus the haughty evil which drives back the heart, also has subduedness, and has tasted that the Lord is gracious, drives it to God, known in grace and the revelation of Himself, His ways, His purposes; and grace effectuates itself in the heart. The renewed heart gets into its own sphere, and learns not merely the necessary character of God as hating evil and loving good, but His own ways, the development of His grace and truth, His holiness in the sphere in which He reveals what He is for those who know Him. This is a rest of heart for the saint, a repose of the spirit which seeks and delights in good. If it sought to meet the evil (though activity in service there will be according to God's will), but to meet the evil in the world, largely as the heart desires it and looks for God's bringing it in, there would be weariness and heart-breaking; but when the power of evil is rife, the soul is driven up into its own place, into the direct revelation of God and His ways, and there near God's altar, for it draws out worship, it finds rest—till. It still looks for setting evil right and the deliverance of the poor and needy, but it abides in patience, learning God's mind, and finds rest

therein, rest in what is eternal. The activity of good it will engage in, where the open door is, but its rest is in that which is properly of God. The establishment of that by power will come, and that is *certain*. God is sure in His ways. He will not cast off His people. He will not have evil in power for ever. Here it is, of course, the intervention of judgment on earth, judgment returning to righteousness—power and good going together, not power and evil. We have better things, a heavenly revelation for sons, a heavenly place, our Father's house before us, but the principle is the same. The judgment, once in the chief priests and Pilate, while righteousness and truth were in the blessed Jesus, will come to His hands who was once Himself the poor and oppressed; judgment will return to righteousness. And if we, taking up our cross, are glad to suffer and so shall reign with Him; yet the thoughts and ways, and counsels, and faithfulness of God will be fulfilled. Heavenly grace and heavenly glory may be added in our present rest of spirit, and the rest that remains to us; still righteousness will have dominion if it be heavenly, and eternal blessing for us who have a part with Him who suffered. The appeal to the impossibility of its going on, if the Lord is to show Himself at all, is strikingly put forward in verse 20.

The power of evil, note (16, 17) was deeply felt. Be it so; it may show our weakness sometimes, but it is well it should, if faith be there. The heart ought not to get accustomed to the power of evil, will not if it be with God; will be sensible to it, astonished at it, and dependent on divine restoration to meet it in thought. This was true of Christ, only in perfection,

and no fault in His thoughts. He was astonished at their unbelief; He looked round upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts; He could say, How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? But then, no less ready in heart in the activity of good where there was a want, He could say, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but then perfect in submission and obedience, and the one desire to glorify His Father, that His Father should glorify Himself—perfect in all things. We, alas! if not helped sometimes, ready to dwell in silence, should soon, so to speak, give up, where Christ, the blessed One, felt all infinitely more, and was perfect in it. But when we turn, in the consciousness of tendency to fail, or being actually in present danger, to God, His help is there. This is great mercy. Teaching, then, is for the rest of the spirit, but there is holding up and help in our ways. David encouraged himself in God: who can fail then? He who is mightier than all, He whose force is accomplished in weakness, is there to help, there in a tried one, witness of goodness, that if we never failed we were in danger.

Another scene opens too, for God thinks of all things for us. What questions, if our minds work, present themselves to us, in the confusion and labyrinths of the mixture of good and evil! The mind enjoying God's goodness may abstain from it. It does well, but the root and spring of all these questions are in men's hearts, and the power of evil around us awakens them. It is not only selfishness, though self is *always* the centre, the centre of the questionings, but when evil

R

affects the spirit, a multitude of thoughts are there. I do not say it is right—it is not. It is the fruit of our departure from God, and the consequent letting in of evil into God's world, a being within it in fact; but when heart and mind go out beyond it, having the knowledge of good and evil, revelation here, when the mind works, increases the difficulty and the multitude of thoughts, for the mind sees good clearer. Why and whence this evil? It sees another world of God's power. Why then this? It looks into a world beyond it, and brings back its thoughts into this where they are not realized. It sees goodness and power, and dwells in the midst of sorrow and evil. This may be in a selfish shape—often is. It is then a low principle, but it has always man for its centre, and (save as it was in perfect love and holiness in Christ who perfectly brought another world into this, I mean in His own mind and person) is always evil, is but the "multitude of *our thoughts*." Yet God has compassion. I retreat into God by faith. This comforts, delights my soul. Our thoughts speculating, as knowing good and evil, either by personal sorrow, or by working of mind, which is worse, launch out into the endlessness, not really infinitude, of speculation as to what ought to be, or into complaint against God as to what God is. It may be sometimes in a more submissive way of wonder and acknowledgment of its being too hard for us; but it is a finite mind, a mind in the sphere of this world, out of which it has no natural powers, let, in thought and speculation, into its relationship with the infinite, with good and with evil. It has a multitude of thoughts, but no possible

rest. In its *state* it does not belong to the sphere it has got into.

Hence, let me add, in passing, the form infidelity has largely taken in these days—what is called positivism or realism, saying, I know what I see and experience, with perhaps some small conclusions from it, and pretending to stop there. It does not, for it pretends to *deny* all beyond it. This is false upon the face of it, for if it only knows what is knowable to man from himself, it can deny nothing beyond it, any more than it can affirm. It is a low thought. But it is false on another ground. The mind has no certainty, but it *has* a multitude of thoughts beyond the sphere of the natural human powers which can decide on what is within these powers. There are a multitude of thoughts within us. We are incompetent to come to a conclusion, but there are thoughts and something or other to suggest them, but the heart has no answer. Where there is no infidelity, but merely the natural working of the human heart, this is the case. There is no further answer till judgment comes, till judgment returns to righteousness. In the psalm, this exercise of soul refers naturally more entirely to the government of this world; Christianity, the revelation of another world, has with the former brought in a thousand others, where men's minds work. But there is a refuge and a resource, not in the explanation of everything to the mind, so as to maintain it in the mad and wicked pretensions to judge God, but in the introduction of the positive good which is in God into the soul, so that it knows it has got blessedness and truth, whatever of its multitude of thoughts it may be unable to solve. Con-

science is upright when it is acted on and judges self. But when, by our enfeebled and beclouded knowledge of good and evil, we pretend, calling it conscience, to judge God, the pretension is to make our ignorance and moral state, as it is, the measure of what is perfect, when all is imperfectly known and God not at all. For in that state men are forming a judgment—what they are to acknowledge as such. It is, on the face of it, judging of a whole system of things when only an obscure end of it is before us. Reasoning from that state of things full of evil, I can judge nothing. God has not yet set things right, nor am I competent to judge even how to do it; but He has introduced good, perfect good, Himself into the midst of the evil. He has made me discover my own evil—judge myself: an immense moral gain. Those only who have done so are, as to soul matters, upright. That is true, honest conscience, and gives me a resource in grace, a perfect knowledge of His love (in Israel a relative knowledge by His ways), and in the details of exercises which follow for self-knowledge and purifying the soul, I have known, perfect love to have recourse to, and what it has revealed and imparted to me, grace and truth; and that not only in the outward revelation of it, however authoritative, but in my soul by the Holy Ghost. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them who love him, but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit;” and again, “We joy in God.” Besides, God acts directly by His Spirit. His love is shed abroad in our hearts, His faithfulness,

in that love can be counted on; but direct communion with Himself raises us up to a kind and source of joy which the trouble and sorrow do not touch; nothing separates from His love. We are more than conquerors in this world; we have the joys of another, divine comforts through the sorrows we have to bear, in presence of the evil which besets us: the power of it drives us into our retreat, our joy in Him who is always the same, and whom we learn to know better: Judgment will close the scene in which I have to be troubled.

The psalms that follow I do not dwell upon, because they are the actual coming in of the Lord to judgment, not the exercises of the heart in awaiting it. Psalm xcv. calls the Jews to be ready to meet Him. Psalm xcvi. the Gentiles. In Psalm xcvi., He is actually coming in clouds; xcvi., He has wrought the deliverance; xcix., He has taken His seat in Jerusalem between the Cherubim. Psalm c. calls the Gentiles up to partake in Israel's joy and worship; ci. gives us the principles on which the government of the earth will be carried on by Jehovah's king.

Psalm cii. is one of the most profoundly interesting in the whole book of Psalms, but I have no remark to make on it here. It applies especially to the Lord Jesus Himself, whatever occasion circumstances of individual sorrow may have furnished to its composition. The citation of it in Hebrews i. leaves no doubt as to this, and gives to the psalm a depth of interest which scarce another equals it in. It shows how the divine, eternal nature of the Lord meets the difficulty

of His having been cut off when Zion is to be restored hereafter. But this gives to the poignancy of His sorrows a depth and character of its own. It is not a glorious result in blessing, the consequence of a work alone in its nature and value, nor the judgment which follows the rejection of Messiah, but the eternal truth of the Lord's divine nature meeting the reality of His sorrows even unto death. Hence it is especially His Person which is the peculiar object of this psalm, and gives it its especial interest. But, though the security of the children of His servants, it does not afford us instruction so much on the government of God, though the foundation of it all is in grace. Nor do the following psalms very largely either, ciii.—cvi., which closes this book. The Spirit views what God always is for faith, but in connexion with the deliverance coming in by the coming of the Lord.

Still the power of good manifested in setting all things right, which faith looks at as coming in, is realized by that faith as belonging to Him whom it knows already, so that it rests in it, as God's character, in Him as bearing that character, though its results are not yet produced, and clothes present things with that knowledge of God, though evil be still here. It looks at this world as the display of power and wisdom under a government of goodness, God being known, though the evil is not finally set aside, nor the result of goodness produced. But He who governs is good. And this is known by those who have sinned against Him, known for themselves and in themselves; and it is this knowledge of God which enables the soul to see wisdom and goodness in all things, though the effects

of sin are still present. This is a very important principle: the perception of God and goodness in the midst of the scene of evil in which we live. True, a godly Jew, who had not seen Jesus rejected, who did not know the cross, could not know evil as we do, still he knew it; and the faith which looked to a final deliverance not yet come, introduced God thus known into the scene through which faith had to pass. God who, in the midst of evil, has let nothing out of His hand, has ordered all things sovereignly in the midst of the evil, though the evil be not His, in judgment has remembered mercy. And when the bondage of corruption came in, He who made all things very good, has held the reins and ordered all things wisely, whatever witness of evil remains, and sorrow and death. We are in bondage to it till divinely freed, but God never has been, never will be—would have us know that all things groan—but that there comes deliverance when He shall rule—but that the Creator, who made all things good, overrules and orders all things now. His mercy is over all His works. Now, faith pierces through the felt evil, does not wish to be insensible to it, but by faith gets at Him who is above it, and can bring in His goodness even into this present scene, sees His part in it, and even His part as superior to all the evil. It is not natural enjoyment of creation, which, though as creatures all are good and lovely, may be utter self-deception and blindness to evil, but faith getting to goodness above the evil, and bringing this into its own enjoyment of God in the creature.

I repeat, Israel could not know the evil as we do; but then, on the other hand, he could not have known

the redemption wrought and reëconciliation to be wrought as we do, so that we can bring in God more fully yet. This is the general character of Psalms ciii., civ., cv. They contemplate the full deliverance of Israel, but by faith; and look at creation not in its abstract perfection, but God in it; and Israel's history, too, as a series of failures, but God's mercy and goodness rising above it.

Thus Psalm ciii. recognizes forgiveness and healing, looks on by faith to the deliverance and grace in store for Israel, but knows God according to that; sees His patience and goodness meanwhile, and this applied to His government. He is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. We know on what a perfect basis, as regards sin, all is founded: but here the effect is celebrated in the government of Israel; but God is known for all times according to this knowledge of Him. Hence it is not vague goodness, deceiving oneself, but evil owned, but God known in goodness. This ought to characterize our ways and thoughts. Not that we shall not have to deal with evil, and, if we go below the surface, meet it everywhere; but I ought to have so gone to God about it, as to bring Him back with me according to what I have found Him to be above it all. My feet should be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Psalm civ. takes up creation in the same way. The last verse shows the judgment which clears the world of evil, and His sovereign power is owned. But the Spirit is able to bring in the goodness into the midst

of all it sees. But it does not go beyond a fallen creation.

Psalm cv. reviews the special dealings with Israel in past times. The present deliverance by judgment is also found here, but it is looked at as His faithfulness to His promise and grace. Here what is present manifestation of goodness, awakes the memory of all God's past ways. This is what He is, what He always was.

The following psalm takes the other side of the picture, and shows man's ways—that, in all the interventions of God in goodness, man, after the first gladness at being delivered, turned back to his own evil and unfaithful ways. Still His ear was ever open, He remembered His promise, repented according to the multitude of His mercies, so as to bring, finally, praise and thanksgiving to His name. The former gave what God was in His own ways, this His being finally above the evil in accomplishing mercy and promise when men had shown what they were. God good in Himself, God good in the midst of evil, but not as allowing the evil, but as making Himself known by His own ways of mercy. And He being thus known by the heart, the heart passes through present circumstances according to this knowledge of Him. But to do this consistently and constantly, supposes the heart not only to know but to be with Him. This closes the fourth book.

Psalm cvii. In the last Book of Psalms we find, besides many songs of praise, all the moral circumstances

of Israel on their return to blessing. The first psalm in it stamps this character on it. It looks at them as gathered back, but traces the various scenes through which they might have passed, and that after their entry into the land too, and God's ways with them in it. It is a description of toils and trials, in which the Lord was looked to, and answered and interfered in behalf of the tossed and tried soul, and men are exhorted to own and praise Him. It carried this blessed truth in the forefront. His mercy endures for ever. God's unchanging love and goodness, celebrated from the first, fully proved failure of Israel onward. Man fails, God's mercy to His people not. It is His redeemed and gathered ones who are the people that have to bear witness to this. Strangers and pilgrims where there was no resting-place, no home, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting in them, they cried to the Lord and were led in a right way to where their foot and heart found rest. Two characters are given to the soul in this condition. It is a longing soul and a hungry soul. We have craving and want, but these brought before the Lord. This is mercy. It is not the case of holy desires here, but God meeting wants. The wearied and fainting soul wants, but this want turns into a cry to the Lord. Mercy is surely there. But this might be even where their affliction and distress was chastisement, the fruit of rebellion. But here where the heart turned to the Lord, mercy met it, and there was deliverance. The gates of brass and iron which shut them in are broken, where iniquity and the folly of departure from the Lord had brought it all on. He sent His word

that they might be healed, and so delivered. When men were venturesome and braved dangers and found themselves at their wit's end through the storm of the sea which gives no footing to them, the Lord comes in and gives peace and leads them to the haven of their desire. In the very place of the habitation of His people, in the place of promises, there His direct government comes in. Rivers are a wilderness, a fruitful land barren, through judgment; turning the wilderness into pools of water, judging wickedness and showing mercy to the needy soul, satisfying the hungry who lean on Him. Careless and lifted up even there, they are brought down. He pours contempt on princes, but the poor and needy He sets on high. It is not the order of a world blessed of God where evil is not, but the government of God where evil is, where God overrules the evil to the purposes of His own government, to hide pride from man, and comfort and encourage the poor in spirit who look to Him, who trust not in pride and human strength and will rest in the Lord. In all the ways, too, where their will has brought them, where their sins even have brought them, if He be looked to, His mercy and goodness are found. Thus God deals with the heart—turns the state of things and the ways of men into the means of their hearts knowing Him. The righteous rejoice, and oh how true that is—how much truer it will be where the fruit of the Lord's goodness to the humble, waiting soul which has put its trust in Him is seen. In the end evil will be put down, but in the way the Lord meets, comforts, and justifies in result the path of the humble soul; and

the wise and observant soul will see, however busy, however pretending, however seemingly successful man's will may be, the loving kindness of the Lord will be made good before him to his joy and gladness of heart. The Lord teach us to walk softly before Him, and leave the results in His own gracious hand. It is sometimes difficult, but always wise—painful to see the wicked and wickedness prosper. It is a world of evil, but God works in it, and His ways will work out blessing, and the fruit of His goodness and righteous power.

One or two brief remarks on Psalm cviii., but on a point of great beauty. There is great confidence here, and, as ever, mercy to the soul which knows itself and comes before truth. But, then, for its own deliverance and blessing, it looks to the exalting of God. This shows it must be a holy, righteous exalting. Be *thou* exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth, that thy beloved may be delivered. It is a blessed thought, and this is what faith has to lay hold of now, even in the time of trial, that our blessing and God's glory are one, only we must put His glory first. This is the very principle of uprightness—"He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true," says Christ, "and there is no unrighteousness in him"—and the highest blessing. So Jesus Himself, "What shall I say, Father, save me from this hour Father, glorify thy name." Then comes, "I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto me." So in trial and even in evil, faith identifies the glory of God and His people. "The Egyptians

will hear of it What wilt thou do to thy great name?" For the same reason there is no sparing evil when we are in the midst of the people, and evil calls this principle out, God being publicly dishonoured, "Slay ye every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." In a word, faith identifies God's glory and exaltation and His people, but puts God first. Here it is in blessing, and we have the remarkable answer of God. I will rejoice. His own joy and delight is in the blessing of His people; exults in doing them good, in delivering His beloved, in the employment of His might to set aside the evil which oppressed them, and put them in possession of what, by His gift, belonged to them. And whatever the strength of their adversaries, He will accomplish their blessing: the strong city dare not stand before Him. And even when through their fault they had been refused His help (in Israel's case, as we know, long cast off), still, when the just time of the blessing of the humble comes, He will put forth the needed strength that all may be fulfilled. He gives strength to His people, His own power delivers them. They have learnt that His only is of any worth or avail.

Psalm cix. is the judgment of Judas and the anti-Christian Jews at the end. It affords us little experimental teaching, while most solemn in its testimony. First, the motive of help: "Do it for thy name's sake." The nature and glory of God is at the root of all His ways; and when the heart caught at this, the answer of help is seen, God cannot be inconsistent

with Himself. But for this the heart must be brought into the state co-ordinate with that name, lowliness, the judgment of evil in self and so uprightness, dependence; and God may exercise fully to manifest brokenness of will and produce it, and the heart's leaving all submissively to Him. In Christ's place all these exercises only brought out His perfectness, in us they work uprightness and dependence. In Him all this sorrow was purely God's hand, that is, there was no reason for it in Himself. And this is accorded to us in grace, even if we have given occasion to it by our self-will or evil, still God has taken it in hand in our discipline, and when He has wrought His work sets His saints up in blessing to the confusion of the adversary, forced to own His hand where they triumphed in evil, and thought only to triumph over the just. But they have met God, for these were His ways with His people, and this government can go on with us because redemption is complete. In Christ's case it was pure hatred against good, He undergoing it for us. For His love they were His adversaries. But they, the lovers of evil, are before the Lord continually; the time of showing it is His own for us when His work of subjugating our will, teaching us holy dependence, is complete; in Christ, when it has been manifested and God fully glorified.

Psalm cx. In this, glorifying Christ at God's right hand, I have only one remark to make. The last verse shows the perfection of Christ in this spirit of dependence on the way, the path in which we have to follow Him as walking in the new man; glad of the

refreshments of God, but dependent in them, and taking them as they are found, that is, as God Himself gives them in the way—the spirit of lowly dependence.

Psalm cxi. In a vast number of the psalms of this last book, the present intervention of judgment and power is so contemplated, that instructions for the trials of the way are less to be looked for. It is the case in this psalm. It raises, anticipatively no doubt, its hallelujah for the *works* of God. Only this is to be remarked, and so always, that these works of deliverance are always conformable to, and founded on, and make good, the truth of God's character. They are verity and judgment. His commandments are proved sure in them. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. Hence to enjoy the fruit of them, our path is to walk after the Lord's ways and reckon on the sureness of His promise, and if He tarry, wait for Him. But, as we have always seen, mercy and compassion towards us is found and felt in them. If we are delivered, it is sovereign goodness. Hence the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; obedience leads us to intelligence, being in the path of God. Light is truth in that path, and according to it. You cannot separate the true knowledge of divine things from godliness. It is the nature which is godly, obedient—grace dependent on God which alone desires or understands them. If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. Hence, in the path of obedience, the *realizing* the light in a subjection which owns God, more is found; for light and the path of the new

nature are one. The truth as it is in Jesus, that ye put off the old man and put on the new, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. We are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us. In this path we have to walk by faith till power comes in. In Israel, of course, it was more as law; but the principle is always true, as true knowledge is the knowledge of God. It is impossible to separate true knowledge from a state which owns God for what He is—obedience and dependence on Him.

Psalm cxii. I leave aside, of course, the promises of temporal blessing, which apply directly to the Jewish people and system. These latter psalms refer especially to them, because blessing is just come in by judgment, but some principles are worthy of note—the wisdom of acting in obedience through the path of trial is specially insisted on in these psalms. Much was there (there always is) to say that faithfulness was folly and ruin. God warns them, and in that is the path of wisdom. It lasts in its effects when the wicked disappear. The generation of the upright will be blessed. His righteousness endures for ever. No doubt darkness seems to shut him in, but light arises for him even there. We must learn to trust to God, blessing is sure to the obedient. But thus walking with God, peace of heart and the sense of goodness make him gracious and full of compassion towards others—upright too with them. Self-seeking is not his governing principle. He shows favour, is liberal in heart, nor is there rashness or self-will. Ho

carries out and carries through his matters in the fear of God, with soundness of mind; does not use lightness, that his yea should be nay. Guided by God in going into them he carries through his path to the end, because it is God's will, and with the strength and steadiness the consciousness of doing that gives. And this is of importance in the path of the saints as a testimony that God is there, and His mind the guide of our path. He abides, he that does God's will does so. Further, when the power of evil is abroad, he is not shaken. In the midst of exercises of heart, of moral evil, he has been with God. His will has been supreme with him. He has looked at God as one whose will ordered all, and God Himself as all. If He was pleased, he was content. Circumstances had lost their power as motives, and God had, so to speak, taken their place in his heart and mind. Hence, when adverse ones arise, they find God there known, trusted: his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.

Only one principle comes before us in Psalm cxiii., but one which cannot be too often brought before our souls, one which we have constant tendency to forget. God chooses weak things, that it may be evident that good and blessing come from His power and love. God uses means, but when man speaks of means he generally speaks not of reference of heart to God, prayer, His word, and the like, but of leaning on man's influence, and man's strength. This is all evil. Oh that we may remember that God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and weak things, and things that are not, to bring to

S

naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Blessing were not divine blessing indeed if it were not so. But then in this strength we may look for grace. He dwells on high, but humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill to set him with the princes, even the princes of His people, and takes the barren and gives her children like a flock, makes her a joyful mother of children. Such are God's ways. The heart delights in them. Power is His, and goodness, but what a lesson in the midst of this world, and for the heart of man.

Psalm cxiv. The same thing as to power is seen in this very beautiful little psalm. He brought water out of the flint rock. His presence makes the earth that has forgotten Him to tremble ; but for His people in the desert, His power and grace bring refreshment and life out of what seems to man hopeless and most opposed. Dependence and confidence in Him—such is the peaceful path of faith.

Psalm cxv. The first principle here brought under our eye is setting the Lord's glory first, a simple but mighty one—"not to us but to thy name." So we find perfectly in Christ. But this is followed, for all that, by the connexion of that glory with God's people. The first principle gives purity of motive—this the courage and hope of faith. And note what is specially blessed—the name (*i.e.*, the revelation of God's character) is specially suited to

the blessings of His people. He had spoken in promise, but they have failed on their side to take up the promise in the path of righteousness. Yet God has promised, and here His name of government in grace comes in. "Give the glory to thy name for thy mercy," that is part of His name; "and for thy truth's sake," that is another. And here the glory comes out—if He were not the former, the latter could not be righteous judgment, would have not cut off the guilty; but there would have been no fulfilment of promise. But mercy rejoices over judgment. What God is in His nature, love, interprets itself in His ways towards the failing, in mercy, leading them, no doubt, into the place of repentance that they may suitably enjoy; suitably to any moral relationship with God, but then accomplishing His promise in truth. But the divine glory goes first. This is counted on. God had made Himself to display His ways, the God of His people. "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" Such was the ancient plea of Moses and Joshua. This is, further, in contrast with the idols of the heathen. When God's glory is first sought by faith, it not only turns to the blessing of the people according to that glory, but it opens out into the consciousness and apprehension of that glory in itself in the hearts of the people. This is a great blessing. They joy, no doubt, in the salvation, but they joy in God. For the full display of this, He must come in in judgment; not for our blessing, for He has given us heavenly things, where His own dwelling is, in what He is in Himself, not merely as what He is in His ways. For we may remark how earth is here the

sphere, and this present life the energy in which God is known and owned. "The dead praise not the Lord;" "the earth hath He given to the children of men." We rejoice in being dead and having our place in resurrection with Christ in heavenly places. We cannot keep this too strongly in mind, though there be instruction as to God's ways on earth in these psalms. In these last especially, the earthly government is in view, because judgment at the end is just coming in. It is a blessing to have heaven instead, and our God, such as He is, our Father.

In Psalm cxvi. the suppliant has been heard; the government of God consequently enters but little into its composition. The soul has been brought down under the pressure of death, but delivered. It is the history of the remnant at the end, into which the blessed Lord so wonderfully entered, but which is not a prophecy of Him, and applicable to any so suffering, as is seen by the apostle's citation of verse 10. (2 Cor. iv. 13.) The deliverance is for this world. The thought of the psalm is—grace and faithfulness in Jehovah in delivering. The character of the saint is simplicity: a spirit difficult to some, but precious. It is formed by a simple-hearted reference to the thoughts of God and living in them, and then trusting Him who always makes His own thoughts good, and remembers those who thus trust in Him. The opposite to this is—the activity of man's thoughts, his will and counsels mixing themselves with them. These perish, he is disappointed. The humble spirit does not think so much—it receives God's thoughts. They have a moral

character. He abides in them, is obedient, and waits on God. (Compare Eleazar, Gen. xxiv.) The deliverance of God comes as favour and an answer to the soul, and is full of sweetness. His faithfulness to the state and expectation is felt. Hence, on receiving the blessing, thankfulness (not merely enjoying the blessing) is the fruit; and, "I love the Lord:" hence sweet associations of soul are connected with it. It is felt that the Lord has dealt bountifully. The soul returns to its rest, faith had been at work before. The soul believed and spoke as trusting God, but was sore troubled—now finds the God it thus trusted its source of joy and blessing, not, mark, the blessing it gets. The soul was turned to Him, not to comfort, in the trouble. It is turned to Him, now in the time of joy. The Lord Himself is before the soul, its source of blessing. Note another thing in this psalm, the feeling of the failure of all men. It is not exactly "in my haste," but in my anxious pressure of alarm, such as would make man flee in haste. This gave the consciousness that man could not be relied on. It was not simple faith or sound judgment this, but there are moments when God makes us feel that we cannot rely on man, but only on Him. Often we have comfort from men. "God who comforteth them who are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus." But we must not rely on man. Hence there are moments when we have to say, "all men are liars," and we are cast on the Lord. How truly the Lord was so, I need not say; yet in grace He could say to His disciples, Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. But there was an hour when He must say,

“*one of you shall betray me,*” and feel it ; and, “all ye shall be offended because of me this night, and shall leave me alone.” That showed His perfection. It teaches us to lean on the Lord only, not diminishing cordial confidence and openness of heart, but teaching to rely on God. Unhindered joy will come afterwards. But in all trouble the Lord thinks of us.

Psalm cxvii. The consciousness of grace and favour enlarges the heart. Israel never thought of calling the nations to praise when under the law. But now that mercy has brought blessing, they do. It is the sentiment of what God is to us, the thankful enjoyment of it as of God, which opens the mouth and heart by the knowledge of Him. It calls others to enjoy His goodness, too. It is an assimilation to the divine nature and privilege in the knowledge of love ; only, as it should be, we learn love by knowing its exercise towards ourselves.

In Psalm cxviii. we are still on the ground of final blessing, so that the government of God in the midst of trial is only referred to in the past. It is Israel's recognition of the divine ways and of Christ Himself when blessing is come, owning that Jehovah's mercy has lasted out all their ways and endured for ever. I notice only the aspect of circumstances as applicable to us at all times. God is for His people ; but men, all men, may be against them. One has only to trust the Lord, and victory remains with faith. But in this, where evil has to be governmentally corrected, Satan seeks, Satan has his part. How truly it was so in

leading all men against Christ; how fully so in the last days of Antichrist's power, I need not say; but as the book of Job shows, it is so in the various chastenings of God. Evil on the conscience, or even unconsciously in the heart, gives him a handle, sometimes a terrible one, against the soul even where it is upright. Rest is found only in self-judgment and confession of what gives him a handle. Satan would seek to make us fall thus; but behind all this the hand of God is to be seen, as in Job's case. "Thou hast chastened me sore, but thou hast not given me over unto death." It is for blessing. One only could declare, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me;" but with us, all is love and blessing, to make us know ourselves, and then enjoy His blessing (compare Deut. viii.), and fully own what Christ is according to His victory and glory, in the counsels of God. We must be thus exercised, the ground ploughed and harrowed, but the result is—"this is the day which the Lord hath made." No doubt this is the final blessing of the earth when Christ comes, but in every exercise of a soul brought to the point of uprightness with God, the principle is made good; the gates of righteousness into the joy of communion, so to speak, are opened. And the mercy to which we had no title we own to be the Lord's doing, and all is light. The direct application to the remnant is evidently the just application of the psalm, but we connect this great *display* of God's government with the details in which it applies to us.

Psalm cxix. is the expression of the effect of the law

written in the heart of Israel, when they had long erred from God's ways and were sorrowing under the effects of it. It is one of the psalms which pronounces blessedness. We will examine some of the elements of this work in the heart. This blessedness is pronounced on "the undefiled in the way." The world is full of defilement. There is only one path *in* the world (for ours is out of it, we are pilgrims and strangers following Christ who is gone on high) but only one in the world which can be undefiled; that is, God's law. It is not what is heavenly formed within, affections set on things above, a walking in the Spirit; that no doubt will produce fruits which no law of God will condemn. It is the way wholly formed by God's expressed will for man's walk in this world. They "walk in the law of Jehovah." There is a delight in what is right, in what is not defiled by sin or the world; but that is in walking in the law. It is a perfect rule, according to God, in this world for a living man. But this is carried farther in the heart. It looks to the source. God has borne witness to His will, and shewed that He would have man walk in it, and the heart turns to it, not only as undefiled and right, but as "His testimonies." This connects itself with the desire after Himself. They "seek Him with the whole heart." This is the general character of the effect of the law written in the heart. The practical effect is evident: they "*do* no iniquity." Not only the heart is set morally right in undefiledness, but evil or unrighteousness, relative wrong, is not done. Instead of their own will, and puffing, as it is said, at God, "they walk in His ways." The authority of

God is recognized in the heart, and diligence in acquiescence in it, and the desires of the heart are towards it. "O that my ways were directed," &c. It is not only the perception of God's ways—what is intrinsically approved in the heart; but the desire that the actual course of life were ordered so as to keep God's statutes; not satisfying our will, or our will being towards God's. And here dependence is felt as to the course of a man's life, and there is the desire it may be directed. Conscience and spiritual discernment go together. Shame does not flow from man's disapprobation; but from the conscience not being good according to God's revealed will. But this way is complete and an only one. Whatever is out of it is not undefiled, is the world which is abhorrent from God; we must be in it in will, heart, and way, or out of it, and so ashamed, if the will of the heart be right. If my mind and soul have morally discerned the excellency of God's way, the conscience, if I am out of it in every respect, makes me ashamed. The heart set right has respect to "*all* God's commandments." But where this is, not only the conscience is right and peaceful, but the heart is set free. "I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments." There is knowledge of God through His ways, and the heart restored to Him, and having learned His thoughts (not only commandments, but His judgments), can praise Him not only for benefits but in the heart's association with Himself. Another element of this state is full will and purpose of heart to obey and keep what God has ordained or appointed, what has God's authority

attached to it, not merely moral right and wrong. But it was a time when Israel had erred; hence here there is a special looking to God, not utterly giving them up. We see thus that the *form* of this psalm cannot apply to the Christian. He never expects to be utterly forsaken; in a particular course he may apply this, when he is conscious of having followed his own will. But from the general principle we may learn much, as that which is wrought in the heart as regards its moral disposition. (Ver. 1—8.)

But there are other points practically. The tendency of man's energy as such is to follow his own will. This is now natural, not before the fall. Then man enjoyed, thanked, and blessed; followed naturally in the path described by God—a simple one. Now, through that first distrust of God, will is come in. And here we have a difference of the very last importance in Christian obedience and the law. The law addresses itself, as such, to responsible man down here without raising the question of and not supposing a new nature, though it may discover (when known to be spiritual) the need of one. It supposes a will and lusts which have to be checked and put down. The Old Testament does not speak of flesh and spirit, but of responsible men and their ways. Christian obedience is as Christ's; the will of God is the *motive* of action, not merely the rule. "I come to do thy will:" no doubt it will herein be a rule to guide us. In us this is a new nature, Christ being our life. We do not find in the Old Testament "he cannot sin because he is born of God." It is not that there was not the

desire to obey in renewed souls then; surely there was. It could not be otherwise. But the relationship in which men stood to God was a law without them to govern their ways when in flesh, not a known new nature standing in the results of redemption whose only motive of action was God's will. The prophets, indeed, pointed out Christ as such (as in psalm xl.), and the masters in Israel should have known that, to have their future privileges, they must be born of water and the Spirit (as in Ezekiel xxxvi.). But obedience under the law was a rule applied to one who had a will whose movements were to be judged by the law, not a nature whose only motive was God's will, standing in the power of redemption so as to have the right to reckon a discovered old man to be dead, yea, which God had pronounced dead through Christ. Hence the heirs differed nothing from servants, to do this, and that, whatever their own will might be. Ways, and not nature, were in question, even though renewal of heart were there. Hence the young man, where energy of will is found, is to "cleanse his way." Lusts would have carried his will elsewhere: how should he find the means of having his ways clear before God? Watchfulness, the fear of God (not will) according to God's word. God's word—how precious to have it in such a world of darkness and will, to guide our feet in a path according to God's mind! For the heart is set right. It is not, indeed, the sweet enjoyment of love in a reconciled soul, love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given, but (what is of all vital importance) the heart right in the sight of God. It supposes the man away from

God but undiscovered in his desire. Both are true of the Christian. He is reconciled and has peaceful affections in perfect relationship (this the law had not); and he has, as known and seen in glory, earnest desire after Him that has loved him, only as knowing (not merely seeking) Him. Here He is "sought with the whole heart;" no guile but the true desire of the heart towards God. Being so (the commandments of God being precious, as making known His will), the true heart prays not to be let to wander from them. God is looked to in goodness; for when He is truly sought, there is always some sense of His goodness. It is what distinguishes conversion from mere terror of conscience, desire towards Him and sense of goodness in God. We have, then, another element. The heart which thus seeks God, and has a desire to do His will, not only seeks outward conduct to be right when the occasion arises, but keeps the word at the centre, so to speak, and springs of action. He hides it in his own heart as that which he loves; "out of the heart (where that word is hid) are the issues of life." How large a place the word has here. Note, too, man's estimate of conduct disappears. It is between God and the heart, and that is integrity of heart. It is not here a single eye to an object; so far as that is here, it is found in seeking with the whole heart. This is the integrity which by reason of the desire towards God, takes His mind as governing the springs of life. It is a blessed and important principle. The word hid in the heart prevents sinning against Him. But the heart goes farther. It owns the blessedness of Jehovah Himself, known in His

ways, His goodness, His mercy, that endureth for ever. There, in the midst of its distress, the renewed heart finds its resource and its rest. "Blessed art thou, O Jehovah." This makes the heart look for what He has decreed and ordained and for divine teaching in it. This looking at God gives courage and the consciousness of integrity and faithfulness. When the heart is right, this is the case. The heart, however humble, when it walks in integrity, has the consciousness of it before God. It may see weakness and infirmity in its ways, shortcomings of which it will judge the cause; but with God it will have the consciousness of entire guilelessness and purpose of heart. "This one thing I do"—"To me to live is Christ." This does not affect humility; entire dependence on grace and divine strength for willing and doing is felt (we are in result unprofitable servants, had we done all), it is duty and delight. But there is the joyfulness with and from God that the heart is right. Service flows from confidence in God and knowledge of His blessedness with the value we have of what God has given. So Christ fully in Psalm xl. The spirit is the same here. It is the effect of perception of divine things, in power and value for them, to make us declare them. It is glorifying God. Love to others may accompany this, but it is another thing. We owe it to God to declare what He is. He ought to be known, and what He is owned. The difference of praise is that the sense of what He is, is addressed to Himself. Perfection is where He is fully known, so that there is no need to declare it to others; all with one mind wor-

ship because of it. Then we hold nothing back, "all the judgments of thy mouth." We are filled with what God is, its value; and it is uttered. We may be wise for others' sake, but God is sufficiently valued to be fully declared. God's testimonies become the riches of the soul. The possession of heaven somewhat modifies this; yet, still, for here below, the way of God's testimonies are joy, moral joy, as riches would be to men. But there is an inward life, which occupies itself with these things, as well as the activity of duty; much to be fed on, digested, learnt in God's testimonies. We meditate on them: we have thus God's mind—the Holy Ghost's intention in them. Thus the soul is fed in delight. But God's ways are held in respect as authority, to the mind. The heart goes with them too. It is not merely that they delight his soul, but there is the activity of the new man; he delights himself with them, he makes it the matter of his occupation, seeking his enjoyment there, and keeps it (oh! how needed it is) in memory, the true proof of affection.

From the third division, another element comes in. Its literal application is to the sorrows of Israel in the last days; in principle it applies to all times—the sorrows and trials which accompany godliness. The soul looks for mercy from One that is supreme, where it is a stranger. It needs this to keep the law. No doubt, it may be strengthened even to martyrdom; but, in general, it looks for mercy to be able to walk. The heart owns it, is God's servant, and looks to be kept in mercy in order to walk truly. This is a great

point of the return of the soul to God. By this fact God has now His own place and authority as such. Whatever evil may be permitted (comp. xciv.), God, our God, is supreme; and, further, goodness is always then necessarily known in Him. But there is more; the soul thus knowing God desires the knowledge of His mind, not merely a rule to direct, but "wondrous things out of God's law." And all this gives the consciousness of being a stranger in the earth. A good God (whose servants we are), and an evil world, make a man "a stranger" (we much more, through Christ). We need these—our own moral delights—God's commandments; we must add the fulness of Christ. "They are not of the world as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." And here the heart is fully engaged and filled; "my soul breaketh" forth, for there is infinite delight, in the new nature, in the fulness of God's revelations. It does break forth with delight. But this delight in the word gives a just estimate of man in the world, the "proud" man acting from his own will and setting himself up. He may seem to succeed and puff at God. He is under a curse, he errs from the one true way of man—God's way. The exaltation of will brings necessary curse; for we are thus away from, in rebellion against, God—all acting of human will. But godliness does more than make a stranger, a sure thing for the heart. It brings cruel mockings, for proud man will not have subjection to God: it is contemptible to man; and the deist, he cannot help him, he boasts. That is not contemptible, his will is in it. But with God man must be subject,

and the wilful despise this, though often with misgivings of heart. This the saint, while enduring, seeks to be removed. God should assert His title, not suffer the faithful to be pressed down by evil. Still, meanwhile, he can retreat into his own delights ; he meditates in God's statutes, hid there from the pride of man. They are his delight, and his counsellors, too. (Ver. 17—24.)

He who seeks to follow God's ways will find himself often in evil days—days when the power of evil prevails and presses upon his spirit. What then marks faithfulness is, that the heart does not turn aside to an easier path or other comforts, but looks to God and His raising up the heart according to His word. There his heart is. He prefers sorrow with it to leaving it, but has learnt to trust God, and in the sorrow looks to relief, according to this revelation of God ; and God can be counted on for it. The heart had been true with God—not only knew that He knew all its ways, but the desire of being right in His sight and confidence with God even there. He had declared His ways. This integrity in the time of trouble, when there is not the joy of God's deliverance, is very important—to be able to say, "When my spirit was in heaviness, thou knewest my path." Still there is confidence in the result, so that the soul cleaves to God's ways, and the heart reckoning on His faithfulness is sure, if led by Him in faithfulness of walk, it will soon declare His wondrous works. Not only did the heart take the lowly and abased place, as having no courage as to external things, but it melted

within for heaviness—inwardly was in felt weakness. Still the strength it looks for is according to God's word. It seeks nothing but this. The false way in the midst of which it lived, it would have kept far away from the heart. Through this it was downcast. But better to be downcast through evil than to walk merrily in it. More energetic faith might lift up. Still the sense of evil and dependence is good. It was deliberate. He knew all this, but he had chosen the way of truth. "Lord, to whom should we go?" How simple the path then! The soul had been steadfast, and another thing was connected with this. The heart sees that its joys and sorrows are in the hand of God. If it was put to shame, it would be His doing, but He could not for our keeping His own testimonies. "Put to shame" is not here bearing shame by man's mocking, but confounded as coming under judgment. After all, the free running in God's path is when the heart is set at liberty and free, joyfully with Him. (Ver. 25—32.)

These last verses look for apprehension of the ways of God's precepts; so that the heart is taught in the midst of sorrow. Here it is more keeping and observing it in his path. Otherwise the first three portions were his own resolutions; here the demand of God's teaching. For the heart, true in its resolutions, then turns to God. It may be first for its sorrows, but then for guidance and dependence on Him. We need His teaching when the will is right, need understanding from Him—His help too. "Make me to go." But the heart seeks to be rightly inclined

T

also, but that root of all evil turns it aside—covetousness. The same as to vanity, but this is all around us. It is not the inclination of the heart, but distraction and leading away the mind from God to folly. Hence the soul seeks to be given energy and life, to seek in singleness of eye heartily the Lord and His will. He seeks too that the word may be confirmed to the soul. This may be inwardly by the Holy Ghost giving it power or even by God's ways according to it. The heart follows God and bows in heart to him at any rate, but seeks to be strengthened and confirmed. Reproach is when God allows shame on one for righteousness without interfering to screen or save from it. It is as if He abandoned His servant to the mockery of the enemy, successful in his ways, or at any rate the faithful in a state to be triumphed over. So Christ: "Reproach hath broken my heart." The world could say, "He trusted in God, let him deliver him." But after all, what God ordained was good, in which the faithful walked. Why should he be left to reproach, which he feared? The heart was right. It longed after God's precepts, and looked for the Lord to give liveliness of heart and energy of renewed will, undistractedness through the faithfulness of God (that consistency with His own goodness and favour on which we can reckon in Him). "Quicken me in thy righteousness." This last supposes an increased knowledge of God, so that we can reckon on Him. So indeed does all this demand on God for help and teaching. Uprightness and integrity lead to confidence in Him for our leading in the way of righteousness, which we know He must love. Being

thus of one mind with Him, through grace, gives it ; but the last word here shows deepened intimacy of faith, which counts on what God must be. (Ver. 33—40.)

Remark here, that all through there is no thought of looking, in difficulty or trial, to anything but God. Help to keep the law, deliverance from trial because of it, these are sought, but there is not the smallest idea of turning anywhere else ; it does not even occur to the faithful. This is true integrity of heart. God in truth, of His will, God in mercy, God Himself as an object, but only God—nothing outside or away from Him. His mercies are looked for, and that is right, and deliverance from Him, and this according to His word, for He has perfectly revealed Himself, and we want nothing short of Him. What an answer will His deliverance be to the enemy that reproaches ! And the word He had sent to us was trusted in as well as obeyed. This is an important point, it is not only the authority of the word, but we have set to our seal that God is true, we receive it as the word of God, and God, we know, must be true, for we know Him ; and the soul is interested in the truth of the word. It has taken it as of and from God, delighted in it, had its confidence in it, taken it in face of the wicked as that which we had of God (was perfect as He, revealed Him), identified it, so to speak, with God. Hence, when there was deliverance according to it (and other the heart would not seek), it was the very answer the heart wanted to him that reproached ; God's word has an immense place in the

heart. It is what reveals Him. Not only it does so, but it is what does so. (So John v. 39.) Had God abandoned the faithful, as fear would lead him to expect, the word would have been taken out of his mouth. Yet here it is not doubting the truth of the word, or its being God's testimony; but he was allowed to accredit it no more by faith. This he fears because he values it. This was Christ's trial and the perfectness of the cross, as to desire ("how, then, should the Scriptures be fulfilled?"); as to trust, "Yet thou continuest holy." Here the faithful has hoped in God's judgments, God's acting on that which is gone out of His mouth, His acting according to the revelation of Himself in His word; and this enabled him to keep it for ever. So will it be with Israel when he is delivered from the oppressor at the end, the law having been written in his heart. Christ took none of the promises in life, but higher glory awaited Him as man, an answer to higher and infinite faithfulness to God, faithfulness to make good His nature, to be the proof of it when abandoned, when only it could be done because of sin. Then will Israel walk at large, when God's judgments have come in, for that was his desire, to be free to keep them in delight and joyfully. Through mercy we may learn this by times, but our path is a higher one—to follow and suffer with Christ. But he has been encouraged by these thoughts. The word gets its value and God His place, so to speak, though unseen. He speaks of His testimonies before kings, and is not ashamed. This is the character of faith. It has the sense of the importance of God's testimonies, and is

filled with it. Men take their place, may be respected, as due to them ; but God fills and governs the mind, not by effort, but, so to speak, naturally. The commandments of God become thus, instead of a pressure on the conscience, the delights of the heart. There is open confession and dedication to them ; I suppose this is lifting up the hands to them. It is a solemn avowal and asseveration of heart ; not only he has loved them, but he openly declares his owning their truth and authority, saying, That is what I own. And as he openly owns his affiance to them, so he meditates in them for his own joy. (Ver. 41—48.)

But the soul has counted on God's word ; God has taught and led the soul to do it, and now it looks for God to put His amen to it (man, through grace, having put his). This confidence of faith in God's word had been its comfort in affliction. There was that which was firm and stedfast for hope, and brought in God's faithfulness and testimony—Himself in hope to the soul when all circumstances around were adverse, and nothing to lean on. And this is comfort, true comfort, in affliction ; but it looks to God to fulfil His word—knows He cannot but do it. That very word had quickened the soul itself to do it. This lowly, patient obedience, accepting meekly reproach, had been the scorn and derision of the proud ; but faith in His word had kept the soul from swerving. It kept fast in the sorrow. It looked back to God's ways of old, when His hand had been stretched out. What made it obedient made it confident : that is, God was looked to, and this kept the vision and

memory of faith clear. It counted on faithfulness, and it remembered judgments; for all this is the government of God. And His ways of old are ever the thought of Israel in the Psalms, and, in their place, we can think of them; though our hope be elsewhere, as Christ's, in whose favour, when all was tested, it was not made good; but the better portion of resurrection was the answer for us. But this thought of God's judgments does make it awful to contemplate the result for the wicked, who are hurrying wilfully against them. But it is not only the end of the wicked that is spoken of here. The wickedness itself is to the soul poignant distress. The soul dwells in Mesech. It sees around what is grief of heart, for its delight is in the fresh air of God's holy will. The rank and fetid breath of sin is distress and pain to it, and seen not only intrinsically as sin, but in the pride of wickedness. Still there is joy: God's statutes are its song in the house of its pilgrimage. How true that is! How, when pressed in by evil around, does the heart find its relief and enlargement in the word and testimony of God Himself! His statutes are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage; and the loneliness in which the heart is in a world of evil (for it will and must be isolated, however sweet communion may be by the way, if it be faithful), will be met by the name of the Lord (to them Jehovah, to us Christ and the Father in Him). And when cast upon our thoughts, these thoughts are filled with their names and all is peace, and the purpose of the heart in obedience and communion is settled and strengthened. And this is the fruit of

obedience, for holiness and communion—the sense of God's presence—are the fruit of obedience. So Romans vi. 22, “Ye had your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” The obedience here has the sense of diligent observation of God's precepts, a thing not to be forgotten. (Ver. 49—56.)

In this part (ver. 57—64) we have more the affections connected with the word written in the heart: “Thou art my portion, O Lord.” The heart has Himself as its source of joy and blessing. This connects itself necessarily with purpose of heart towards God: “*I have said.*” It is impossible to look to the Lord as one's portion without thus purposing to do His will, for that would be not owning Him. This, too, necessarily involves the desire of His favour since He is God. Still the word here has its place, which has awakened this desire and confidence, both as assuring of the mercy and the revelation of the principles on which this favour and mercy are shown. I see the same desire, not mere obedience though resulting in it, but the meditation of the heart: “I thought on my ways”—the heart's inward exercises, a needful and important matter for us—“and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” We may obey instinctively, carelessly almost, with right intention, but showing that the heart is not with God, not exercised, not anxious as to pleasing Him, and in which, though the path be not evil, the heart may be in a very poor state. But the saint rightly with God will review the purpose of his ways, the direction of them, how far they are according to the measure of the purpose which the

light given to us leads to, and if the purpose be adequate, how far the filling up in practice be true to it and earnestly pursued, true to the character of that purpose. For we may be externally blameless, in appearance even amiable, and unfaithful to the calling of God. Here, of course, we have to turn to God's testimonies which are able to make the man of God perfect, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We see how having the Lord for our portion is the very spring of all this. Thus we should have a heart which thinks on our ways. But this gives diligence when the heart is right. It does not confer, then, with flesh and blood, having only God's favour in view and purpose of heart: "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." How characteristic and all-important this is I need not say. It is the essential first-fruits and spring of a life true to God, as we see in the blessed Apostle Paul. Suffering may be found in this path, opposition of the haters of the Lord, the instruments of Satan, but the inward life remains steady and rightly directed—does not swerve in its judgment of its path: "I have not forgotten thy law." We may be occupied with opposition and evil, so as to have the state of our mind formed by it, though opposed to the wicked. It is but meeting flesh by flesh. He who looks to the Lord has the character of his path in the scene of wickedness formed by the unforgotten word, and this leads to see God as the dealer with these things. It looks for the perfectness of God's dealings with evil. This is a comfort, for an upright mind would often rise up in indignation against public evil; but the wrath of

man does not work the righteousness of God. It is hard often for an active energetic mind to take the lowly place, and not bring down fire from heaven, or will to smite with the sword, when Christ and His truth are insulted and annoyed; but in looking above we have songs in the night. The heart, in singleness of eye, led of God in His ways, has springs of joy which wake it up in the time of evil, and when it is alone with God. Sorrow may be around, but joy with Him. It arises. There is a chord of heart to praise. It is not only comforted in the sorrow, but freed from the bond of evil, active in praising Him whom it knows and who is its portion. For judgment and deliverance will come according to the word, and the heart gets up to God as to it now. But though we are and must be alone in faith, not in fellowship, when the Lord is our portion, we are a companion of them that fear Him and walk in His ways. And here the heart is able to turn round and, when all the evil had pressed upon it, yet see mercy. And so it is: evil may rise up like a flood, but the Lord is always above it; and when the heart by faith realizes that, and the will is bowed as to it all, if it is *then* comforted by the thought of God's judgments, it finds the constant exposition of His mercy now, and seeks in peace to be led in His ways. This is an interesting part of the soul's experience under the influence of the word of God. (Ver. 57—64.)

We have now the sense of blessings from God, and the heart turned to Him as its portion: this with the consciousness, the will being broken, of being

His servant. Still in unerring goodness the word, the great subject of this psalm, has its place. The word guides Jehovah in His goodness, as it assures us of that goodness, revealing Him and His ways to us, as it guides us in our path. This is very precious, because it teaches how to reckon on it, and that we can. And here he had found it by experience; he had been afflicted, and he can now account for it; but as His word, so Jehovah's ways have been. So even (and it *is* most precious) we can reckon on it at all times. We may have more, but this we have. Now he looks for discernment as taught of God, divinely-given judgment and knowledge; for he had put the seal to God's commandments, for believing here is putting the amen of his heart. Herein he can confidently look to be guided—so we; and it gives confidence to the heart, so as to look for it. His will had been broken. Affliction had been there; before will had its way, forgetting God and going its own way. Affliction is understood now, and obedience wrought. How graciously God follows through righteously as to government and necessarily so in general! For sometimes He breaks the heart through favour as He knows how, when we have wandered away from Him. Hence God is known in goodness in the subdued heart: "Thou art good and doest good." The desire of the heart is after God's ways. Now "teach me thy statutes;" that is, the goodness the heart seeks. This subdual of will and setting the heart right is beautiful to see. The pride of ungodly adversaries is before him, saying evil of him in untruth: it is natural if he has left their ways and his

own pride of will, but experience has given purpose of heart. It was enough to have gone astray; he clings to that with purpose which he has now got; and the moral difference is great. Filled with will and self on one side, perhaps success; delight in Jehovah's law on the other: the law of Him whose we are—Jesus Christ's will in all things. But not only was there breaking of will and return; there is positive progress, through infinite grace, in this experience. The breaking of will brings the elements of the heart directly into contact with the word. Self is judged in the forms it takes within in the heart—what flesh is in its ways, however deceitful. Thus the heart gets to learn, freed from self, and the light of the word breaking in *on* the heart, and exercising it, thus renders it cognizant of its import and power; for (though, yea, and because, of God) it is directed to and adapted to the heart of man: only till the will is broken and conscience awakes, it does not reach it intelligently. See the parable of the sower and John iv. But then the law of God's mouth is precious above all, the expression of His own perfect mind and will, and His will about us. We live by it, but we live on it too, and with delight, as from Him and perfect and for us.

The soul looks now to God as dependent for man's very being on God, so that He should surely direct and guide it, as Peter wrote, "Committing the keeping of our souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator." The heart alone, which knows Him in grace, can do this. Otherwise we seek our own will in resistance to Him. But once He is known, He is known in

all that He is according to the truth of His nature in grace. This enlarges our knowledge of God, and applies it to everything. It warrants thus the desire founded on it. Here it is applied to the teaching of the word, because the soul is walking and to walk in the old creation. Still we can, as down here now, look to the truth of God's nature, when, as I said, He is known, and look to Him thus because thus our dependence on Him, in the fullest and most absolute sense, is expressed, as well as the desire of the renewed heart. I only exist by thy work: make me then walk as disposed in heart and guided by thee. He who made can give understanding. But there was a common bond in thus looking to God—the same disposition of heart which delighted in His being owned and honoured, and was kind to those who did, in the midst of an evil world. They were companions, as Malachi speaks: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another;" and as we see so beautifully in the lovely picture of the hidden ones in the beginning of Luke. There is another trait of this divine work in the soul. God being really known in the soul, it rises up to the justification of Him in His ways, however painful. Thus the heart knows in a double way that His judgments are right. They are His, and we know what He is. He cannot but do rightly, and more, rightly towards us. He is faithful to us in goodness; but then, secondly, we see the rightness of it morally. God ought not to allow evil—above all, not in His people. For their good He could not. Right and wrong are known and judged, and it is God's care over His people which makes Him follow them in their ways.

But the feeling that the chastening comes from God, though it gives submission, gives the desire of His favour, when the submission is complete. Still one desires relief; but a subdued heart, while naturally desiring relief, yet seeks divine favour in it, and comfort from God, not in self-will. "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort." "God who comforteth," says the apostle, "them that are cast down;" and this depends on God's faithful word. On that goodness he counts and looks for it, and this is right. Mere looking for relief is self-will, and may be the means, if we had it, of more sorrow; but a subdued and broken will under chastisement is all right in desiring mercy. It knows this character in God and desires that it may be exercised, if possible; and it can plead its integrity in this case, for the desire is right when submission is complete, so that goodness is felt to be in God. So here, "For thy law is my delight;" and judgment is the portion of the proud. There is the sense that the proud will is the subject of judgment. In the time of grace the Christian desires that will may be changed. Yet he knows faith is not of all. Here the desire that they should be ashamed is according to the righteous character of God. The faithful one keeps himself apart and meditates in God's revealed will. But there is the desire, not only of the favour of God, but that those who fear God should turn to the afflicted one. There is something special in these. It is not that he seeks them, though this be right. There is energy of affiance in God, and he seeks Him only, nor leans on another, but delights in their association with him. It is not

that he was not a companion of those that feared God's name, but here he seeks his comforts from God; and as Job's acquaintance came to him again when the testimony of God was with him, so it is here. Only whatever the comforts of God, his desire is to be maintained in integrity. There is no thought of blessing out of the way of God's word. So shall the servant of God not be ashamed. (Ver. 73—80.)

Ver. 81—88 goes further. The pressure of the power of evil is greater and the cry more earnest, but the word is fully trusted. This blessed revelation of God Himself, of His will and favour, that in which He cannot lie, maintains the heart through all. How precious is it—the fact of having a revelation of Himself as sure as Himself! With this two grounds of appeal—the extremity of distress. He is dried up like a bottle in the smoke; but he dare not forget God's statutes. But a poor, short-lived creature, it was time for God to lay to His hand, if he was to taste of mercy. And the sorrow he was suffering was both the pride of man and was not according to the word which God made good and owned. Yet that word was, all of it, faithful and the persecution wrongful. It had gone very far. He was almost consumed in the land, the very place of promise and God's power; but he forsook not God's precepts. Mercy, too, is looked for as life-giving to himself. It is not only comfort from without, but the restoration of the soul itself, and so is it kept firmly, and with good courage, and confidence, the testimony of God's mouth. Thus

sorrow itself and great pressure, where there is integrity, become a plea with God.

Another aspect of the word is now before the soul—before God in heaven itself. There it is settled for ever. There where He is, it remains in its own character of God's settled and expressed purpose. But God has acted out of heaven, though His purpose be settled in it. His faithfulness, His abiding by what He is and has said, continues through the changing generations of men. Hence when we have His word, we can reckon upon it as sure as what is in heaven, and changes not as God Himself. He established the earth and it abides. All continues as God orders it; for—and it is another important truth—all that does exist is the servant of God. If even He has given them fixed laws, why do they abide in them? Because they depend on Him. They are His servants. All are His servants; but then the soul has its strength in this word. Here is a moral, willing obedience in a renewed heart, and when circumstances were all adverse, it were hard to hold good unless the moral side of the law had its power. God seemed out of the circumstances, but the inward delight in the law of God kept it fast. We have, I think, something more, though this be interesting as a testimony to a renewed heart and true to us. We glory in tribulation, knowing its working in us, having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, as it is witnessed in the gift of the Son, by the Holy Ghost given to us. "All things work together for good to them that love Him." How truly Christ held to God's will, in the highest sense,

against all adverse circumstances—even to wrath. This power of the word in sustaining the heart, in sorrow, in its inward quickening and restoring power in the new man, gives purpose of heart in the consciousness of its divine preciousness. And this leads up to God in the consciousness that we are His. I do not say it creates the thought, but it leads the heart to the consciousness of it; and hence to look to Him who is faithful to save and deliver, and that, as ever here, in the consciousness of integrity. “I have sought thy precepts;” and this must be so. Want of it enfeebles all confidence, though God may have mercy. One sees how constantly the soul is seen in the presence of oppressing enemies; for the remnant will be so in the last days. In one sense we always are, but it applies often in evil days. “The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.” But the soul waits in peace, occupied with God’s testimonies. And this does give peace, and enables the soul to leave all to God. Another pressure of the soul is universal failure. Not that there is no integrity; but the heart would be disposed to say so under the pressure of it. But there is no fulfilling, completing—such is the force of the word—the will of God even in those who undertake to walk in it. But if the heart turn to the word, it has quite another effect. This very failure, though never justified, leads to see how perfect, how complete, and wide God’s commandment is—how it reaches to everything in which man can be engaged—everything in the relation of the creature to God—all moral relations. (Ver. 89—96.)

Ver. 97—104 is the affection and value he has for the law, its known experienced value. He loves God's law in itself. It is of God to him, the revelation of His will. It is his meditation all the day. It is not for the fruit he got from it, nor the wisdom it gave him towards others; he loved it for itself. This characterizes the new man. But its effect when loved for its own sake was to make him wiser than his enemies, however subtle and cunning they may be; there is a path which the vulture's eye has not known—"simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good," which outreaches and baffles the adversaries of God and of the godly man. They can form no estimate of the principles of those who fear God. But this supposes constancy and consistency in them. "They are ever with me." It is divine wisdom, and immediately so that it gives a discernment (because it acts on the soul itself and forms it, and is perfect in every respect) which no human teaching however godly can. This may be very useful as drawn from and leading to the word; but even in the case of the highest gift nothing gained by it is in the faith of the soul with God, until it is learned there; it may be pointed out, interest the heart and mind; but to possess it, it must be learned with God. "They shall be all taught of God." Nothing teaches like the word of God, sought out and searched in holy subjection, and received as a new-born babe. We have thus understanding—divine wisdom—as to our mind and path; so it gives more wisdom than human experience, when God's precepts are kept. It becomes a positive motive; it is preferred to every evil way: we leave them all for that

one which is God's way, because the heart has learned to delight in that. We see, too, how directly the soul connects itself with God in grace here, and has the consciousness that it is of God, gives the word authority. "I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me." This has great weight in the soul, when the power of God's word has been realized. What has been taught of man, may be left for man; but what has been taught of God, will never be left for God; and for whom else shall we leave it? It has the bond of faith and authority for the soul. It comes from and leads to Him. The soul returns to the thought of the sweetness of the word to the taste. These divine communications are the delight of the soul. It is not merely duty, though that is owned, but they are sweeter than honey to the mouth. Through God's precepts the heart itself is formed; learns to discern good and evil. It is not merely obedience to a law, but moral discernment grown up in the heart and will. By reason of use, the heart being attached to God's word, the senses are exercised to discern good and evil, and every false way is hated.

It is remarkable to how many things the word applies. In the last section the heart and affections were engaged in it for its own sake, leading to wisdom. Now it is a guide to our path through the world in which we walk, a very different service. It "is a lamp to my feet and a lantern to my path." This it is. It is the means of a right walk, not merely because it sets the heart right, but as casting light on this world; yet not merely light on this world, such

as it is, but on our path through it. So Christ does not merely detect by practical righteousness, but he that follows Him has the light of life. It shows the path of the law, to us of divine life, through the world. But withal it never loses the character of obedience. Here, of course, in Jewish form: "I have sworn and will perform it: I will keep thy righteous judgments." Yet here, I think, with a decided moral estimate of their character in contrast with man and the world. It is not testimonies here, that is for oneself; righteous judgments are the contrast of God's ways and man's ways. He then turns to his trials through which this path must pass. Affliction is here seen, not as coming from the hand of God, but as affliction. The former he had to learn, and did learn, his will being bound (see ver. 67, 71, 75). So it was the wasting of human strength (ver. 81—83). Here it is viewed as affliction on the path which was lighted up for him by the word; and he looks for strength and revival through the word from God in his soul in that path. But the desire of the heart is not here deliverance, sweet as it may be, but that, in turning to God in this path of righteousness, the free-will offerings of his mouth may be accepted. He can bring, as kept there, and God's thoughts in him, free praises to God, that was not interrupted though affliction. He was brought low—had been astray, but walking now in rectitude of heart, desired that these outgoings of his heart, fruit of the word's power, might be accepted. This is all right. It is not the joy of present salvation. There is all through the consciousness of having been astray; only the heart is set right. The word has power over

his ways ; he feels it as a light in these he has entered on ; and, though in a certain sense under the fruit of his old ways, his heart set right, can go forth in praise ; can it be accepted ? Such is his desire, and surely it would be. But the lowliness of the desire is right, as the desire itself is the fruit of grace. It is not the simple-hearted praise of one in known relationship when it flows forth unhesitatingly as the natural and necessary fruit of blessing. As he praises, so he looks to be taught in God's ways, in contrast with evil. Purpose of heart then characterizes his path. His state of affliction and even danger was great, his soul was continually in his hand, but this did not alter his purpose, he does not forget God's law. He was not so absorbedly in the danger as to put this out of his mind. This is a blessed witness of the power of the link with God which grace gives, and how what is known of God, where faith is in exercise, is paramount to the strongest effects of circumstances and the power which Satan can exercise ! What God gives to the soul is kept in remembrance in spite of it. Craft and subtle wiles were in his path ; and to an upright mind this is trying and painful, but his feet were stedfast in the way. They were set in that way to dishearten in it, but the word had its own power within ; and the full secret of this was, he had taken God's testimonies as his portion for ever. It was not present delight which may influence the mind and be lost as in a moment ; it was a divinely-given estimate of the good and divine truth that was in them. Hence, when really held by grace, it abides, and is not affected by circumstances. The terrors of the enemy and his

wiles make the soul cling more closely to what is of God and truth from Him. They have been and are themselves the rejoicing of the heart; only *we* say more—"nothing shall separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Hence obedience was the purpose of the heart, in its continual practice or as a perpetual bond. So indeed with us. Still we say rather, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Yet even that leads to equally perpetual obedience as our very element and state as men. (Ver. 105—112.)

This section is simple in its character. The soul states its own condition, but then looks out to see God's intervention according to the word, hoping in that, but withal apprehends God's judgment on the disobedient. "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love"—thoughts, I suppose, of man's understanding and reasoning, but God's word he loved. The soul thus turned to God from man's reasonings, God, and God only, is his hiding-place and shield; he hopes in His word. So in turning to men he refuses evil-doers, his mind is made up, he looks to be upholden to the end, and not disappointed in this hope founded on the word. But this desire is more precise; that is, he looks to the Lord to hold him up in the way, and he will be safe. He needs not only to be guarded, but kept morally upright—God's strength and grace to sustain him: otherwise the enemy would have the advantage over him; but thus kept he would constantly heed God's commandments. But he sees God's judgments on those that went away from them. That

by which they sought to beguile men turned out to be emptiness and vanity. Deceit is, as regards men, falsehood—what was vain and false in itself. God rejected them and treated them as nought—as dross. This encouraged the heart in God's testimonies, whose way the heart had kept, in spite of the wicked who puffed at them. But there was fear, and just fear, in the prospect of these judgments. We indeed shall be above them, taken out of the hour of temptation which shall come on all the earth, but encouraged by the word and even by the judgment in looking up to Him from whom it came. And such is ever the case in this psalm. Nothing can be more natural nor more true than this righteous fear. The expression of the apostle (how perfect is Scripture ever!) in view of deeper judgments, if less outwardly terrible, shows that while he would not directly be in it at all, he was not unconscious of it. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It only awoke love (for he would not come into judgment), but he knew its solemnity and terror. It acted in sanctifying power, manifesting him as a present thing to God, but where one passed through it, though not reached by it, fear was right. So "Noah, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house." (Ver. 113—120.)

There are three points in this section. He is fully in the presence of the power of evil, his regard is to Jehovah Himself; the energy of evil in its moral character only attaches him increased to God's word and testimonies. This is the effect of near-

ness to God, because His presence keeps the heart free and confident, and maintains the sense of value for what is in the word. There is, I think, progress here. In ver. 82, it is, "when wilt thou comfort me." This is not so here, though Jehovah's mercy is earnestly sought. He appeals on the ground of righteousness to God's protection, but, with this, if waiting in anxious desire for deliverance, yet for the word of God's righteousness, more, I think, than faithfulness to promised deliverance, as ver. 124 shows. When delivered, his heart would be set free in obedience. But he looked for more than deliverance, or measuring this by the evil he was under. His heart had got to God, and he looked to be dealt with according to His mercy. This is progress too, and, I think, shows consciousness of integrity on which God has set His seal in the heart. When under the sorrows of God's chastening hand, we look for mercy, for deliverance: grace and caring for His favour leads us to it. But it is left to Him, as wholly undeserved; the pressure of the power of evil is felt as deserved, and deliverance from it is mercy enough; but when this has wrought its effect, when the heart has been purified to think more of God, and His holiness and will, and less of the sorrow and evil from without, so that it springs up from under it, so to speak—when the heart is morally restored (and God's place in it in contrast with the sorrow is just the test of it), it measures what it seeks for by God, into whose knowledge, revealed within, it has, so to speak, got back. Hence, in what follows, we see the fruit of this reconciliation with, or restoration to, God. The soul has got into the place of uprightness, and it says,

“I am thy servant.” In such a shape we have not had this yet. Holy desires, confidence, true confession we have had—the general expression, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.” But this is another thing. He presents himself to God directly as being in this relationship and place; “I am thy servant.” It is perfect submission but one who holds the place, God owning him in it, and he knowing that He does. This is saying a great deal. What a ground to ask from God, understanding that we may serve Him! For what a thing it is to serve God rightly such as we are! No doubt it is a great encouragement being able to say “I am thy servant:” so the parable of the talents, where confidence in Him, who had enabled them to serve, was the spring of service. But there all was happy and right. Here the soul was only getting back to say “I am thy servant” after long chastening for wanderings. Verse 126 shows the same growing confidence and taking the blessed title of one free with God. God’s law is precious to Himself; not a tittle can pass from it till all be fulfilled. And when the believer can look out of himself, it is a plea with God. It is time for Thee: “they have made void thy law.” What a principle it is that God’s authority must be maintained, so that the extreme of evil gives the assurance of deliverance. But it makes God’s law exceeding precious. The love to the law (and here this is the expression of God’s will) grows with the growth of the power of evil. We feel more how precious it is, how sure it is, how it comes from God; and what makes His intervention precious as against the power of evil, makes His word precious against the

development of evil itself. There is a double feeling as to this. The commandments of God are loved above all that could be precious to man. There is decision of moral judgment. All God's precepts are taken as absolutely and the whole of what is right, and every way of vain falsehood is hated. The decision of good and evil is absolutely by the word. (Ver. 121—128.)

The soul has now got into a place where it not only obeys, and tastes the goodness of the law, but estimates its value in itself. There is intelligence. "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them." God's words getting into the heart give light: even to the simple they give understanding. Thus they become to the heart the subject of earnest desire; the soul is engaged with the excellency of them. It was a thirst produced by them; not a filling of the heart, though a desire formed by them. There may be intelligence, obedience as regards the path we walk in on the way, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, a moral forming and filling the desire, but the satisfying it will be only when the promises are fulfilled and God takes His place, of whose mind His testimonies speak. So with us, though in a higher way; for it is Christ, and a heavenly cry Himself. Hence the cry is for this mercy ordering his steps, delivering from oppression; and one sees he is in the midst of evil—only looks for God's face to shine upon him, and to be taught. He has deep grief, because the law is not kept; but this seems to flow more here from the sense of the excellency of

the law, than from love to the persons who failed. (Ver. 129—136.)

But the righteousness of God's law, and the key it gives to God's ways, leads to the recognition of what Jehovah is who gave it. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." That is the way Jehovah deals with a case, or the moral decision which He utters as to it. His testimonies He had commanded according to righteousness and faithfulness. This characterized them. The contempt of Jehovah's words had roused his zeal so as to consume him; he became as an earnest adversary, in collision with evil yet in power, as Christ in the temple. But whatever the evil around, there is in one rest and comfort for the heart when the word of God is known and loved. "Thy word is very pure," try it ever so, it is only more proved to be purity itself; the heart loves it as its resting place and joy. And it gives greatness and courage to the heart. One may be small and despised, yet one has the courage to keep God's precepts in spite of the power of the world or its scorn, for they are God's words—what God is as judging evil and good; He is everlasting. His righteousness is everlasting, and His law truth. It is not here, surely, the truth that came along with grace by Jesus Christ; but in the presence of all else on the earth, which is a lie, that is truth, true religion, God's mind about everything, in contrast with man's thoughts and all he sets up to be; and God will make His judgment therein revealed, good for ever. (Comp. Isaiah xlii. 3.) It is not the absolute revelation of God as He is; that

is in Christ. But it is the revelation of God's judgment as to man as to good and evil, and that will be made good for ever. Executed judgment will be verified. Those that have sinned against the law will be judged by the law; just as those that heard Christ's word will be judged by it. The tribulation of the power of evil will take hold of the remnant, but there will be the comfort of the commandments being their delight in the inner man. So we in all sorrow, in the evil day in a yet higher way. And now he arrives at the point we have touched upon. "The righteousness of Jehovah's testimonies is everlasting." They come from God, His will and judgment concerning man; and that He will make good for ever. What he has to look for is understanding; then he will live, guided in the path where life is found, found even when the wicked are cut off: yea, never so found here below as then. This is true of government as to us, yea, even of Christ ("as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love"). As to life, it was in Him, and in our case we have it by Him: so all that live; but it was only brought to light by the gospel. What was presented to them as the governmental way of life, and will be so literally at the end, is the governmental way of blessing for us here below. (Ver. 137—144.)

Here the soul expresses, and expresses to God, the sense of its dependence. This is an important point. We are dependent, know ourselves to be dependent, and remain quiescently so. This shows want of interest in that for which we are dependent, and want of reckoning on God's faithful love. If we

did, we should cry. "If thou knewest and who it is thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given." Here he cries with his whole heart, and declares his purpose of obedience to Jehovah's enactments. Then he looks for deliverance that, having, he may keep them, no hindrance and his heart so disposed. There was diligence in the cry, too, for the word, which led his heart, was trusted, but it was not only for the cry to be delivered he was diligent, but to meditate in Jehovah's word itself. Deliverance, no doubt, was sought, but the word itself is loved. All this goes together necessarily in the soul. Deliverance is to be with God, freed from transgressors of His law, from rebellious oppressors. The meditation of the law is to be with God, and the word which makes us hope is the testimonies we delight in. Still he looked, as we shall in true-heartedness, in distress (so did Christ Himself), to be heard, and according to the kindness of Jehovah, but with the desire that the work of power might be wrought in him, to be quickened, receive life according to the mind of God, that is, which had its nature and desires according to God's judgment. He does not speak as dead, but of moral quickening. We know it must be a new life. The sense of the present power of evil was upon his soul. Jehovah only was his refuge he must draw near to. This is beautiful, the true only resource which gives a perfect principle. "I waited patiently for the Lord"—perfect submission to His will; no deliverance sought until it was so, till His will brought it; but faith knew Jehovah was near and the path plain. All His commandments were the one true path of security and of

God. Jehovah's testimonies were founded for ever. They could not change; they will be made good. Only God must come in, and that was his cry and demand here. These verses are a cry for deliverance, but it must be, if true and of God, according to His word and making good for ever its truth, in its moral testimonies, and as the foundation of hope. (Ver. 145—152.)

The soul of him who opens out his heart to God is much more in presence of the persecutors and enemies, God's deliverance and of the need of help, than in the beginning. There what the law was for the heart was more in view. So it ever is. With Christ the word of blessing begins; at the end he is in presence of the enemies and looks for deliverance. So Paul: he begins with carrying out of the blessing; at the close he has to do with persecution and desertion too. So ever, when good is persevered in, because the testimony of God in every shape and faithfulness draw out opposition, and the place of the word in the world, not in the heart, is more distinctly felt. Still there is no uncertainty of heart. Salvation is needed, *i.e.*, present deliverance, but it is far from the wicked. But where righteousness of heart and way is, the affliction is a ground of pleading with God. But, with deliverance, quickening also is sought, the practical power of life according to the word and revealed judgments of God. Righteousness is sought in liberty and power when righteousness is loved in the heart. External security in the word is sought, but internal power too. In the thought of Jehovah's tender mercies quickening is sought according to

God's judgments. The felt goodness of God leads always to the desire of His will. When the purity and blessedness of His word is thought of with delight, His lovingkindness is thought of as that in which He should quicken us. His word is so precious, we look to grace to form us freely into it. Truth and perpetuity characterize the word. I question whether "from the beginning" is the sense, and if not rather the sense the whole contents, but cannot now say. (Ver. 153—160.)

The soul goes something further in this portion. The heart stands in awe of God's word—a godly feeling. It comes with God's authority; yet he rejoices in it as one that has found great spoil. This, *i.e.*, the connection of these two, characterizes the true, full apprehension of the word. It is God's—a most solemn thing; the soul trembles, as it is said, "at thy word." It comes with divine and absolute authority; but as it is God's word, and we have a new nature, and are taught of God, we delight in an unspeakable way in that which is of and reveals Him. Nor is there any difference as to good and evil, the law being taken as the truth or true measure of what is right. He hates and loves—hates lying and loves the law; not merely what is right, but God's authoritative expression of it. And all this begets praise, because the heart rises up to the source of these things. It is not merely that we have what is good; we have it from God. He praises Him in the relationship he was in with Him. These are Jehovah's ways with His people. But the expressed will of God has

another power when really received : the heart is in peace. It is a known perfect communication from God with which the heart is satisfied, and, if it trusts in God, circumstances cannot stumble the heart then, because it has and enjoys the mind of God which no circumstances can affect. There is no stumbling. I have what is perfect from God, know it to be so, and enjoy it in a new nature. That is affected by nothing without.

Another element of a godly walk besides obedience is found here. "All my ways are before thee," but this leads naturally to obedience : but the heart and conscience are all before God. It is a most important principle. So Paul, "We are made manifest to God ;" only this goes further. He looked at complete, final judgment of men, and for that knew the righteousness of God. And it was not merely his ways before God as to his earthly government. He himself was manifested, as men would be manifested, before the judgment-seat of Christ, who judges as Son of man—perfect, every secret emotion, the heart itself brought out. (Ver. 161—168.)

When men have gone astray, cries and supplications go first, praises and testimony after. Still the cry and supplication is a godly one, though it arise from need. He seeks understanding, intelligence, not exactly of the word, but according to it. It is that wisdom in discernment which those taught in God's word have. They see clear in what is before them. No doubt it is God's mind and will they discern ; but they discern in circumstances. They walk

not as fools, but as wise. The word has formed their judgment. Then the soul looks to be heard and delivered. Still its delight is in God's revealed will. It will praise when really taught them of God—for thankfulness comes first—for it is our own portion first of all; and from God; then we have liberty to speak of it to others. This is an important principle also: no testimony, no preaching, no teaching, even if the matter of it be all right, is right teaching, when the soul is not filled *for itself* first from God. We must drink for ourselves that rivers may flow. Indeed all else dries up the soul. "That thy profiting may appear," says the apostle. It is only fresh, good, and powerful, when it is the soul's own portion first with God. The help of God's hand, the longing for *His* salvation, is not merely that we may be delivered. That *may* be sought, if only it be sought, in some bye way, not God's way. But when the heart is in God's precepts, only God's salvation is sought. So Christ: "I waited patiently for the Lord." There was submission to God's will. God could not come in till His will was done, so that His glory should be made good in coming in—till His counsels were fulfilled and perfect judgment wrought by His coming in. And this the soul had learnt to desire, though often out of sorrow. There was Christ's perfectness in this respect—there our path in submissive uprightness. Then the soul praises God, God Himself in it, and God's own judgments help us. This is a principle of great perfectness and great blessing. Yet here, though brought to this, yea because brought to this, the people then—some when occasion arises—acknow-

ledge that they had gone astray (for that is their case and is the condition of the whole Psalm, the law being now written, in desire at least, in their hearts), and gone astray like a sheep wholly lost. The humbled and repentant remnant (and, I repeat, we, when we have wandered from God), look for God's seeking them, for they were upright in heart, mindful of His commandments. This gives the key to the whole Psalm—Israel gone astray, the desire and love of God's law in their hearts, but *their* circumstances and condition not yet set right by Jehovah's deliverance, but their hearts set right that He may come in His word, and His deliverance being their desire, and His word the ground of their hope. In the restoring of any soul we have an analogous process, specially when under chastisement. It does not seek comfort without restoration, where uprightness of heart is. Only if we know the Lord, we stand in Him as our righteousness. This they could not speak of as established or their hearts in it. They were only looking for it when delivered. It had been prophesied of: Jehovah would be their righteousness. Gracious and true as this is, our place is infinitely higher. (Ver. 169—176.)

I have thus closed this running notice of Psalm cxix., of which I feel the poverty. But I feel every day more, that, true and applicable as this may all be to the government of our hearts, we are far away from Christian ground here. Nothing makes it more sensible than the Psalms. Neither the Father, nor divine righteousness, is known in them, nor that whole

class of feelings, blessed and holy as those feelings are, which flow from them. May we remember we are Christians!

Psalm cxx. These psalms of degrees all treat the circumstances of the restored but undelivered remnant; our part now is to enquire into their moral bearing. The first psalm declares their state and resource. "In my distress I cried unto Jehovah, and he heard me." The character of evil is spoken of: deceit and hostile power. It was grief of heart to have constantly to say to this. But such was his condition. He was dwelling in the midst of evil. It was his sorrow, and distress to him. He sought peace: they were for war. It is the spirit and character of the Christian in the midst of the power of evil, which, when called out by the presence of good, shows itself thus. Judgment, however, would come on the false tongue. It is the simple expression of the grief of a soul, peace-loving and peaceable, having to do with the wicked deceit of man. The resource is calling on the Lord, who hears.

Psalm cxxi. Where should the soul look? To the hills? (Comp. Jer. iii. 23.) Help was to be found in the Lord. I suppose it is: shall I look to the hills? My help is in Jehovah, and Jehovah would surely keep me. He slumbers not, nor sleeps. The point is, Direct me away from all false and vain hopes, and set forth the one true object and resource, surely to be reckoned upon, and reckoned upon to keep all evil away. Only we must now note that the literal application of this is not now just. Christ has been reck-

oned among transgressors; and we have to go on not looking for absolute deliverance: yet we are to be assured that the hairs of our head are numbered. God withdraws not His eyes from the righteous now; but we do not look in result to be kept for earth, as the Jew rightly will in the path of faithfulness. Yet our Father does watch over us with unceasing vigilance. We may be at peace under the shadow of His wings. Our instruction is, in the midst of every evil, to look only to the Lord.

Psalm cxxii. The Lord's house, *i.e.*, His presence and worship in the place of His rest, is our desire (for us, heaven). But love to that place of God's dwelling is accompanied by the sense that all this is united in blessing. It is loved, not only for the Lord's own sake, the centre of all, but for all the saints' sake, for our brethren's and companions' sake. This cannot be the first thing, but it is the first circle round the true centre—love to all saints. Heaven is loved, but it is loved for the sake of the dwelling-place of Him with whom we have to do—our Father's house. If heaven is dear to me, that is what especially makes it so. We desire even the Church's good now for the same reason. We do take our place in heavenly places. They are bright and holy: we rejoice in it. But the house of God is the centre there for our hearts.

Psalm cxxiii. The heart waits on God for deliverance. So we. There is pressure on the heart by the presence of the power of evil. We wait continually upon God for the coming of the blessed Lord to remove it all.

The contempt of the proud will cease. All will be wholly changed to the soul's rest.

Psalm cxxiv. God *alone* keeps His people. The great point all through here is to look to Him alone. And it is our part along our path, and specially in these last days. All other refuges will give in something or another. A wrong direction to the soul will lead it into a false path, makes its state less holy in purpose, less pure and wise in walk. God can make use of everything, because His motive to bless us is always in Himself, and He disposes of everything. Whereas we are formed in heart by the objects we have, and must adapt ourselves to what we lean on.

But then (Psalm cxxv.) trusting in the Lord is perfectly sure. A divine and almighty hand secures us. We know from many passages, the Lord may see good to let us suffer, but not a hair of our head shall perish. When His time is come, the rod of the wicked shall not be on the lot of the righteous. He may let us suffer for our God, or for His name's sake; but even so it is not according to the will and power of the wicked, but according to His own. Only this supposes one walking in His ways.

Psalm cxxvi. We find here a partial restoration, leading to look for full blessing. God may have delivered the soul, too, from the alienation and sorrow of its evil days, when it has gone wrong, backslidden, without its being yet fully restored. God comes in in goodness on repentance, encourages us, brings

blessings we never could have hoped for, re-establishes the soul in the place of blessing, makes His favour so far manifest, so that we feel He is for us with great joy. Yet it is not the peaceful flow of favour in communion with Him, as if there was nothing but favour naturally enjoyed in the place we are in. Just as to Jacob at Peniel, God blessed him, but would not reveal His name—blessed, but did not reveal Himself. The soul gets the blessing from God, finds so far His favour; but it is not in communion, nor does it receive the communication of what He is, so as to be able, going forth from Him into the world, to be a witness for Him in it. This is our true place. No doubt to be blessed and restored, when we have gone astray, is great mercy; but our place is to be peacefully in communion where God has set us with Himself, and thus the vessels of His revelation of Himself to others. And this, in the Jewish form of it, is what our psalm expresses. But there is another principle also. In a world where the power of evil is, sowing time, in which we meet the evil in possession with the word, is a time of tears. "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them." (John xvii.) Christianity was sown in the tears of the Son of God. It is the fruit of the travail of His soul which He will see in that day. So in all service (and we must make up our minds to it), where there is to be real blessing, there must be the sorrow of the world's opposition, and even in the Church the greater sorrow of trials, of failure and shortcoming where we desire to see Christ fully represented. But, going forth with the precious word, we may reckon on bringing our sheaves back with us.

Psalm cxxvii. This psalm tells us that God alone gives the increase. All labour, all toil is vain, except the Lord Himself and His hand be in it to work and bless; as the people said of Jonathan, he hath wrought with God this day. But thus the diligent efforts of evil-doers result in nothing, and (blessed be His name!) He gives rest and peace to His beloved without all the toil and labour with which the reckless men of this world seek it in vain.

Psalm cxxviii. But if the Lord's blessing alone can keep or give success, they who fear the Lord can count upon it. And this is true. It does not exclude persecution, nor does it exclude discipline and the exercise of faith. But when we walk in the fear of God, we are in the path of peace even here. "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" It does not mean a prosperity which consists in gratifying our lusts, but in the peaceful enjoyment of divine favour here below. But there is one joy above all others, here spoken of as the then fruit of godliness—the seeing the Lord's people, and the Lord's habitation, in prosperity and peace, manifestly blessed of God. This, as regards this world, is the highest, most constant wish of the heart. Blessing shall come to us out of God's dwelling-place, the place of faith on the earth, before the final temple of glory is built and we see blessing resting on it. The details are, of course, Jewish, present outward blessings. This is the final blessing promised in the place of distress. And on this faith counts in the evil day and time of distress. Joyful to receive any

anticipation of it in the Church of God now, and in this detail it applies now, we know that the peace will be perfect when God shall have accomplished His counsels. We do look for it before, but we are sure of it then, for He wills the blessing of the Church. Zion is the place of faith. It is not the temple on Moriah, but where David placed the ark when he had brought it back. The Lord is owned there. So we; we have the blessing in the seat of grace in power; we shall have perfect rest.

Psalm cxxix. The soul looks back and sees God's faithful dealings all along the road—a blessed thought! How sweet it is to turn back and see, while we were obliged to walk by faith, and it was as though He beheld not, the eye of the Lord has unceasingly waited on us and ordered all things! It is the effect of integrity to be able to do this. It is true that he who could say, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of the life of my pilgrimage," could also say, "The angel that redeemed me from all evil." And it is blessed to see His faithfulness, even when we have failed, when our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God. Still, it is another thing when in the path of God through trials and difficulties (perhaps doubts and fears of success as to service and making good what was committed to us), we can trace the good hand of God all through. And here sorrow and trial are looked at, the hostility of God's enemies against God's people. But it was in vain. God, even if He had chastised, had been faithful, and now had manifested His righteousness, faithful to His

own ways and promises, the expectation He had raised, the trust He had called for. He had cut asunder the cords of the wicked. We may expect it. He will chastise if needed, though He does not afflict willingly; but He will make good the expectation of faith, He will deliver and bless; and the expectation of the proud shall be as the grass upon the housetop.

Psalm cxxx. The last psalm considered the sorrow and suffering of those that are the Lord's, and the pleasure of the wicked in their oppression. This refers to the chastisement and evil to which I have alluded above in commenting on it. The sorrows have their character to the soul, not in the oppression of the wicked, but in the consciousness of sin with God. The oppression is unrighteous, the pleasure of wickedness; but while, when God restores, we can see this, yet restoration is with God and in looking to His mercy, owning—and yet in spite of what we have deserved—and looking, with a heart which has the sense of its sin, to His deliverance. For here it is not forgiveness in the sense of justification, though allied to it, but of government. But it is the question of the Lord's marking iniquity, not of oppression, though that were the outward rod that brought iniquity upon the soul from God's hand. But the Lord is cried to. No turning, to gain release, to the oppressor; that is in character apostacy, and accepting the power of evil and making terms with it. The soul is in the depths, but it refers it in integrity to its sin, cries to the Lord in faith as one who forgives; waits for the Lord to come in when He is pleased, so

as that the deliverance is righteous, and His favour too, and His word is trusted in. "Let Israel hope in the Lord," he concludes, and this glorifies His character as above evil and Himself good; and till deliverance has that character, it is not looked for. With Him is mercy and plenteous redemption; mercy to the faulty soul and plenteous redemption. Thus there is truth in the inward parts, and God's true character and His active power in complete deliverance are known. How far better than compromise with evil itself!

Psalm cxxxi. gives us another character of the returning soul—the soul right with God. It is not speculative or haughty in mind, does not reason about matters. It walks in meekness as a weaned child and waits for deliverance: it hopes in the Lord. But activity of mind as to what ought to be and managing matters, which are really in God's hand, does not go together with true hoping in Him in lowliness of heart. And this is often a great trial of faith when we see the power of evil.

Psalm cxxxii. This psalm is important as showing the position which all these psalms of degrees occupy. We have, indeed, the house, as in Psalms cxxii. and cxxvii., the former of which seems to refer to the temple; yet I think hardly there as yet accepted and built of God, as Psalm cxxvii. shows. The remnant were rejoiced at the thought of going to the house and Jerusalem, and we have it clothed with the thoughts of faith. But the Lord had not yet built it. For all

the songs of degrees are the expression of the godly ones' thoughts and feelings between their external restoration, when the sour grape is ripening in the flower (Isaiah xviii.), and the full restoration to the Lord's enjoyed blessings, their enemies being cut off by judgment. It is all Isaiah xviii., but with this we have Zion and David—the interference of power in grace, connecting the hearts of the remnant with Jehovah as a present thing, and giving the present testimony that His mercy endureth for ever. For David placed the ark on Mount Zion, and had this song first sung after the ark had been delivered from the Philistines, and brought up from the house of Obed-edom. Israel in responsibility had failed, and God had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand. Now, it was brought out, and sovereign grace, for His name's sake (first by a prophet, and next properly by power in grace, by a king), acted in behalf of Israel, and gave a new link and ground of relationship in the ark on Mount Zion. This was not the temple, the place of settled peace and prosperity; but it was a link with God renewed to faith, David being the centre. David's son, as the true Solomon, would give in time the full blessing; for David did not, after all, build the house. So the place of rest here is in the heart and in hope; what we have is the person on whom the blessing is founded. (Compare 2 Sam. vii. and 1 Chron. xvii.) We have David brought before us as the great dispensational root and characteristic, consequently of the blessing, but the house is the subject, a dwelling-place for the mighty one of Jacob. Hence, also, it is not wilderness blessings. It is not,

“ Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered; ” and, “ Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel. ” (Numb. x. 3, 5, 6.) It is “ Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength. ” It is Zion which is God’s rest for ever. This it is He has chosen; there He will make the horn of David to bud. The person of David’s Son, royal grace in Zion, is thus what characterizes the blessing. Whatever house is built, David and his trouble is remembered, not Solomon the typical son of David, and his house. In truth, Solomon’s faith was personally every way inferior. He went to Gibeon, not to Zion; to the empty tabernacle, not to the ark until afterwards. David’s heart was on the house. It was all right. But God built his as He replied to him. It is the personal grace of Christ that is the centre of all, and the faith that, when the outward blessing was not yet there in peace, formed the true link with God.

What a blessing for the remnant then, and this is in principle our case now, and especially in these latter days! His tabernacle and His footstool are more than the temple. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the tabernacle, never the temple, is taken as the figure and shadow of the blessings of faith, though not so the very image. Still God’s rest is *desired*, *i.e.*, that He should rest, and so we worship in His house.

Let us see a little in what particulars this is brought out. The answer of God is in everything beyond the desire. There are three requests. The first is that Jehovah should arise into His rest, that Jehovah’s priests may be clothed with righteousness. This became them, it was the right desire. The righteous

Lord loveth righteousness. His countenance beholds the upright. How often had they been otherwise! The second is, that Jehovah's favour and blessing might be such that the saints might shout for joy. The third is, that for David's sake Jehovah should not turn away the face of His anointed. As to David there is the positive promise, and the conditional one. The answer then comes. Zion will be His rest for ever. He hath desired and chosen it; her priests will be clothed with salvation, her saints shout aloud for joy. There the horn of David will bud, his crown flourish on him—the true David and David's Son, the Beloved.

And now note the principles. The afflictions of faith are the true path of blessing. A rest for God is the desire of the new nature; for sin, disorder only has disturbed that rest, and note that rest which has its place in His relationship with His creatures, for in Himself He ever rests; but He must rest in holiness and love, in the state of the creatures, with whom He has to do, being according to His mind and love. This the heart desires. It is *God's* rest, nor can the heart rest till then. But this is according to the way of His presence; in Israel covenant-promise and governmental glory; for us our Father's house, God's rest according to His own nature, holy and without blame before Him in love, and in glory. That it is in the Beloved, the true David, the Anointed, the Christ—this both secures and gives the true character of the blessedness in, with, and like Him. But note, that simplicity of faith, its proper energy, leaning not on the past which is ruined or to be forgotten, but on what is before us as its object and on only dependence,

on divine leading as to it—simplicity of faith, wrought as it is by God, leads into the place of God's desire and God's election. David brought the ark to Zion, but Zion God had chosen, had desired for His habitation. This in us is identified with a new creature, being made partakers of the divine nature. In this faith lives, and acts, and judges. It is in the saint a new nature, living on Christ as its object and food. And it learns and knows the place of God's rest herein. For David and Zion are really identified each in its own way with one another. Thus our new nature, God's desire, God's election, God's rest, and Christ Himself all coincide. But the place of Christ's glory, which is God's rest, where He dwells, God owns as His for ever. "This is my rest." And faith looks at all connected with it, priests and saints as God's—"thy priests" and "thy saints." But then He, taking Christ for the resting place of His glory, and contemplating the place of His dwelling and rest and habitation (*i.e.*, for us, the Church which is His habitation, His tabernacle, His city holy Jerusalem)—He having thus so associated Himself with her (comp. Eph. iii. 21; and Rev. xxi. 3), looks at the priests and saints as her priests and her saints, thus specially showing His delight in her, His identification with her. His priests are her priests, His saints her saints, as that to which they belong. *Then* it is He sets up the glory of David's horn, the glory of the power, and rule of the Beloved; and this (while David is the foundation, His everlasting glory the result) is the subject of the Psalm—Zion—for us, the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is His rest, His dwelling place for ever, His desire,

what He has chosen. And if He fully glorifies His Anointed, as He will and must do, it is there He will do it. Though His name flourish in Himself (for His person must be the ground and centre of glory), yet its place is in the city of grace and glory. Her priests, her saints will have salvation and abundant joy. One cannot say her David or her Christ; that would be out of place. His dignity is our personal glory, but it dwells here as the place with which it is associated, and all the rest can be called hers. The glory is His, the place of it the chosen city of God—for us, the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem.

There, too (Psalm cxxxiii.), blessing and unity are, but here after the analogy of Aaron; the lowest skirt of his garment partakes of the anointing of the head, and this one Spirit makes the unity according to which (Eph. iv. 3) they ought to dwell together. The blessing, too, was there. The abundant dew of Hermon, *i.e.*, abundant as on Hermon, fell upon the mountain of Zion. This fellowship was rich in blessing from above, as the desired refreshing of abundant dew fell in the everlasting hills. For in Zion Jehovah had promised the blessing. The anointing of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and the refreshing of goodness from on high in abundance, shall accompany the unity of Israel in Zion. How far more deeply true was it on the Church, when the anointing of the Holy Spirit and His full ministration of grace by the word revealing heavenly things enriched and gladdened the unity in Christ which that Spirit formed! Alas, where is it now? Yet it is our privilege.

These psalms of degrees close by a summons to bless Jehovah. (Ps. cxxxiv.) There in the sanctuary they were to bless; on the other hand blessing is pronounced out of Zion upon him who has gone through the sorrows and endured. It is Melchisedec blessings, only in Jehovah's sanctuary, and out of Zion where grace has set power to bless. It is the full crowning expression of the result of these psalms; the points, able to bless Jehovah in His own sanctuary, and the godly man blessed out of long desolate Zion—but where Jehovah now dwells. The city over which Jesus could weep, whose dust Jehovah's servants had remembered, was now the seat of Jehovah's sanctuary, and, what was more, of Jehovah's presence. This will not be fully ours till we are in our Father's house. But then, though praise will surely go up unceasingly, we shall not have need to call on others to bless. We are kings and priests, as, indeed, we bless now as such in spirit, and as more than that, as dear children, holy and beloved. It is in the holiest of all, where no Jewish priest could enter to bless even in figure, that we stand in reality, and bless Him in whose presence and light we stand there. Night we cannot say then, for "there shall be no night there;" now we praise in Spirit here, saying, "the night is far spent." And as to our souls, the darkness passes, the true light now shines. But it is in the holiest we bless, in God's own presence, and hence in heaven. We may well say He has set us in a wealthy place. And while on earth it will then be Jehovah the Creator who will bless out of the chosen place of grace in power, He who gives eternal life, and in whose knowledge it is possessed, blesses us as brought

home into the possession of it, in the seat of the unclouded knowledge of it, where what He is, as the power and source of it, is fully displayed. To know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent is eternal life. The Father has life in Himself, and, in the Son, man here below has life. He was it with the Father before the world. We have it in Him, and there in that which that life is, and therefore enjoys, as a holy being enjoys holiness, a loving being love, we shall possess the divine fulness in God of that which we delight in. And it is the God of redeeming love, the Father and the Son, not simply the Creator of heaven and earth. Such is our place. We enjoy it now by the Holy Ghost, but it is now but in earthen vessels. Still we are called to be "holy and without blame before Him in love," and children with the Father, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The accomplishment of promises in grace is much, the enjoyment of communion is more. The Psalms of degrees are the progress of Israel in the land, out of sorrow and through sorrow, to the full blessing in Zion, which forms the crowning result, Jehovah being there.

Psalm cxxxv. gives the more general praise of Israel, not so much priestly praise, but then it consequently brings out the place of the people as such with God. They are in the courts of God, there as His people, praise Him, for He is good, and it is pleasant. We do praise Him as priests in the sanctuary. But we praise Him also as on earth in the sense of His goodness, and praise is pleasant. His name is known; that is,

His revelation of Himself, so as to be known to us. But there is more : we sing, as we do all else, as the elect of God, holy and beloved—an immense privilege. It is not only that God is good, what He is in nature ; but we are the special objects of His favour and delight. This, when known, is an immense delight. As people of God we know it, and for ourselves as part of it, but, when personally brought home, it is of divine delight to be the peculiar treasure of God, and that not as a national election but according to His own nature, the personal objects of His delight. It is known, it is evident, as of pure grace. It is what gives it its value. Faith recognizes it as true, rests in it. It is a doctrine of Scripture—the faith, but in relationship it is great delight. But we know withal that He is great, and though we know Him as Father, yet we do know Him, realize His presence, as exceeding great, and as supreme above all ; and the heart delights in this. Our God is above all. It is more general for us than for all Israel who could speak of other gods, but the absoluteness and supremacy of God for the heart remains true. He is sovereign in His actings everywhere, a comfort when we have to traverse in weakness a world of wickedness. He disposes of everything. He has smitten the power of evil and brought out His people, and brought them into a heavenly inheritance whence the powers of darkness are expelled. This is true for us now, as in Ephesians iv. and Colossians ii., though not for the possession of the inheritance. And we reckon fully on the final result. And it is looked for presently, though no day or hour be known. This as to Israel is brought out here

Y

in a remarkable passage. The original promise in which God appeared to Moses as taking up Israel for ever in grace, His name of memorial for ever, is cited ; and the prophetic declaration in Deuteronomy xxxii. of what He would do when Israel had wholly utterly failed—judge His people and repent Himself concerning His servants. The idols are nought. It is in the place of royal rest that praise is found, the Jerusalem where Jehovah dwells. And so for us, the Church and even the individual saint knows itself as the heavenly dwelling-place of God, the bride ; and now we dwell in Him and He in us, as we know by the Spirit, and collectively too are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit ; but it is as a new heavenly thing, as that which is heavenly, as that which remains.

Psalm cxxxvi. celebrates a blessed principle in connection with Zion, the place of sovereign grace in power. Our having the place of praise and thanksgiving depends on this, that His mercy endures for ever. Ichabod had been written on Israel ; the ark where the blood was to be placed on the day of atonement, that Israel might have a place with God, was taken—as far as Israel went, lost. But God's mercy endures for ever, and David, so soon as he sets the ark on Zion, establishes this song there, celebrating the alone Jehovah, the creator and wonder-doer of His people. His mercy does endure for ever for us. Christ and the Father's love in every way secure our blessing and ourselves for it. But while glory awaits us, and He will confirm us to the end, we possess that in which He confirms us, even eternal life as His children. The

life we have and know it, the inheritance we have nothing of as yet, but are assured of and being kept for it. And in this wilderness we can abundantly say, His mercy endureth for ever. But it is only along the road we say it, because we have eternal life. Only if a soul wanders from Him and is restored, it can say with special application, His mercy endures for ever.

Psalm cxxxvii. There is a double application of this to our souls. Nothing can make us forget the heavenly Jerusalem, the house where God and the Lamb are the temple, and where they dwell. All the glory of the world is nothing compared with that heavenly home. But the Church on earth, which will be it in glory, arrests our hearts; we see it desolate and her walls cast down, her children scattered or in captivity. But the saint's heart is still there. The outward worldly glory of Babylon cannot efface the attachment and love of heart to the Church as God founded it on earth; and even the judgment of those who corrupted it is looked for with joy by the Christian. But of the individuals a Christian could not do that—it would be revenge—but of the whole power of evil.

Psalm cxxxviii. But the enduring of God's mercy for ever brings out a blessed apprehension in the heart of many other truths, which make God's character known, and His word precious as revealing it and as sure, so that the whole heart praises. And this is a very important element. Not will for some blessing, not even thankfulness for that which we do

desire, while the main current of the heart is elsewhere than with God ; but such a learning of God as makes the whole heart praise Him, and this is always in circumstances which makes the whole heart want Him (as it will be with Israel in the latter day). This may be learnt gradually by emptying of self, or in times of deep trial when help fails, and thus self is broken up within. Hence, too, when God is thus known, He is praised in presence of all the pretentious power of this world, which seemed to make those that leaned upon it happy and enriched. We praise with the whole heart, we praise before the gods, all within ; all without has given place to God known and revealed in His word. Lovingkindness and truth are the great traits in which He is known, just as grace (a fuller word) and truth came by Jesus Christ, who is the living Word. There they came, and we know their fulness and perfectness in Him ; here they are learned by experience, and it is lovingkindness in nature and circumstances, not infinite and perfect grace in itself. But God had here made good His word. His faithfulness had exalted itself, and taught the saint how right he was in trusting God when all seemed contrary. But this involved His goodness also in caring for us and persevering in His love in spite of failure. His word taught us to trust in Him, was in its nature a call to it, revealed His goodness to sinners to this effect, but called us to wait on Him to this effect, to trust Him though it set us in a lowly place, apparently far off from all our desires and left evil in power to try our faith. So it was with Christ and those who followed Him.—But there is

another point. The saint led by this word, and guided in his thoughts by it, cried and was answered; and, before the public answer came forth by power, God strengthened with strength in his soul. How true this is of Christ even, and of the Christian! But this gives the assurance that all shall have to own the power which we have trusted in the time of darkness. We have had God's mind, following Jesus, done God's will (by power) before power came in to deliver and make that will good. But every knee shall bow to Him to whom our knees have gladly bowed. But they shall praise and bless His name (for those are looked at here) who own that power truly in that day. Thus the word revealed God as the object of trust, and there His faithfulness came to make good all that He had led the heart to trust in. The word gave both—revealed God and gave that to hope in which it was fulfilled. This brought out another character of goodness. The Lord, high as He was, had respect to the lowly. He is too high to make a difference of man's exaltation. If we look down from heaven, all is flat upon the earth. But there are high and low here, and God thinks of the lowly. Trouble, too comes on the faithful, but the goodness and the promise give the issue according to the word. Nor is this quite all. God will perfect what concerns us, make good in blessing in and to us all that was in His heart, and which He had revealed in His word, in relationship and communion with Himself. Over all, through all difficulties, and, beyond all, His mercy endureth for ever.

Psalm cxxxix. But it is not without the most thorough searching out of all that we are. But this, where there is confidence, is a great grace; for He who alone can do it, and does it according to His own perfectness, does it to purify us from all inconsistent with Himself—His own mind, and hence with our blessedness, which is in communion with Himself. I do not think that the psalm goes beyond creation and God's knowing perfectly His own work, though there may be a known analogy to the Church. It is the conscience brought into the sense of God's perfect acquaintance with everything in us. All is under His eye and He actually sees everything. It is not only He sees, but He searches. He is there with us, however offended, in all our ways. This produces uneasiness. Adam innocent could not have thought of it. There was no reflex act in himself to judge how he was going on; no thought consequently of what God had to see. He enjoyed and blessed or might have done so. But where there is a knowledge of good and evil, a reflex act on what passes consequently in our hearts, the eye of God that reaches all its recesses, knows all, makes us uneasy—*i.e.*, makes the disturbed conscience uneasy. God is everywhere and in every corner of my heart, and darkness and light are all the same. The very fact makes us uneasy now in our natural state; for fear and moral fear has entered in and is become a part of our nature. Still, where He is known, there is confidence, and here integrity of heart gives confidence. Not here the peaceful confidence of known redemption and living in a nature the fulness of which is

Christ Himself; but the state of heart which gives confidence, as being the integrity of the new nature. And this knowledge which searches the conscience is drawn from creative power. We are the work of His hands. Here it is man as man, so that the earth out of which he was fashioned at first is as the womb out of which we were born. God has formed us, be it in the womb of dust or of our mother, the place where we were nothing, before we were. The same God has ever thought of us along the road, and here confidence has been *acquired*, though thus acquired it reaches to all God's creative knowledge and power. If He sees in the dark, He keeps in the dark when we awake, and so it will be in resurrection too. We are still with Him—He knows our thoughts, but thinks of us when we think not. Thus if God knows all our thoughts, and long before His are precious to us, to such the putting down of evil is the sure expectation, yea the call for judgment on the haters of the Lord, whom we therefore abhor. Christians do not desire their ruin as souls, nor does God; but looked at as wicked, as haters of the Lord, one does desire their removal by judgment—abhors them as such and rejoices at their being taken away from corrupting and destroying the earth. But if this desire of their judgment be holiness and righteousness, not will, we shall desire the full searching out of evil in ourselves. It is the hatred of evil as under the eye of an all-seeing God. But it is exceedingly beautiful to see this integrity of heart, brought into the full light of God's presence (once shrunk from as searching all), now it desires the thorough searching of God, that it may get

rid of the evil that it hates. Note, too, mere integrity will not suffice without God to find out evil. An honest, natural man may use his conscience, but as the natural eye must have light to search with, so we the presence of Him who is light. He who had kept the commandments for his own conscience from his youth up, shrunk from that which searched his heart and its motives. So we, *even if desirous* of knowing the evil of our hearts, bring God into the work, and seek Him to do it. If not, there is not integrity.

Psalm cxl. I have only for our present purpose to note that it teaches, in the relentless and crafty malice of the wicked, to cast oneself wholly over on the Lord. The saint cannot rival the world in craft and plotting, but there is One above all who knows the end from the beginning—to Him we have to look. The character of the Lord's people in presence of this wickedness is to be remarked; they are the afflicted, the poor, righteous, and upright. And they can reckon upon the Lord against the evil doer and the wicked man. Jehovah is owned as his God. So we acknowledge God fully as ours in the revelation of the Father and Jesus our Lord. He is owned, that is, in face of the world.

Psalm cxli. looks indeed for deliverance, but more for rightness of heart in trial. The desire is to be with, near God, that God should draw near. The heart is with Him—is right with Him. He does not say deliver, as his first desire, but "give ear to my voice;"

that his prayer may be incense, the lifting up his hands as the evening sacrifice. He seeks too (and how needed it is), that in the pressure of evil God should set a watch before his mouth and keep the door of his lips. We may be true and right in principle on the Lord's side; but how does an impatient or pretentious and reproachful word mar the testimony, give a handle to the enemy, and, so far, set the soul wrong with God. No point is more important than this for the upright. He who can bridle his tongue, the same is a perfect man. He looks to be in no way drawn away into the paths or society of the wicked. What he wants is to be kept in uprightness. If the smiting of the righteous be needed, he will rejoice in it, as an excellent oil to anoint him, and honour him as a friend. Grace accompanies this. When calamities come upon God's outward people, for of such it speaks here, who have been the enemies of him who has sought to walk godly and keep himself from evil, his heart yearns over them; there is no rejoicing or triumphing over them; his prayer ascends to God for them. He looks, too, to the overthrow of those who had power over them, smitten by the enemy, as that which shall break down their pride for good, so that they would hear his words; and he, whatever trouble he might be in, knew their sweetness. The distress was deep, evil in power, but his eyes were unto God. But again we find here that what his heart is on is the nearness of his soul with God; "leave not my soul destitute." This is a sure mark of the renewal of heart. So the thief on the cross does not even think of his sufferings, but asks Christ to remember him in His

kingdom. It is a full picture of uprightness of heart, in a soul which, having been away from God, is morally restored but still under trial.

Psalm cxlii. is the expression of extreme distress, refuge failing him—no man caring for his soul. He cried unto Jehovah with his voice. This, as we have seen, is more than trusting Him. God is known in the revelation of Himself; so we look to the Lord and to a Father's love. But in crying with the voice there is confession of His name, and open acknowledgment of dependence and confiding in the Lord. The heart can open itself out before the Lord—not be careful, but make its requests known. It is a sure sign of confidence making our trouble known—a great thing to leave such with God. But there is another comfort here; he was in the path of God. And from this grew the sense, of immense importance in the times of trial, that God knew, acknowledged, and had His eye on, as accepting it, the faithful man's path. This is a fountain of strength and comfort. It supposes faith—that realizing that one's way is pleasing to God suffices. The spirit may be overwhelmed by the pressure of enmity and desertion, but the soul is in peace, resting in the approbation of God.

Psalm cxliii. I pass over here the desires of judgment as dispensational, as we have often seen. In this we have the soul bowed down under the trouble, but in principle set right with God as one chastened for sin, only in the midst of those hostile, but brought to uprightness. It looks for mercy that it may not be

under judgment from God, but that God may be a deliverer, and looks for it as in heart belonging to God and His servant. It is broken by the affliction, and trusts God, and seeks His way. It transfers the evils, so to speak, from God to the adversary, associating itself in heart with God, and looking that God should own it and take up its cause as against the power of evil which He had used as a rod. We have this experience when we have suffered from malicious enemies, but through our own fault. The heart true with God when thoroughly subdued and set right, accepting the punishment of its iniquity instead of excusing itself, can then look to God to take up its cause against the malice, but not till it has set God's glory above itself. The soul then clings to the enjoyment of God's lovingkindness in a subdued and softened spirit, and its motives are purified, which is the very object of the discipline, not merely its ways, but its motives, and so power of communion, which is directly in relation with our motives and state of heart. There is a strengthening of the bond of the heart with God, and His will is sought because it is so. "Thy Spirit," he says, "is good." The heart lives in the sense of what the Spirit works in us; His influences in the heart are good. The soul has found where good is. There is accordance between the heart and the things of the Spirit, and it is felt, and true delight is in the soul in it. So we say praise is good; it is right pleasant, felt to be pleasant, and pleasant because it is right. There is the sense, too, of divine favour with it. But withal the soul seeks to enjoy it, where all is in harmony with it; where its

exercises and fruits will be natural (for he was in the midst of unholy enemies). For us this will only be in heaven. The heart is separated by trial to God through grace, and in uprightness owns it cannot stand in the judgment, and looks for divine favour and deliverance.

Psalm cxliv. I have only a remark to make here. All these exercises make us learn what man is, and the whole bearings of good and evil. When man is seen, known, judged, and is delivered, there is an acquaintance with the whole scene which makes God's patience, goodness, and ways known and perfect in our eyes. "Man is like to vanity," but we sing a new song; happy are the people that are in such a case. We, indeed, have a far more radical acquaintance with this. It is settled at once by one act in the cross, and we reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God through Him that is risen. It is a new creation, and we are children with the Father. Still every one does not learn it like Paul, and in every case it must be learnt experimentally. Only a simple mind laid hold of by Christ, which, therefore, does not confer with flesh and blood, learns it easier and walks in the power of it. Only, alas! how many like to be Jews, and live only to die at the end, and so learning it, instead of dying and then living as alive to God, and so pass into Christ according to the power of that life, whether they wake or sleep.

Psalm cxlv. looks back and shows the soul (for I do not speak of dispensation here as such: it is the Spirit

of Christ showing what passes in the millennium; but it shows the soul) recounting with praise and thanksgiving, the works and ways of God, where it can look back—the greatness of God. But then in these ways the character of God has been fully displayed, and the soul has learned that blessed lesson, knows what He is. See verses 8, 9, 14—20. This is a great blessing. All that we have passed through exercises us, breaks our will, makes us know ourselves. We have learnt by it, and, in the preparation of the heart, it gives what God is. Israel learned themselves in the wilderness, but here they learn God, if they had hearts to understand it. First, what He is, and then in what He shows Himself such to others. Not only His greatness: that indeed has been shown in bringing all to His own ends; but He is gracious, good, thinking of others in love, and full of compassion. He is slow to anger—perhaps the heart has complained of that sometimes in trial, yet *we* need it—and of great mercy. Yes, we are often Jonases, though we need or have needed as much mercy as Nineveh. But what should we have lost, to say nothing of losing ourselves, if our God had not been all this? But this is the God we have to say to, and when we are delivered, we delight in Him, such as He is. No doubt by faith we delight in His being such, but we have to get our wills broken, our heart set right in its desires, tempers, and whole state, to delight fully in God who so long suffers evil which we hate, and the evil doers who thwart our desire of good, but with which our will mixes itself, and taking, perhaps, its most subtle form. “Ye know not what

manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He was the manifestation of God in forbearing love; and we have to walk in love as He showed it, offering Himself up to God, in nothing seeking His own will, committing Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. Finally, in peace we shall heartily rejoice in God as such. And it is His nature and character; He is good to all, His mercy is over all His works. Compare Peter, the apostle of God's government and judgments. (2 Peter iii. 9, the epistle that applies judgment to the wicked. He is, too, the faithful Creator, 1 Peter iv. 9. One sees in this passage, as elsewhere, how the Epistles of Peter take up the government of God as the Psalms, only introducing redemption.) First, then, we find mercy. The Lord occupied with the need of men, all that fall (that is weakness); those that be bowed down (that is oppression). Then even, as he says in Jonah, "and very much cattle," He it is that takes care of and provides for man and beast. But then, further, there are moral character and relationships in which He has to do with men. He is righteous in His ways, takes account of all that is due to others, and also to Himself. He Himself thinks of others, for this also is righteousness in Him, and there is gracious consideration in His works, no evil. His ear, too, is open to the cry of those who seek Him—fulfils the desire of *those who fear Him*. He preserves those that love Him. He is thus interested in every want, and takes notice of all our ways. Thus the exercises of our hearts will have caused us to know Him.

The following psalms are the hallelujahs of a delivered people. Some elements of God's ways in general may be, however, found here, because God in the deliverance has shown whom He thought of and His care for them.

Psalm cxlvi. It is the wisdom of trusting the all-enduring, ever-living Lord that is spoken of. "Put not your trust in man:" his breath goes forth: all his thoughts are gone. Not so with God. Not only He has power, but He is faithful—keeps truth for ever. And again, His tender mercy is brought out for the comfort of those that are in sorrow. The oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners come before Him, are the objects of His care and power; the blind He gives eyes to, raises up those that are bowed down. All this is comfort of heart to those that are in sorrow and trial, that are oppressed. But farther, He loves the righteous, so that men, whatever comes upon them, can trust in Him. The stranger whose heart may feel sick where he is, the fatherless or widow whose sustaining props are gone, He preserves and relieves. The heart of the righteous has its sure confidence, of the bowed down and those deprived of earthly stay, the sure hand of a God who cares for them, because they are such. It is what God always is.

Psalm cxlvii. The great principle in all these psalms is that the one true God, the Creator, and He who ministers to every creature, is specially known as the God of His people, and is known by His delivered people to be righteous, full of compassion, and good. His

ways and character have become known to the delivered ones; but He is the God of Israel, as we say our Father, or the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All this is largely brought out in this psalm—the ground for trusting Him in every trial, but for seeking Him and walking in righteousness, for He takes pleasure in those that fear Him. But, besides this, another blessing is spoken of, belonging to His people, and so to us, His word. This is the first of blessings. He gave it to His people. He had not dealt so with any nation. There is a difference between us and Israel here. This in itself is true of both; but the Jew was shut up in his own system. The temple was a place of resort for all nations, but for Jews even there was no access to God Himself, no knowledge of Him by the revelation of Himself. The law told them what man ought to be, God's dealings taught them many a lesson if they would learn it as they do here; but the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and there was no going out with the testimony that God is love. They learnt from His ways on earth, but did not know Him in heaven and will, not as we do, even in the millennium, though mercy and redemption will be clearer for them. We do; we know God as light and love. We shall be in the Father's house then. Hence, while we have the word which reveals Him who has sanctified Himself, a man in heaven apart from the world, we have known God's love issuing and in the power of eternal life. We know the Father in the Son, and then God as love, yea, are in Him and He in us. Hence we have a gospel ministry, and every one is a witness of divine love and heavenly righteous-

ness. We have no priesthood here, save as we all are, but go with boldness into the holiest, our great High Priest being ever there. The word is in this respect another thing for us, though still God's word. We have the word for others because it is the true knowledge of God Himself in grace, a heavenly word. Some other elements of goodness are spoken of in this psalm, though the general tenor of it be the same. He *heals* the broken in heart, He binds up their wounds. There is not only tender compassion in grace, but remedy, and, more and more, He establishes securely, strengthens the bars of the city of God, and blesses His children in her. Thus we have a richer and fuller unfolding of mercy in this psalm. The general principle is the same. God's ways revealing what He is in its effects of goodness and righteous government, a knowledge of God by His statutes and judgments; but not the revelation of Himself and introduction into His presence as He is, nor knowledge of Him as Father. It is, indeed, in contrast with it. See Ephesians i. 3—5, where we have the Christian's place, as in verses 19—23 our relationship with Christ, to which add chapter v. 25—30.

Psalm cxlviii. With this remark I may merely note the character of this psalm. All creation is called to praise God, but with the additional word, He exalts the horn of His people. It is more than deliverance and mercy. He exalts them in the creation as the people of His favour on earth. He is the praise of His saints, a people near Him—a blessed thought, but how far more blessed to us who will be near Himself,

Z

unveiled in His house and in His presence! Israel is near the Creator, as His people on the earth. We with God our Father in heaven like the Lord Jesus His only-begotten Son. In this, as in the following psalm, deliverance is not spoken of, for there is progress in them. First, mercy and deliverance, favour to the tried righteous within her; then the horn of His people exalted, and Israel a people near Him; and now it is joy and triumph.

Psalm cxlix. He takes pleasure in them, and they are His weapon against His enemies, the high praises of God in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands, executing the judgment written. We see at once how we are on the Jewish ground of judgment in this world. There is a delight in the setting aside of evil by power, even for the Christian. "Rejoice over her, ye heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets;" but this only when the Church gets on prophetic, not on her own, ground. Hence the Father is not more spoken of in the Apocalypse than in the psalms. Where the relationship is with the Father, there it is carried out in love. And this difference, often noted, is as distinct and plain to the spiritual mind as possible, and of all importance to make the psalms intelligible and set Christianity on its own true ground. The Christian is not a Jew; the revealed name of God to him is not Jehovah, but Father, as Christ so markedly states.

Psalm cl. gives the full praise to Jehovah in a double character, the sanctuary and the firmament of

His power, for His ways which come from the firmament of His power were always according to the sanctuary in which He governed Israel, and made good the revelation of Himself there. So, indeed, with us, He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him; but it is according to the heavenly place to which they belong and to which He is bringing them. Christ is in the firmament of His power now. He is praised for His acts, praised for His greatness manifested in them. Jehovah is the theme of praise—Jehovah the God of Israel, but Jehovah the Creator and Sustainer of all—the righteous judge. But here it is Jehovah, *God* in His sanctuary, as we, after all we have received in a higher way, glory in tribulations, and finally in God Himself—not in what we have received. It is not even here, Praise our God, just as that was, but it rises higher. “Praise God in his sanctuary.” The deep sense of what God is goes out beyond the relationship in which we are, though it is relationship with Him in the highest way that we have. Our Father’s love, ours and Christ’s, is sweet, but we joy in God. Blessed be His name!

BY THE SAME AUTHOR, AND MAY BE HAD OF THE SAME PUBLISHER.

- Notes on the Scripture. Price 1s., Cloth, post free.
 Lectures on the Second Coming of Christ. Price 1s. 6d., and in cloth, gilt, 2s.
 Notes on the Epistle to the Romans. Price 9d., Cloth Limp; and in Extra Cloth, 1s.
 Notes on the Gospel of Luke. Price 2s., Cloth.
 The Sabbath: Is the Law Dead, or am I? Price 6d.
 Meditations on the 16th and 17th Psalms. Price 6d., Cloth.
 A few Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Price 6d., Cloth Limp, and in French Morocco Limp, gilt edges, for presents, 1s. 6d. Post free.
 Notes on the Epistle to Hebrews. Price 1s. 6d., Cloth.
 Thoughts on Psalm cxix. Cloth, 6d. Two copies post free.
 The Faithfulness of God, as seen in his ways with Balaam. Price 2d.
 Who is a Priest? and What is a Priest? Price 1d.
 Notes of Addresses on the Ways of God, with particular reference to the Church. Price 9d., Cloth Limp.
 "The Man of Sorrows." (Poetry.) Price 1d. Also in Large Type. Price 1d.
 Brief Notes of an Address on Phil. 3, &c. Price 1d.
 Brief Thoughts on the Apocalypse. Price 2d.
 Christ's Work and its Consequences. Heb. 9 and 10. Price 4d.
 The Red Sea and the Wilderness. Price 1d. Twelve copies postage free.
-

By W. KELLY.

- Lectures on the Book of Revelation. A new and revised edition. Price 5s. Also the same, with a New Translation, &c. Price 6s. 6d.
 Vols. I. to IV. of the Bible Treasury. New and revised edition. Edited by William Kelly. Price 7s. 6d. each. Postage free.
 The Second Advent of Christ Pre-Millennial. Price 1s. 3d., Cloth.
 Types of Scripture. Price 9d., Cloth Limp; and in extra Cloth, 1s.
 Christ and the Seven Churches. Cloth, 1s. 6d. Post free.
 Teetotalism and the Testimony of the Bible. Price 6d. (New edition.)
 Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer. A New Edition. Price 2d. Six copies post free.
 Notes on Matthew xiii.: being a Short Exposition of the Seven Parables. Price 6d., in Cloth, and in Paper Covers, 4d.
 Thoughts on Matthew xxv. Price 3d. Four copies postage free.

Princeton University Library



32101 063698631

