

“BE-ing Better Blessings”

Psalm 119:65-104

May 8, 2022

INTRO:

VIDEO: Remember 8 yr. old Silas on Job

- Remember cute little Silas from 10 yrs ago?
- Remember this video from earlier this year?
- Remember it's not about cute little Silas...???
- ***Remember the warning & worship of Job?***

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Psalm 119 sermon series... “**PERSPECTIVE**”
- Remember: Blessing’s building blocks...
- Remember: “*Building Better Blessings*”
- Today: “BE-ing Better Blessings”
 - Divine
 - Design
 - Discipleship

BIG IDEA:

***BE-ING a biblical blessing is the biblical believer's biblical bullseye
(AND... their worshipful word of warning)***

God's Word put the war in warning!

- JDP

God's Word often focuses on the need and divine use of WARNINGS... even (or especially) warnings about blessings... warnings about BE-ing blessings!

- Parallelism can be poetic genre
 - Chiastic arches & relational couplets...
 - Parallelism is also in metaphors & apps...
 - Jesus... mother hen, her chicks & end times
-
- See the wonders of divine warnings...we're living in them!

EXAMPLE: Divine Design vs corrupted cultures

- There's a problem when you have **Churches** without real Christians & Christians without real churches! – JDP
-
- **Gender** (ie. We're not allowed to foster a child...)
-
- **Abortion** (“*My body... My choice!*”)

*That is the Satanic battle-cry of murderous mothers and their sick support systems in our modern day Sodoms and Gomorrahs... By contrast, the biblical Christian's and biblical church's consistent, Christ-like response, rebuttal, and rebuke will unite & unify the mother's privilege and responsibilities: Hear me **mothers...***

- *It's NOT your body, your choice.*
- *It's your BABY and your responsibility!* – JDP

Every human life is Almighty God's miracle!

PREVIEW:

1. The Point	(Savior)	War & Warning
2. The Parallel	(Silas)	Walk & Work
3. The Poetry	(Scripture)	Word & Witness

1. **Remembering** is the 1st war & warning... v.65-72
2. **Relationships** are 2nd war & warning... v.73-80
3. **Refinement** is the 3rd war & warning... v.81-88
4. **Realization** is the 4th war & warning... v.89-96
5. **Repentance** is the 5th war & warning... v.97-104

*Often times,
micro warnings lead to macro winning!* - JDP

TEXT:

REMEMBERING

Psalm 119:49-56

Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.

This is **my comfort** in my affliction,
that your promise gives me life.

The insolent utterly **desire me**,
but I do not turn away from **your law**.

When I think/**remember** of sorrows from of old,
I take **comfort**, O LORD.

Hot indignation seize me because of
the wicked who **forsake your law**.

Your statutes have been **my songs**
in the house of **my sojourning**.

I **remember** your name in the night, O LORD,
and keep your law.

This blessing has fallen to me,
that **I have kept** your precepts.

VIDEO: Silas' Capstone clip #1

(Remember the reality of Christianity's contrast to consumerism... the difference between marketing & ministry)

Teth

65 You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.

- Remember Who you're dealing with...
- Remember Who is dealing with you...
- Remember the reality of God's AMAZING grace
- Remember God's conditional blessings for servants
- Remember the role, promise & authority of *His Word*

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.

- Remember that we all need to be taught
- Remember that God & His Word are our Teachers
- Remember that a fear of God is the start of wisdom
- Remember that fear + faith = knowledge & wisdom
- Remember believing opens the door to blessing. - JDP

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

- Remember disobedience brings pain...
- Remember we are responsible for our sins.
- Remember Job & his “friends” – be careful!
- Remember transformation means obedience. – JDP
- R: Only biblical obedience is blessed obedience. – JDP
- Remember the eternal contrast... astray vs abide...

**68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.**

- Remember God is good ALL the time!
- Remember God DOES good ALL the time!
- Remember Romans 8:28 ALL the time!
- Remember our need to be taught God’s truths.
- Remember God’s grace... at the core of our teaching

**69 The insolent smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;**

- Remember the reality of spiritual warfare
- Remember the reality of Christian persecution
- Remember the reality of personal lies & liars
- Remember the role of whole-hearted, faithful-obey
- Remember, by grace, to persevere in God’s precepts

**70 their heart is unfeeling like fat,
but I delight in your law.**

- Remember God-haters are unfeeling & unfaithful!
- Remember the unfeeling don't feel like you do...
- Remember *the head, heart & hands test each other!* -
JDP
- Remember the faithful & feeling delight in God's law
- Remember this is a personal litmus test!

**71 It is good for me that I was afflicted,
that I might learn your statutes.**

- Remember ours & God's ways are not the same...
- Remember that God's ways are always best ways!
- Remember that God's faithfulness > our feelings...
- Remember that God's affliction is never wasted...
- Remember the biblical blessing of biblical affliction:
 - It **underscores** God's holiness
 - It **highlights** God's sovereignty & providence
 - It **reinforces** God's standards
 - It **establishes** God's trustworthiness
 - It **exemplifies** God's grace
 - It **serves** as a warning for God's wrath
 - It **proves** God's biblical & conditional mercy
 - It **demonstrates** God's working thru ALL things
 - It **displays** God's loving promise to refine us
 - Like it or not... it IS God's truth in love!

**72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.**

- Remember the power & promises of God's Word
- Remember the priority & purpose of [1 Timothy 4:16](#)
- Remember the difference... earthly vs. eternal
- Remember the warning of [James 4:4...](#)
- Remember always... [Mark 8:36](#) and [Matthew 16:26](#)

RELATIONSHIPS

VIDEO: *Silas' Capstone clip #2*

(Remember the reality & relationship of marketing and manipulation... of motive, money, ministries, & mission... the biblical relationship between goats & sheep, crowds & Church)

Yodh

73 Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

- Remember the relationships between:
 - Creator-Christ & we created-Christians
 - **He made us & He fashioned us**
 - Creator-Christ & those of us who understand
 - Creator-Christ's loving grace & our learning
 - Sovereign grace & human responsibility...
 - God's Word, will, ways... & our word, will, ways

**74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.**

- Remember the **relationships** between:
 - People who fear God and those who don't
 - Christian fear, sight, joy, & hope
 - True Christian "companions" – The Church
 - The true Christian Church and God's holy Word
 - Personal and corporate biblical applications...

**75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous,
and that in faithfulness YOU have afflicted me.**

- Remember the **relationships** between:
 - KNOWing vs. merely thinking or saying truth...
 - Almighty God & His rules & His righteousness
 - The LORD's love, faithfulness, AND affliction...
 - Christ's trustworthy, while unseen, methods...
 - Your afflictions and your divine blessings.

**76 Let your steadfast love comfort me
according to your promise to your servant.**

- Remember the **relationships** between:
 - God's steadfast love vs. fickle, worldly feelings
 - God's steadfast love & Christian comfort
 - God's trustworthiness & His promises
 - God's comforting promises & our realities
 - God's conditional comfort for His servants.

77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.

- Remember the relationships between:
 - Almighty God and eternity's only true mercy
 - Miraculous mercy and the "coming" of grace
 - Divine pronouns (Your) & personal pronouns
 - God's grace, mercy, law... & our life & delight
 - Heavenly grace & mercy prior to eternal life...

78 Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.

- Remember the relationships between:
 - God's sovereignty and insolent sinners
 - Insolent sinners and shameful consequences
 - Imprecatory prayers & purveyors of lies...
 - Personal pondering & meditating on the Word
 - Obedient Christianity vs. religious hypocrisy

79 Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.

- Remember the relationships between:
 - God's miraculous grace & one's ability to turn
 - Biblical fear and turning, transformative faith
 - Fearing God reverently & wanting to be grown
 - Disciples who make disciples who make D3's

- God's Word and the discipleship bullseye!

80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!

- Remember the relationships between:
 - The personal heart and one's spiritual standing
 - God's grace & the Christian's race (start to end)
 - God's statutes define blame & blamelessness
 - Temporal vs. eternal shame...
 - The Christian's crying out for grace & mercy...

REFINEMENT

VIDEO: Silas' Capstone clip #3

(Remember the reality of Christian refinement... BE-ing intentionally counter-cultural at all levels of personal & spiritual development... even using missional metaphors)



Kaph

81 My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.

- Remember the **refining work** of:
 - Prioritizing your soul vs. your senses...
 - Longing for the LORD...
 - Longing for the LORD's salvation...
 - Biblical hope & the role of biblical hoping...
 - God's Word in all hope, help, & healing.

82 My eyes long for your promise; I ask, "When will you comfort me?"

- Remember the **refining work** of:
 - Seeing with spiritual, biblical eyes...
 - Longing & living for the Lord's loving promises
 - Crying out to Christ...
 - Crying out to Christ for mercy & grace...
 - BE-ing blessed & crying out for Christ's comfort

83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

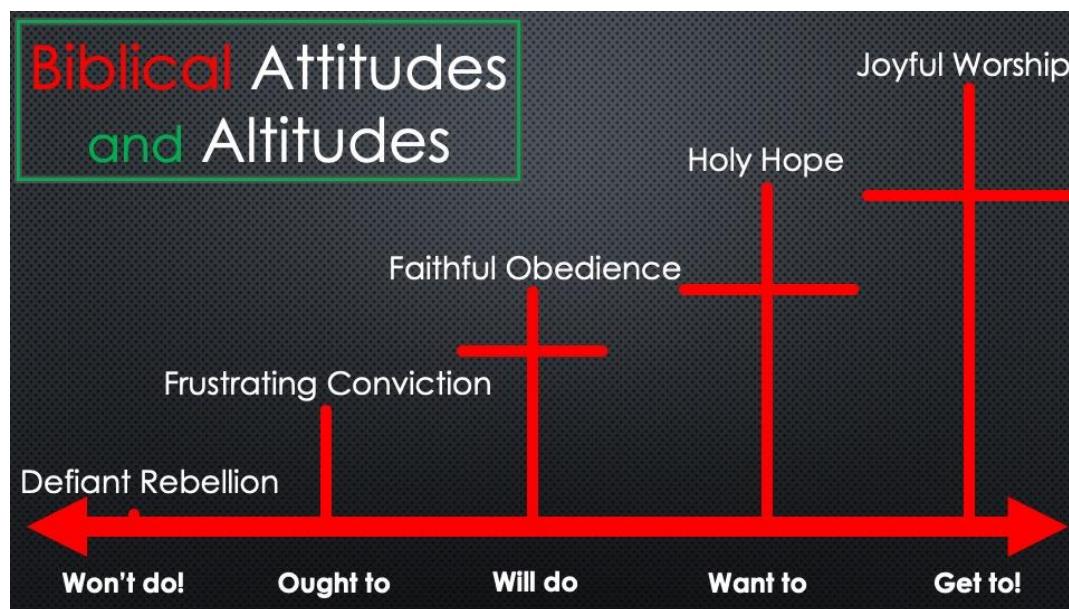
- Remember the **refining work** of:
 - Admitting when you're withering...
 - Confessing and repenting
 - Surrendering in the sin's "smoke" & swamp
 - Not forgetting... and active remembering...
 - God's Word, will, and ways

84 How long must your servant endure? **When will you judge those who persecute me?**

- Remember the refining work of:
 - Affliction and persecution...
 - Patience and perseverance...
 - Serving and enduring...
 - KNOWING the eternal Judge & Justifier...
 - KNOWING the Victor & His vengeance...

85 The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; **they do not live according to your law.**

- Remember the refining work of:
 - Hard times on holy people...
 - Devilish pit-diggers undermining God's do-gooders
 - Realizing the need to LIVE in God's full armor
 - The lawless & liar's attacks... on lovers of God
 - Genesis 50:20 & a "No matter what!" attitude.



**86 All your commandments are sure;
they persecute me with falsehood; help me!**

- Remember the refining work of:
 - Believing 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - Championing 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - Ditto to Romans 8:28 **AND** v.29
 - BE-ing biblically persecuted & the Beatitudes
 - Personally crying out to Christ for personal help

**87 They have almost made an end of me on earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.**

- Remember the refining work of:
 - The enemies of God amongst God's children
 - Every "almost" unleashed on all the Almighty's
 - Near death experiences that wake us up...
 - Cleaving to Christ and not forsaking His Word
 - Seeing the world thru a biblical worldview

**88 In your steadfast love give me life,
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.**

- Remember the refining work of:
 - God's miraculous & merciful steadfast love
 - God's life-giving graces per His living Gospel
 - Being able to request redemption from God
 - Being empowered to BE obedient witnesses
 - Being blessed to graciously hear & heed God

REALIZATION

VIDEO: *Silas' Capstone clip #4*

(Realize the dangers of drifting & distractions... Realize your privilege AND responsibilities... Realize the contrast between Christian & counterfeit comforts... Realize that "waking up is the next step to a new day..." Realize that God's warnings are gifts! Realize that both biblical fear, faith & faithfulness leak... Realize that the Christian mission is messy! - JDP).

Lamedh

**89 *Forever, O LORD, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.***

- Remember to realize:
 - Forever is real... and you will be alert forever!
 - The LORD is always sovereign over ALL...
 - God's Word has never & will never change!
 - God's Word, (will & ways) are firmly fixed...
 - Christians too are forever-firmly-fixed! - JDP

**90 *Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, & it stands fast.***

- Remember to realize:
 - God's faithfulness endures...

- To all generations
- For every family member
- Thru all trials and tragedies
- God is faithful even when we are not
- God's faithfulness cuts both ways...
 - Blessings to the disciples
 - Wrath to the damnable
- Christ is Creator God – Maker of heaven & earth
- Christ is also Sustainer of all things as well.

***91 By your appointment they stand this day,
for all things are your servants.***

- Remember to realize:
 - Almighty Creator God oversees all of reality
 - God's providence displays His sovereignty
 - All the "all's" in Scripture...
 - "All things" are here to serve Almighty God
 - We are ALL a part of these "all things!"

***92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.***

- Remember to realize:
 - Knowing God's Word does not save anyone
 - Your attitude always affects your altitude.
 - Healthy, biblical disciples delight in God's Word
 - Delighting in God's Word fuels perseverance.
 - God's Word stands between life & death! – JDP

**93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.**

- Remember to realize:
 - Never forgetting is a form of praise & worship!
 - What we remember &/or forget really matters!
 - The power is in the precept, not the person...
 - God works & saves thru His Word (Rom. 10:17)
 - Only God, per His Word, can give anyone life!

**94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.**

- Remember to realize:
 - If you are a Christian... the price that was paid.
 - If you are a Christian... you will always be one.
 - Only Christ can truly, eternally, save anyone.
 - The connection between Ps. 119:94 & Jn. 6:44
 - All the power & promises in God's precepts

**95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your testimonies.**

- Remember to realize:
 - We all live on the battlefield of spiritual warfare
 - The wicked are often wolves in sheeps clothing
 - The wicked lie... AND they lie in wait...
 - The wicked seek to destroy (Christians & churches)
 - Considering Christ & His Word truly comforts...

**96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.**

- Remember to realize:
 - Christians are able to see with Christ's eyes...
 - Even the best of this world is internally flawed...
 - Biblical worldview's are eternally blessed...
 - Biblical worldview's are counter-cultural...
 - Biblical worldview's are all-encompassing.

REPENTANCE

VIDEO: *Silas' Capstone clip #5*

(Realize & remember that rationalizing is stalls repentance...

The "church culture" needs to repent of it's consumerisms...

*Both, the prosperity movement & attraction models for ministry are killing the visible church, literally blowing it up!
Repentance is needed for rationalizing 95% clean, 5% poison...*

The motives & methods require responsibility & repentance!

Cowardice & compromise around wolves calls for repentance!

*Ignoring &/or disregarding Phil. 4:13 & 2 Pt. 1:3 demand
repentance...*

Mem

**97 Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Love is the first fruit of repenting & believing
 - Repenting leads us to LOVE God's law...
 - Repenting motivates us to meditate more
 - Repenting is a perpetual, daily blessing
 - God's Word reveals that repenting IS a blessing

98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - God's commandments (ie. repent & believe) bless us
 - Repenting & believing make us wiser...
 - Repenting & believing equip us for battle...
 - Repenting & believing are key to overcoming...
 - Repenting & believing will always be a blessing!

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Repenting & believing bring us understanding...
 - Repenting & believing God's Word is best...
 - Repenting & believing God's Word build us up...
 - Repenting & believing God's Word feeds souls
 - Repenting & believing leads to more meditation

**100 I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Repenting & believing empower understanding.
 - Repenting & believing are not based on age...
 - Repenting & believing trump resume building...
 - Repenting & believing lead us to pray & obey!
 - God's Word (alone) defines repenting & believing!

**101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Repenting & believing "hold back" from sin
 - Repenting & believing turn away from evil
 - Repenting & believing turn away from ALL evil
 - Repenting & believing births Gospel motives
 - Repenting & believing seeks to obey The Word!

**102 I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Repenting & believing is a personal reality
 - If not... they are not biblical repenting/believing
 - Repenting & believing do and do not turn...
 - We do turn away from sin & evil
 - We do NOT turn away from God & His W's

- Repenting & believing cleave to Christ
- Repenting & believing know that God & God's Word cannot be separated.

**103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - How repenting makes old-sour... new-sweet
 - How repenting makes God's Word a desire...
 - How repenting changes our heart's tastebuds
 - How repenting brings God's Word into us...
 - How repenting sweetens our sharing the Word

**104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.**

- Remember the **blessing of repenting:**
 - Repenting engages God's precepts
 - Repenting submits to God's precepts
 - Repenting empowers God's precepts
 - Repenting applies God's precepts to life
 - Repenting exemplifies God's precepts
 - **We now hate what God hates... and**
 - **We now love what God loves!**

REVIEW:

BEing a biblical blessing is the biblical believer's biblical bullseye!

- **REMEMBERING** God's grace, gospel & glory
- **RELATING** to Christ, His Church & Commission
- **REFINING** our walk, work, worship, & witness
- **REALIZING** the war for God's Word, will, & ways
- **REPENTING** biblically, holistically & continuously

CLOSE:

Think about the micro movement of a child's smile... and the contrasting scale of the earth-quaking-affects of tectonic plates shifting... Both movements, the macro and the micro, have a profound and powerful ability to move us....

And so it is with God's Word, as we've seen with concentrated, "micro" messages fixed and focused upon a single word, phrase, sentence, verse, & stanza...
Plus, in the past, we've also exemplified the spiritually moving potential of a "macro perspective" with sermon series that included extended (some as long as a year or year and a half) biblical book studies," extensive doctrinal studies, and multiple, multi-faceted discipleship series.

In the end, we've learned to love & live the missional both/and of a micro AND macro perspective... as Great Commandment & Great Commission, Christ-like Christians.

Let's PRAY!

WORSHIP: *"Where Are The Christians?"*

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TETH

65 You are good to Your servant, O LORD,
according to Your word.

66 Teach me good judgment and
knowledge,
for I believe in Your commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted, I went astray;
but now I keep Your word.

68 You are good, and You do what is
good;
teach me Your statutes.

69 Tho the arrogant have smeared me
with lies,

I keep Your precepts with all my heart.

70 Their hearts are hard and callous,
but I delight in Your law.

71 It was good for me to be afflicted,
that I might learn Your statutes.

72 The law from Your mouth is more
precious to me than thousands of pieces
of gold and silver.

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YODH

73*Your hands have made me and
fashioned me;
give me understanding to learn Your
commandments*

74*May those who fear You see me and
rejoice,
for I have hoped in Your word.*

75*I know, O LORD, that Your judgments
are righteous, and that in faithfulness
You have afflicted me.*

76*May Your loving devotion comfort me,
I pray,
according to Your promise to Your
servant.*

77*May Your compassion come to me,
that I may live, for Your law is my delight.*

78*May the arrogant be put to shame for
subverting me with a lie;
I will meditate on Your precepts.*

79*May those who fear You turn to me,*

those who know Your testimonies.
80May my heart be blameless in Your
statutes,
that I may not be put to shame.

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KAPH

81My soul faints for Your salvation;
I wait for Your word.

82My eyes fail, looking for Your promise;
I ask, “When will You comfort me?”

83Though I am like a wineskin dried up
by smoke, I do not forget Your statutes.

84How many days must Your servant
wait?

When will You execute judgment on
my persecutors?

85The arrogant have dug pits for me
in violation of Your law.

86All Your commandments are faithful;
I am persecuted without cause—help
me!

87They almost wiped me from the earth,
but I have not forsaken Your precepts.

88Revive me according to Your loving
devotion,
that I may obey the testimony of Your
mouth.

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LAMEDH

89Your word, O LORD, is everlasting;
it is firmly fixed in the heavens.

90Your faithfulness continues through
all generations; You established the
earth,
and it endures.

91Your ordinances stand to this day,
for all things are servants to You.

92*If Your law had not been my delight,
then I would have perished in my
affliction.*

93*I will never forget Your precepts,
for by them You have revived me.*

94*I am Yours; save me,
for I have sought Your precepts.*

95*The wicked wait to destroy me,
but I will ponder Your testimonies.*

96*I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but Your commandment is without
limit.*

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MEM

97*Oh, how I love Your law!
All day long it is my meditation.*

98 Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are always with me.

99 I have more insight than all my teachers,
for Your testimonies are my meditation.

100 I discern more than the elders,
for I obey Your precepts.

101 I have kept my feet from every evil path,
that I may keep Your word.

102 I have not departed from Your ordinances,
for You Yourself have taught me.

103 How sweet are Your words to my taste—

sweeter than honey in my mouth!

104 I gain understanding from Your precepts;
therefore I hate every false way.

Commentary on Psalm 119:65-72

(Read [Psalm 119:65-72](#))

However God has dealt with us, he has dealt with us better than we deserve; and all in love, and for our good.

Many have knowledge, but little judgment; those who have both, are fortified against the snares of Satan, and furnished for the service of God.

We are most apt to wander from God, when we are easy in the world. We should leave our concerns to the disposal of God, seeing we know not what is good for us. Lord, thou art our bountiful Benefactor; incline our hearts to faith and obedience. **The psalmist will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution.**

The proud are full of the world, and its wealth and pleasures; these make them senseless, secure, and stupid. God visits his people with affliction, that they may learn his statutes.

Not only God's promises, but even his law, his percepts, though hard to ungodly men, are desirable, and profitable, because they lead us with safety and delight unto eternal life.

Commentary on Psalm 119:73-80

(Read [Psalm 119:73-80](#))

God made us to serve him, and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unfit to serve him, and to enjoy him. We ought, therefore, continually to beseech him, by his Holy Spirit,

to give us understanding. The comforts some have in God, should be matter of joy to others. But it is easy to own, that God's judgments are right, until it comes to be our own case. **All supports under affliction must come from mercy and compassion. The mercies of God are tender mercies;** the mercies of a father, the compassion of a mother to her son. **They come to us when we are not able to go to them.** Causeless reproach does not hurt, and should not move us. The psalmist could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in it. He valued the good will of saints, and was desirous to keep up his communion with them. **Soundness of heart signifies sincerity in dependence on God, and devotedness to him.**

Commentary on Psalm 119:81-88

(Read [Psalm 119:81-88](#))

The psalmist sought deliverance from his sins, his foes, and his fears. Hope deferred made him faint; his eyes failed by looking out for this expected salvation. But **when the eyes fail, yet faith must not.**

His affliction was great. **He was become like a leathern bottle, which, if hung up in the smoke, is dried and shrivelled up.** We must ever be mindful of God's statutes. The days of the believer's mourning shall be ended; they are but for a moment, compared with eternal happiness. **His enemies used**

craft as well as power for his ruin, in contempt of the law of God. The commandments of God are true and faithful guides in the path of peace and safety. We may best expect help from God when, like our Master, we do well and suffer for it. **Wicked men may almost consume the believer upon earth, but he would sooner forsake all than forsake the word of the Lord.**

We should depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work. The surest token of God's good-will toward us, is his good work in us.

Commentary on Psalm 119:89-96

(Read [Psalm 119:89-96](#))

The settling of God's word in heaven, is opposed to the changes and revolutions of the earth. And the engagements of God's covenant are established more firmly than the earth itself. All the creatures answer the ends of their creation: shall man, who alone is endued with reason, be the only unprofitable burden of the earth? **We may make the Bible a pleasant companion at any time. But the word, without the grace of God, would not quicken us.** See the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections; and though the exact words be lost, if the meaning remain, that is well. **I am thine, not my own, not the world's; save me from sin, save me from ruin.**

The Lord will keep the man in peace, whose mind is stayed on him.

It is poor perfection which one sees and end of. **Such are all things in this world, which pass for perfections. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.** The psalmist had seen the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency. The word of the Lord reaches to all cases, to all times. It will take us from all confidence in man, or in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness.

Thus shall we seek comfort and happiness from Christ alone.

Commentary on Psalm 119:97-104

(Read [Psalm 119:97-104](#))

What we love, we love to think of.

All true wisdom is from God.

A good man carries his Bible with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.

By meditation on God's testimonies we understand more than our teachers, when we understand our own hearts. **The written word is a more sure**

guide to heaven, than all the fathers, the teachers, and ancients of the church. We cannot, with any comfort or boldness, attend God in holy duties, while under guilt, or in any by-way. *It was Divine grace in his heart, that enabled the psalmist to receive these instructions.* The soul has its

tastes as well as the body. **Our relish for the word of God will be greatest, when that for the world and the flesh is least.**

The way of sin is a wrong way; and the more understanding we get by the precepts of God, the more rooted will be our hatred of sin; and the more ready we are in the Scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

9. TETH.

Psa 119:65-66

Here,

- 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along: *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt *well* with us, better than we deserve, and all in love and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations. He has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me,* not only according to thy mercy, but *according to thy word.* God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise and are seen flowing from that fountain.
- 2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction: "*Teach me good judgment and knowledge,* that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me." Teach me *a good*

taste (so the word signifies), a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for **the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat.** We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have **spiritual senses exercised,** [Heb. 5:14](#). Many have knowledge who have little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan and well furnished for the service of God and their generation.

- 3. This petition is backed with a plea: "**For I have believed thy commandments,** received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, **teach me.**" Where God has given a good heart a good head too many in faith be prayed for.

[Psa 119:67](#)

David here tells us what he had experienced,

- 1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition: "**Before I was afflicted,** while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, **I went astray** from God and my duty." Sin is going astray; and we are most apt to wander from God when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See [Ps. 30:6](#). It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray **before we were afflicted,** that we may answer the end of the affliction.
- 2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state: "**Now have I kept thy word,** and so have been recovered from my wanderings." God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first and then to his father.

[Psa 119:68](#)

Here,

- 1. David praises God's goodness and gives him the glory of it: **Thou art good and doest good.** All who have any knowledge of God and dealings with him will own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of

God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration and with holy love and thankfulness.

- 2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it: *Teach me thy statutes*. "Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me,-Instruct me in my duty, incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and doest good*; Lord, *teach me thy statutes*, that I may be good and do good, may have a good heart and live a good life." It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will *teach them his way* because he is *good and upright*, [Ps. 25:8](#).

[Psa 119:69-70](#)

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

- 1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty: *They have forged a lie against me*. Thus they aimed to take away his good name. Nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. Those that were proud envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him. They took a pride in trampling upon him. They therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented storied which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silently. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution: "Let them say what they will, *I will keep thy precepts*, and not dread their reproach."
- 2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty. *Their heart is as fat as grease*. The proud are *at ease* ([Ps. 123:4](#)); they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them,

- (1.) Senseless, secure, and stupid; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used, [Isa. 6:10](#). *Make the heart of this people fat.* They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God or his rod.
- (2.) Sensual and voluptuous: "*Their eyes stand out with fatness* ([Ps. 73:7](#)); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them. I would not change conditions with them. *I delight in thy law;* I build my security upon the promises of God's word and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights." The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

[Psa 119:71](#)

See here,

- 1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to* God's people, [Ps. 73:10](#).
- 2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally: *It was good for me;* many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to which otherwise would have been unlearnt and undone. *Therefore* God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered: the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.*

[Psa 119:72](#)

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, an the profit did so much counterbalance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's *law*, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was *better* to him than all the *gold and silver* which he lost by his affliction.

- 1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing!

Observe, **Therefore** he valued the law, because it is ***the law of God's mouth***, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

- 2. He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he valued it. His riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's **Psalms** and Solomon's **Ecclesiastes**, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

Psa 119:73

Here,

- 1. David adores God as the God of nature and the author of his being: ***Thy hands have made me and fashioned me***, **Job 10:8**. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, **Ps. 139:15, 16**. "***Thy hands have*** not only ***made me***, and given me a being, otherwise I should never have been, but ***fashioned me***, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties;" and we must own that we are ***fearfully and wonderfully made***.
- 2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, "Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation and live to some purpose: ***Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.***" The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men is by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul and gains possession of it.

Psa 119:74

Here is,

- 1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation: "*I have hoped in thy word;* and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that *maketh not ashamed;* but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last."
- 2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation: "*Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me* relieved by my hope in thy word and delivered according to my hope." The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, [\[2 Co. 1:11\]](#); [\[4:15\]](#). Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

[Psa 119:75](#)

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns,

- 1. That his sin was justly corrected: *I know, O Lord! that thy judgments are right,* are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but most acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his *judgments are right*, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.
- 2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good: "*In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me*, pursuant to the great design of my salvation." It is easier to own, in general, that God's *judgments are right*, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, "Even my afflictions are just and kind."

[Psa 119:76-77](#)

Here is,

- 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. Those that own the justice of God in their afflictions (as David had done, v. 75) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's *merciful kindness* (v. 76), his *tender mercies*, v. 77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. "Let these *come to me,*" that is, "the evidence of them (clear it up to me that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store), and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance."
- 2. The benefit he promised himself from God's lovingkindness: "Let it *come to me for my comfort* (v. 76); that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy: "Let it *come to me, that I may live,* that is, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. *In his favour is life;* in his frowns are death." A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.
- 3. his pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads,

- (1.) God's promise: "Let me have thy kindness, *according to thy word unto thy servant,* the kindness which thou hast promised and because thou hast promised it." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.
- (2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise: "*Thy law is my delight;* I hope in thy word and rejoice in that hope." Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

Psa 119:78-79

Here David shows,

- I. How little he valued the will-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even

those that deal most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David regarded it not, for,

- 1. He knew it was *without cause*, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us.
- 2. He could pray, in faith, that they might *be ashamed* of it; God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "*Let them be ashamed*, that is, let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin."
- 3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. "However they deal with me, *I will meditate in thy precepts*, and entertain myself with them."

- II. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them and communion with them: *Let those that fear thee turn to me*. He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, those that feared God grew strange to him and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them *turn to me again*. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, *that have known thy testimonies*, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

Psa 119:80

Here is,

- 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's *statutes*, and that it might be *sound* in them, not rotten and deceitful, that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with the subject to the power of it,-that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

- 2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: *That I be not ashamed.* Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not: *"Let my heart be sound,* that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. *Let my heart be sound,* that I may come *boldly to the throne of grace,* and may lift up my face without spot at the great day."

11. CAPH.

[Psa 119:81-82](#)

Here we have the psalmist,

- I. Longing for help from heaven: *My soul faints; my eyes fail.* He longs *for the salvation of the Lord* and *for his word,* that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith, salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old-Testament church; the souls of the faithful even *fainted to see* that salvation of which the prophets testified. ([1 Pt. 1:10](#)); their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch and they could not stedfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried out, *"When wilt thou comfort me?* Comfort me with *thy salvation,* comfort me with *thy word.*" Observe,

- 1. The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season.
- 2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them.
- 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon that salvation, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. "Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon."

- II. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come, and tarrying till it come: *But I hope in thy word;* and but for hope the heart would break. When the *eyes fail* yet

the faith must not; for *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.*

Psa 119:83

David begs God would make haste to comfort him,

- 1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity: Lord, make haste to help me, *for I have become like a bottle in the smoke*, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with smoke, is thrown by, and there is no more use of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David, in his low estate, looked upon *as a despised broken vessel*, and as *a vessel in which there was no pleasure*. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.
- 2. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise: *Yet do I not forget thy statutes*. Whatever our outward condition is we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some *drink and forget the law* ([Prov. 31:5](#)), so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance; and, if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

Psa 119:84

Here,

- 1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself (he bore no malice to any), but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and *would repay* ([Rom. 12:19](#)), as the God

that *sits in the throne judging right*. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people, *tribulation to those that troubled them*; Enoch foretold it ([Jude 14](#)), whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for and pray for the hastening of. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

- 2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: "*How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few*" (so some); "therefore let them not all be miserable, and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, *before I go hence and shall be seen no more.*" Or rather, "*The days of my affliction are many;* thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elect's sake, *the days of trouble are shortened.* O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am *thy servant,* and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until thou have mercy on me."

[Psa 119:85-87](#)

David's state was *herein* a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians that he was grievously persecuted; as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as those here. Here observe,

- I. The account he gives of his persecutors and their malice against him.
 - 1. They were *proud*, and in their pride *they persecuted him*, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins.
 - 2. They were unjust: *They persecuted him wrongfully*, so far was he from giving them any provocation that he had studied to oblige them; but *for his love they were his adversaries.*
 - 3. They were spiteful: *They dug pits for him*, which intimates that they were deliberate in their designs against him and that what they did was of malice prepense; it intimates likewise that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom, that they were industrious and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief, and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do take wild beasts, [Ps. 35:7](#). Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman.

- 4. They herein showed their enmity to God himself. The pits they *dug for him* were *not after God's law*; he means they were very much against his law, which forbids to *devise evil to our neighbour*, and has particularly said, *Touch not my anointed*. The law appointed that, if a man dug a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief (*Ex. 21:33, 34*), much more when it was dug with a mischievous design.
- 5. They carried on their designs against him so far that *they had almost consumed him upon earth*; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those who shall shortly be consummate in heaven may be, for the present, *almost consumed on earth*; and *it is of the Lord's mercies* (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy) *that they are not quite consumed*. But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

• II. His application to God in his persecuted state.

- 1. He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered: "However it be, *all thy commandments are faithful*, and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it." True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. "Men are false; I find them do; men of low degree, men of high degree, are so, there is no trusting them. But *all thy commandments are faithful*; on them I may rely."
- 2. He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him: "*They persecute me; help thou me*, help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles." *God help me* is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is a pity that it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word.

• III. His adherence to his duty notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors (*v. 87*): *But I forsook not thy precepts*. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world than forsake the word of God, would sooner lose his life than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

Here is,

- 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty. His constant desire and design are to *keep the testimony of God's mouth*, to keep to it as his rule and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose.
- 2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: "*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness* (make me alive and make me lively), *so shall I keep thy testimonies*," implying that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, *Quicken me in thy righteousness* ([v. 40](#)); but here, *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness*. The surest token of God's good-will toward us is his good work in us.

12. LAMED.

[Psa 119:89-91](#)

Here,

- 1. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God and of all his counsels: "*For ever, O Lord! thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself* (so some read it); thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. *Thy word*, by which the heavens were made, *is settled* there in the abiding products of it;" or the settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. *All flesh is grass*; but *the word of the Lord endures for ever*. It *is settled in heaven*, that is, in the secret counsel of God, which is hidden in himself and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, *as mountains of brass*. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall *fall to the ground*; for it follows here, *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations*, that is, the promise is sure to every age of the church and it cannot be antiquated by lapse of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season.

- 2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature: *Thou hast established the earth for ever and it abides*; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, it remains unmoved. "*They*" (the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of both) "*continue to this day according to thy ordinances*"; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them; they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended." The stability of the ordinances of the day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, [Jer. 31:35, 36](#); [33:20, 21](#). It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah ([Gen. 8:22](#)) that *day and night, summer and winter*, observe a steady course. "They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants; they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both *are thy servants.*" All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth.?

[Psa 119:92](#)

Here is,

- 1. The great distress that David was in. He was in affliction, and ready to *perish in his affliction*, not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet, if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, *We have cleansed our hands in vain*; or, *What profit is it that we have served God?*
- 2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight,
 - (1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity.

- (2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time if we please.

Psa 119:93

Here is,

- 1. A very good resolution: "*I will never forget thy precepts*, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule." It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion, and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it.
- 2. A very good reason for it: "*For by them thou hast quickened me*; not only they are quickening, but,"
 - (1.) "They have been so to me; I have found them so." Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them.
 - (2.) "Thou hast made them so;" the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. Ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word and makes use of it as a means of quickening, and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found and hope still to find such benefit by. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections. If we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that does really quicken us to and in our duty is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well.

Psa 119:94

Here,

- 1. David claims relation to God: "*I am thine*, devoted to thee and owned by thee, thine in covenant." He does not say, *Thou art mine* (as Dr. Manton observes), though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge; but, *I am thine*, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, *I am thus*, but, *I am thine*, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him: "*I am thine*, not my own, not the world's."
- 2. He proves his claim: "*I have sought thy precepts*; I have carefully enquired concerning my duty and diligently endeavoured to do it." This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.
- 3. He improves his claim: "*I am thine; save me*; save me from sin, save me from ruin." Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his may be sure that he will protect them and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, [Mal. 3:18](#).

[Psa 119:95](#)

Here,

- 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me to destroy me*. They were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were *confident* (they *expected*, so some read it), that they should destroy him; they thought themselves sure of their prey.
- 2. He comforts himself in the word of God as his protection: "While they are contriving my destruction, *I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to me my salvation." God's testimonies are *then* likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

[Psa 119:96](#)

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience,

- 1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy: *I have seen an end of all perfection*. Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome, Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken,

Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled, Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection. He saw it by faith; he saw it by observation; he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency (it was scanty and defective; there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of continuance; it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

- 2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: But thy commandment is broad, exceedingly broad. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burdens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. MEM.

Psa 119:97

Here is,

- 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: O how love I thy law! He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.
- 2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love we love to think of; by this it appeared that David loved the word of God that it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and all the day; some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

Psa 119:98-100

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the *Israelites indeed.*

- I. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp. Which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the author: *Thou hast made me wise.* All true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means, by *his commandments* and *his testimonies.* These are able to *make us wise to salvation* and *to furnish the man of God for every good work.*

- 1. These David took for his constant companions: *"They are ever with me,* ever in my mind, ever in my eye." A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.
 - 2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his *meditation,* not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner.
 - 3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: *I keep thy precepts,* that is, I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine* of Christ, shall know more and more of it, [Jn. 7:17](#). The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; the *pure in heart shall see God* here.
- II. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to *behave himself wisely in all his ways,* [1 Sa. 18:14](#).

- 1. He outwitted his enemies; God, by these means, made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments we secure God on our side and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve in ourselves that

- peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other.
- 2. He outstripped his **teachers**, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct and undertook to prescribe to him (by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures and they had taken the wrong), or those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had **spiritual senses** **exercised**, [Heb. 5:14](#). It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to **understand more than our teachers**, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot.
 - 3. He outdid **the ancients**, either those of his day (he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, but his keeping God's precepts taught more wisdom than the multitude of their years, [Job 32:7, 8](#)) or those of former days; he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients ([1 Sa. 24:13](#)), but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

[Psa 119:101](#)

Here is,

- 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: "*I have refrained my feet from the evil ways* they were ready to step aside into. I checked myself and drew back as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation." Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer,* [Ps. 17:4](#).
- 2. His care to be found in the way of duty; *That I might keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was,
 - (1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word and had made that his rule.
 - (2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any by-way.

[Psa 119:102](#)

Here is,

- 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had *not departed from God's judgments*; he had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity.
- 2. The cause of his constancy: *"For thou hast taught me*; that is, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

[Psa 119:103-104](#)

Here is,

- 1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; it was *sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey*. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things, such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have *heard him*

ourselves, [Jn. 4:42](#). To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace; no pleasure was comparable to it.

- 2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God.

- (1.) It helped him to a good head: "*Through thy precepts I get understanding* to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life or in advising others."
- (2.) It helped him to a good heart: "*Therefore*, because I have got understanding of the truth, *I hate every false way*, and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it." Observe here,

- [1.] The way of sin is a false way; it deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, [Prov. 14:12](#).
- [2.] It is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it ([v. 101](#)), but he *hates it*, has an antipathy to it and a dread of it.
- [3.] Those who hate sin as sin will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And,
- [4.] The more understanding we get by the word of God the more rooted will our hatred of sin be (for *to depart from evil, that is understanding*, [Job 28:28](#)), and the more ready we are in the scriptures the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

Teth

- 65**You have dealt well with your servant,
O LORD, according to your word.
- 66**Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
- 67**Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I keep your word.
- 68**You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
- 69**The insolent smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;
- 70**their heart is unfeeling like fat,
but I delight in your law.
- 71**It is good for me that I was afflicted,
that I might learn your statutes.
- 72**The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Yodh

- 73**Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
- 74**Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
- 75**I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous,
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.
- 76**Let your steadfast love comfort me
according to your promise to your servant.
- 77**Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
- 78**Let the insolent be put to shame,
because they have wronged me with falsehood;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 79**Let those who fear you turn to me,

that they may know your testimonies.

80May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
that I may not be put to shame!

Kaph

81My soul longs for your salvation;
I hope in your word.

82My eyes long for your promise;
I ask, "When will you comfort me?"

83For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.

84How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?

85The insolent have dug pitfalls for me;
they do not live according to your law.

86All your commandments are sure;
they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

87They have almost made an end of me on earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.

88In your steadfast love give me life,
that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

Lamedh

89Forever, O LORD, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.

90Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

91By your appointment they stand this day,
for all things are your servants.

92If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.

93I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.

94I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
95The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your testimonies.
96I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Mem

97Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
98Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
99I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
100I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
101I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
103How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

65. *"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD,
according unto thy word."*

This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum of ours. The Psalmist tells the Lord the verdict of his heart; he cannot be silent, he must speak his gratitude

in the presence of Jehovah, his God. From the universal goodness of God in nature, in verse 64, it is an easy and pleasant step to a confession of the Lord's uniform goodness to ourselves personally. It is something that God has *dealt* at all with such insignificant and undeserving beings as we are, and it is far more that he has dealt well with us, and so well, so wondrously well. **He hath done all things well:** the rule has no exception. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything **Jehovah hath dealt well with us.** It is dealing well on our part to tell the Lord that we feel that he hath dealt well with us; for praise of this kind is specially fitting and comely. This kindness of the Lord is, however, no chance matter: **he promised to do so, and he has done it according to his word.** It is very precious to see the word of the Lord fulfilled in our happy experience; it endears the Scripture to us, and makes us love the Lord of the Scripture.

The book of providence tallies with the book of promise: what we read in the page of inspiration we meet with again in the leaves of our life-story.

We may not have thought that it would be so, but our unbelief is repented of now that we see the mercy of the Lord to us, and his faithfulness to his word; henceforth **we are bound to display a firmer faith both in God and in his promise. He has spoken well, and he has dealt well. He is the best of Masters;** for it is to a very unworthy and incapable servant that he has acted thus blessedly: does not this cause us to delight in his service more and more? We cannot say that we have dealt well with

our Master; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but as for our Lord, he has given us light work, large maintenance, loving encouragement, and liberal wages. **It is a wonder that he has not long ago discharged us, or at least reduced our allowances, or handled us roughly;** yet we have had no hard dealings, all has been ordered with as much consideration as if we had rendered perfect obedience. **We have had bread enough and to spare, our livery has been duly supplied, and his service has ennobled us and made us happy as kings. Complaints we have none.**

We lose ourselves in adoring thanksgiving, and find ourselves again in careful thanks-living.

66. *“Teach me good judgment and knowledge.”*

Again he begs for teaching, as in verse 64, and again he uses God’s mercy as an argument.

Since God had dealt well with him, he is encouraged to pray for judgment to appreciate the Lord’s goodness.

Good judgment is the form of goodness which the godly man most needs and most desires, and it is one which the Lord is most ready to bestow.

David felt that he had frequently failed in judgment in the matter of the Lord’s dealings with him: **from want of knowledge he had**

misjudged the chastening hand of the heavenly Father, and therefore he now asks to be better instructed, since he perceives the injustice which he had done to the Lord by his hasty conclusions.

He means to say—Lord, thou didst deal well with me when I thought thee hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord.

A sight of our errors and a sense of our ignorance should make us teachable.

We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect;

if the Lord teaches us knowledge we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise.

The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance:

let us ardently long for his teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.

“For I have believed thy commandments.”

His heart was right, and therefore he hoped his head would be made right.

He had faith, and therefore he hoped to receive wisdom. His mind had been settled in the conviction that the precepts of the word were from the Lord, and were therefore just, wise, kind, and profitable; he believed in holiness, and as that belief is no mean work of grace upon the soul, he looked for yet further operations of divine grace. He who believes the commands is the man to know and understand the doctrines and the promises. If in looking back upon our mistakes and ignorances we can yet see that we heartily loved the precepts of the divine will, we have good reason to hope that we are Christ's disciples, and that he will teach us and make us men of good judgment and sound knowledge. A man who has learned discernment by experience, and has thus become a man of sound judgment, is a valuable member of a church, and the means of much edification to others. Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge."

67. "*Before I was afflicted I went astray.*" Partly, perhaps, through the absence of trial. Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray. If any of us remember a time in which we had no trouble, we also probably recollect that then grace was low, and temptation was strong. It may be that some believer cries, "O that it were with me as in those summer days before I was afflicted." Such a sigh is most unwise, and arises from a carnal love of ease: the spiritual man who prizes growth in grace will bless God that those dangerous days are over, and that if the weather be more stormy it is also more healthy. It is well when the mind is open and candid, as in this instance: perhaps David would never have known and confessed his own strayings if he had not smarted under the rod. Let us join in his humble acknowledgments, for doubtless we have imitated him in his strayings. Why is it that a little ease works in us so much disease? Can we never rest without rusting? Never be filled without waxing fat? Never rise as to one world without going down as to another? What weak creatures we are to be unable to bear a little pleasure! What base hearts are those which turn the abundance of God's goodness into an occasion for sin. "*But now have I kept thy word.*" Grace is in that heart which profits by its chastening. It is of no use to plough barren soil. When there is no spiritual life affliction works no spiritual benefit; but where the heart is sound trouble awakens conscience, wandering is confessed, the soul becomes again obedient to the command, and continues to be so. Whipping will not turn a rebel into a child; but to the true child a touch of the rod is a sure corrective. In the Psalmist's case the medicine of affliction worked a change—"but"; an immediate change—"now"; a lasting change—"have I"; an inward change—"have I kept"; a change Godward—"thy word." Before his trouble he wandered, but after it he kept within the hedge of the word, and found good pasture for his soul: the trial tethered him to his proper place; it kept him, and then he kept God's word. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and this is one of them, it puts a bridle upon transgression and furnishes a spur for holiness.

68. "*Thou art good, and doest good.*" Even in affliction God is good, and does good. This is the confession of experience. God is essential goodness in himself, and in every attribute of his nature he is good in the fullest sense of the term; indeed, he has a monopoly of goodness, for

there is none good but one, that is God. His acts are according to his nature: from a pure source flow pure streams. God is not latent and inactive goodness; he displays himself by his doings, he is actively beneficent, he does good. How much good he does no tongue can tell! How good he is no heart can conceive! It is well to worship the Lord as the poet here does by describing him. Facts about God are the best praise of God. All the glory we can give to God is to reflect his own glory upon himself. We can say no more good of God than God is and does, We believe in his goodness, and so honour him by our faith; we admire that goodness, and so glorify him by our love; we declare that goodness, and so magnify him by our testimony.

"Teach me thy statutes." The same prayer as before, backed with the same argument. He prays, "Lord be good, and do good to me that I may both be good and do good through thy teaching." The man of God was a learner, and delighted to learn: he ascribed this to the goodness of the Lord, and hoped that for the same reason he would be allowed to remain in the school and learn on till he could perfectly practise every lesson. His chosen class-book was the royal statutes, he wanted no other. He knew the sad result of breaking those statutes, and by a painful experience he had been led back to the way of righteousness; and therefore he begged as the greatest possible instance of the divine goodness that he might be taught a perfect knowledge of the law, and a complete conformity to it. He who mourns that he has not kept the word longs to be taught it, and he who rejoices that by grace he has been taught to keep it is not less anxious for the like instruction to be continued to him.

In verse 12, which is the fourth verse of Beth, we have much the same sense as in this fourth verse of Teth.

69. *"The proud have forged a lie against me."* They first derided him (51), then defrauded him (61), and now they have defamed him. To injure his character they resorted to falsehood, for they could find nothing against him if they spoke the truth. They forged a lie as a blacksmith beats out a weapon of iron, or they counterfeited the truth as men forge false coin. The original may suggest a common expression—"They have patched up a lie against me." They were not too proud to lie. Pride is a lie, and when a proud man utters lies "he speaketh of his own." Proud men are usually the bitterest opponents of the righteous: they are envious of their good fame and are eager to ruin it. Slander is a cheap and handy weapon if the object is the destruction of a gracious reputation; and when many proud ones conspire to concoct, exaggerate, and spread abroad a malicious falsehood, they generally succeed in wounding their victim, and it is no fault of theirs if they do not kill him outright. O the venom which lies under the tongue of a liar! Many a happy life has been embittered by it, and many a good repute has been poisoned as with the deadliest drug. It is painful to the last degree to hear unscrupulous men hammering away at the devil's anvil forging a new calumny; the only help against it is the sweet promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

"But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart." My one anxiety shall be to mind my own business and stick to the commandments of the Lord. If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of contumely and slander. David renews his resolve—"I will keep"; he takes a new look at the commands, and sees them to be really the Lord's—"thy precepts"; and he arouses his entire nature to the work—"with my whole heart." When slanders drive us to more resolute and careful obedience they work our lasting good; falsehood

hurled against us may be made to promote our fidelity to the truth, and the malice of men may increase our love to God. If we try to answer lies by our words we may be beaten in the battle; but a holy life is an unanswerable refutation of all calumnies. Spite is balked if we persevere in holiness despite all opposition.

70. "*Their heart is as fat as grease.*" They delight in fatness, but I delight in thee. Their hearts, through sensual indulgence, have grown insensible, coarse, and grovelling; but thou hast saved me from such a fate through thy chastening hand. Proud men grow fat through carnal luxuries, and this makes them prouder still. They riot in their prosperity, and fill their hearts therewith till they become insensible, effeminate, and self-indulgent. A greasy heart is something horrible; it is a fatness which makes a man fatuous, a fatty degeneration of the heart which leads to feebleness and death. The fat in such men is killing the life in them. Dryden wrote—

"O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,
Fat minds and ever grovelling on the ground."

In this condition men have no heart except for luxury, their very being seems to swim and stew in the fat of cookery and banqueting. Living on the fat of the land, their nature is subdued to that which they have fed upon; the muscle of their nature has gone to softness and grease.

"*But I delight in thy law.*" How much better is it to joy in the law of the Lord than to joy in sensual indulgences! This makes the heart healthy, and keeps the mind lowly. No one who loves holiness has the slightest cause to envy the prosperity of the worldling. Delight in the law elevates and ennobles, while carnal pleasure clogs the intellect and degrades the affections. There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: *their heart is as fat as grease*, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord. Our delights are a better test of our character than anything else: as a man's heart is, so is the man. David oiled the wheels of life with his delight in God's law, and not with the fat of sensuality. He had his relishes and dainties, his festivals and delights, and all these he found in doing the will of the Lord his God. When law becomes delight, obedience is bliss. Holiness in the heart causes the soul to eat the fat of the land. To have the law for our delight will breed in our hearts the very opposite of the effects of pride; deadness, sensuality, and obstinacy will be cured, and we shall become teachable, sensitive, and spiritual. How careful should we be to live under the influence of the divine law that we fall not under the law of sin and death.

71. "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" Even though the affliction came from bad men, it was overruled for good ends; though it was bad as it came from them it was good for David. It benefited him in many ways, and he knew it. Whatever he may have thought while under the trial, he perceived himself to be the better for it when it was over. It was not good to the proud to be prosperous, for their hearts grew sensual and insensible; but affliction was good for the Psalmist. Our worst is better for us than the sinner's best. It is bad for sinners to rejoice, and good for saints to sorrow. A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs, and among the rest is this—that we have thus been schooled in the law. "*That I might learn thy statutes.*" These we have come to know and to keep by feeling the smart of the rod. We prayed the Lord to teach us (66), and now we see how he has already been doing it. Truly he has dealt well with us, for he has dealt wisely with us. We have been kept from the ignorance of the greasy-hearted by our trials, and this, if there were nothing else, is just cause for constant gratitude. To be larded by prosperity is not good for the proud; but for the truth to be learned

by adversity is good for the humble. Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers. As the Latins say, *Experientia docet*, experience teaches. There is no royal road to learning the royal statutes; God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears.

72. "*The law of thy mouth.*" A sweetly expressive name for the word of God. It comes from God's own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. Things written are as dried herbs; but speech has a liveliness and dew about it. We do well to look upon the word of the Lord as though it were newly spoken into our ear; for in very truth it is not decayed by years, but is as forcible and sure as though newly uttered. Precepts are prized when it is seen that they come forth from the lips of our Father who is in heaven. The same lips which spoke us into existence have spoken the law by which we are to govern that existence. Whence could a law so sweetly proceed as from the mouth of our covenant God? Well may we prize beyond all price that which comes from such a source.

"*Is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*" If a poor man had said this, the world's witlings would have hinted that the grapes are sour, and that men who have no wealth are the first to despise it; but this is the verdict of a man who owned his thousands, and could judge by actual experience of the value of money and the value of truth. He speaks of great riches, he heaps it up by thousands, he mentions the varieties of its forms,—"gold and silver"; and then he sets the word of God before it all, as better *to him*, even if others did not think it better to them. Wealth is good in some respects, but obedience is better in all respects. It is well to keep the treasures of this life; but far more commendable to keep the law of the Lord. The law is better than gold and silver, for these may be stolen from us, but not the word; these take to themselves wings, but the word of God remains; these are useless in the hour of death, but then it is that the promise is most dear. Instructed Christians recognize the value of the Lord's word, and warmly express it, not only in their testimony to their fellow-men, but in their devotions to God. It is a sure sign of a heart which has learned God's statutes when it prizes them above all earthly possessions; and it is an equally certain mark of grace when the precepts of Scripture are as precious as its promises. The Lord cause us thus to prize the law of his mouth.

See how this portion of the Psalm is flavoured with goodness. God's dealings are good (65), holy judgment is good (66), affliction is good (67), God is good (68), and here the law is not only good, but better than the best of treasure. Lord, make us good through thy good word. Amen.

Notes on Verses 65–72

ΤΕΤΗ.—In the original each stanza begins with T, and in our own version it is so in all but verses 67 and 70, which can easily be made to do so by reading, "Till I was afflicted," and "Tis good for me that I have been afflicted."—C. H. S.

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD.*"

1. The party dealing is God himself: all good is to be referred to God as the author of it.
2. The benefit received is generally expressed, "*Thou hast dealt well.*" Some translate it out of the Hebrew, *Bonum fecisti*, thou hast done good with thy servant; the Septuagint, Χρηστότητα ἐποίησας μετα του δουλου σου, thou hast made goodness to or with thy servant; out of them, the Vulgate, *Bonitatem fecisti*. Some take this cause generally, "Whatever thou dost for thy

servants is good": they count it so, though it be never so contrary to the interest of the flesh: sickness is good, loss of friends is good; and so are poverty and loss of goods, to an humble and thankful mind. But surely David speaketh here of some supply and deliverance wherein God had made good some promise to him. The Jewish rabbies understand it of his return to the kingdom; but most Christian writers understand it of some spiritual benefit; that good which God had done to him. If anything may be collected from the subsequent verses, it was certainly some spiritual good. The Septuagint repeat χρηστότητα twice in this and the following verse, as if he acknowledged the benefit of that good judgment and knowledge of which there he beggetteth an increase. It was in part given him already, and that learned by afflictions, as we see, in the third verse of this portion: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." His prayer is—Now, then, go on to increase this work, this goodness which thou hast shown to thy servant.

3. The object, "*thy servant*": it is an honourable, comfortable style; David delighted in it. God is a bountiful and a gracious master, ready to do good to his servants, rewarding them with grace here, and crowning that grace with glory hereafter: "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).—*Thomas Manton*. Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well*." If the children of God did but know what was best for them, they would perceive that God did that which was best for them.—*John Mason*.

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant*." He knew that God's gifts are without repentance, and that he is not weary of well-doing, but will finish the thing he hath begun; and therefore he pleads past favours. Nothing is more forcible to obtain mercy than to lay God's former mercies before him. Here are two grounds, First. If he dealt well with him when he was not regenerate, how much more will he now? and Secondly, all the gifts of God shall be perfectly finished, therefore he will go on to deal well with his servant. Here is a difference between faith and an accusing conscience: the accusing conscience is afraid to ask more, because it hath abused the former mercies: but faith, assuring us that all God's benefits are tokens of his love bestowed on us according to his word, is bold to ask for more.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant*." "No doubt," said the late Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, Scotland, "I have met with trials as well as others; yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if he were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed, except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother, and yet never missed them.'"—*Arvine's Anecdotes*.

Verse 65.—"*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word*." The expression, "*according to thy word*," is so often repeated in this Psalm, that we are apt to overlook it, or to give it only the general meaning of "because of thy promise." But in reality it implies much more. Had God dealt "*well*" with David according to man's idea? If so, what mean such expressions as these—"O forsake me not utterly" (ver. 8)—"I am a stranger in the earth" (ver. 19)—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust" (ver. 25)—"My soul melteth for heaviness" (ver. 28)—"Turn away my reproach which I fear" (ver. 39)—"The proud have had me greatly in derision" (ver. 51)—"Horror hath taken hold upon me" (ver. 53)?

In view of such passages as these, can it be said that God "*dealt well*" with David, according to man's idea? David's experience was one of very great and very varied trial. There is not a phase

of our feelings in sorrow which does not find ample expression in his Psalms. And yet he says, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, *according to thy word*."

How, then, are we to interpret the expression, so often repeated here, in accordance with the facts of David's spiritual life?

God dealt well with him "according to his word," in the sense of dealing with him *according to what his word explained was the true good*—not delivering him from all trial, but sending him such trial as he specially required. He felt truly that God had dealt *well* with him when he could say (ver. 67), "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Again (ver. 71), "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Such dealing was hard for flesh and blood to bear, but it was indeed "*well*," in the sense of accomplishing most blessed results.

It was "according to his word" too, in the sense of being in *accordance with his revealed manner of dealing with his people*, who are chastened for their profit.

Again, God had "dealt well" with David *according to his word or covenant*; the present fulfilment (even if in itself bitter) being a sure earnest of his final perfecting of his work, and glorifying himself in the entire fulfilment of his word, in the completed salvation of his servant. According to thy word, O Lord, thou hast dealt well with thy servant. Thy word is the light and lamp that shows things in their true aspect, and teaches us to know that all things work together for good to thy people; that thou doest all things well. "Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." What can be more wonderful than such views to our eyes?

"According to thy word": not only "because of thy promise," but in such a manner and measure as thy word declares. See how such an understanding of the expression opens out the idea of "Be merciful to me according to thy word" (ver. 58). All the sweet promises and declarations of God's infinite mercy rise before us, and make it a vast request. Again, "Quicken thou me," and "strengthen thou me according to thy word"—*up to the full measure of what thou hast promised and provided for thy people*. See the fulness in this view, of ver. 76, "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, *according to thy word*." Again, ver. 169, "Give me understanding *according to thy word*"; ver. 170, "Deliver me *according to thy word*." In each of these we are to feel that the request includes the thought of all that the word teaches on the subject.

Let our prayer then for mercy, and strength, and comfort, and understanding, and deliverance, ever be a prayer for these, in the full measure in which they are revealed and promised in the word of God.—*Mary B. M. Duncan (1835–1865) in "Under the Shadow."*

Verse 66.—"Teach me good judgment," etc. David, who discovered a holy taste (Ps. 19:10; 104:34; 119:103); and recommended it to others (34:8), requests in our text to have it increased. For the word rendered "*judgment*," properly signifies *taste*, and denotes that relish for divine truth, and for the divine goodness and holiness, which is peculiar to true saints. I propose therefore to consider the nature and objects of that spiritual taste which is possessed by every gracious soul, and which all true saints desire to possess in a still greater degree.

The original word, which is often applied to those objects of sense which are distinguished by the palate, is here used in a metaphorical sense, as the corresponding term frequently is in our own language. "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste meat?" (Job 12:11). Our translators in this place render it, "*judgment*," which is nearly the same thing; yet as the terms

are applied among us, there is a difference between them. Taste is that which enables a man to form a more compendious judgment. Judgment is slower in its operations than taste; it forms its decisions in a more circuitous way. So we apply the term *taste* to many objects of mental decision, to the beauty of a poem, to excellence of style, to elegance of dress or of deportment, to painting, to music, etc., in which a good taste will lead those who possess it, to decide speedily, and yet accurately, on the beauty, excellence, and propriety of the objects with which it has long been conversant without laborious examination.

Just so, true saints have a power of receiving pleasure from the beauty of holiness, which shines forth resplendently in the word of God, in the divine character, in the law, in the gospel, in the cross of Christ, in the example of Christ, and in the conduct of all his true followers, so far as they are conformed to his lovely image. I do not mean by this that they are influenced by a blind instinct, for which they can assign no sufficient reason: the genuine feelings of a true Christian can all of them be justified by the soundest reason: but those feelings which were first produced by renewing grace, are so strengthened by daily communion with God, and by frequent contemplation of spiritual things, that they acquire a delicacy and readiness of perception, which no one can possess who has never tasted how gracious the Lord is. You cannot touch, as it were, a certain string, but the renewed heart must needs answer to it. Whatever truly tends to exalt God, to bring the soul near to him, and to insure his being glorified and enjoyed, will naturally attract the notice, excite the affections and influence the conduct of one who is born of God. "Sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." "My meditation of thee shall be sweet." "How sweet are thy words to my taste! sweeter than honey to my mouth." "O taste and see that the Lord is good."—*John Ryland*, 1753–1825.

Verse 66.—"Teach me good judgment and knowledge," etc. Literally it may be rendered thus,— Teach me goodness, discernment and knowledge; for I have believed or confided in thy commandments. In our system of divine things, we might be inclined to place knowledge and discernment first, as begetting the "goodness." But it is a well ascertained fact, that the intellectual and moral powers are reciprocal—that the moral also give strength to the intellectual. Moreover, it is only the spiritual man that discerns the things of God. The state of being spiritually minded, and also conversant with divine things, gives a vigour and breadth to the intellect itself, that remarkably appears in the lives of eminent men. And if you remark that some have been eminent who were devoid of spiritual qualities, the reply might be—How much more eminent would they have been had they possessed these qualities. The petition is, "Teach me goodness, discernment and knowledge." The principle of pleasing God may be within, and yet the mind may require to be enlightened in all duty; and again, though all duty be known, we may require spiritual discernment to see and feel it aright.—*John Stephen*.

Verse 66.—"Teach me good judgment." In a lecture of Sir John Lubbock's [on the fertilization of flowers by the agency of insects], a striking distinction is noted in regard to this operation between beautiful and hideous plants. Bees, it would appear, delight in pleasant odours and bright colours, and invariably choose those plants which give pleasure to man. If we watch the course of these insects on their visit to a garden, we shall observe them settling upon the rose, the lavender, and all other similar agreeable flowers of brilliant hues or sweet scent. In marked contrast with this is the conduct of flies, which always show a preference for livid yellow or dingy red plants, and those which possess an unpleasant smell. The bee is a creature of fine and sensitive tastes. The fly is "a species of insectoid vulture," naturally turning to such vegetable

food as resembles carrion. Let two plates be placed on a lawn, at a little distance apart, the one containing that ill-scented under-ground fungus, the Stink-horn, and the other a handful of moss roses, and this difference will be immediately discerned. The foul-odoured and unsightly fungus will soon be covered with flies, while the bees will resort to the plate of roses. To this love of bees for fine colours and fragrant perfumes we are indebted for our choicest flowers. For by taking the pollen dust of some conspicuous flower to the stigma of another, they have by this union produced the seed of a still richer variety. Thus, age after age, many blossoms have been growing increasingly beautiful. On the other hand, strange to say, through a similar process, a progress in the opposite direction has taken place in those plants which are frequented by flies, and their unwholesome and repulsive qualities have become intensified. So is it with the two great classes into which mankind may be divided—the men of this world, and the men of the next. While the purified affections of the one centre continually on “whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,” so the earthward and vile affections of the other fasten on corruption. Not more surely does the laborious bee fly from one beautiful flower to another, than does the Christian seek of set purpose all that is fairest, sweetest, and best on earth. His prayer is that of David, in Psalm 119:66, “*Teach me good taste*” (which is the literal translation); and “if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” he thinks on these things.—James Neil, in “*Rays from the Realms of Nature*,” 1879.

Verse 66.—“*Good judgment and knowledge.*” No blessings are more suitable than “*good judgment and knowledge*”—“*knowledge*” of ourselves, of our Saviour, of the way of obedience—and “*good judgment*” to direct and apply this knowledge to some valuable end. These two parts of our intellectual furniture have a most important connexion and dependence upon each other. “*Knowledge*” is the speculative perception of general truth. “*Judgment*” is the practical application of it to the heart and conduct.—Charles Bridges.

Verse 66.—“*For I have believed thy commandments.*” These words deserve a little consideration, because believing is here joined to an unusual object. Had it been, “for I have believed thy promises,” or, “obeyed thy commandments,” the sense of the clause had been more obvious to every vulgar apprehension. To believe commandments, sounds as harsh to a common ear, as to see with the ear, and hear with the eye; but, for all this, the commandments are the object; and of them he saith, not, “I have obeyed”; but, “*I have believed.*”

To take off the seeming asperity of the phrase, some interpreters conceive that “*commandments*” is put for the word in general; and so promises are included, yea, they think, principally intended, especially those promises which encouraged him to look to God for necessary things, such as good judgment and knowledge are. But this interpretation would divert us from the weight and force of these significant words. Therefore let us note,—

1. Certainly there is a faith in the commandments, as well as in the promises. We must believe that God is their author, and that they are the expressions of his commanding and legislative will, which we are bound to obey. Faith must discern the sovereignty and goodness of the law-maker and believe that his commands are holy, just and good; it must also teach us that God loves those who keep his law and is angry with those who transgress, and that he will see to it that his law is vindicated at the last great day.

2. Faith in the commandments is as necessary as faith in the promises; for, as the promises are not esteemed, embraced, and improved, unless they are believed to be of God, so neither are

the precepts; they do not sway the conscience, nor incline the affections, except as they are believed to be divine.

3. Faith in the commands must be as lively as faith in the promises. As the promises are not believed with a lively faith, unless they draw off the heart from carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer to us; so the precepts are not believed rightly, unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in obtaining that happiness, and unless we are determined to adhere to them, and obey them. As the king's laws are not kept as soon as they are believed to be the king's laws, unless also, upon the consideration of his authority and power, we subject ourselves to them; so this believing noteth a ready alacrity to hear God's voice and obey it, and to govern our hearts and actions according to his counsel and direction in the word.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 66.—“*For I have believed thy commandments.*” The commandments of God are not alone; but they have promises of grace on the right hand, and threatenings of wrath on the left: upon both of these faith exercises itself, and without such faith no one will be able to render obedience to God's commands.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 67.—“*Before I was afflicted I went astray,*” etc. Not that he wilfully, wickedly, maliciously, and through contempt, departed from his God; this he denies (Ps. 18:21); but through the weakness of the flesh, the prevalence of corruption, and the force of temptation, and very much through a careless, heedless, and negligent frame of spirit, he got out of the right way, and wandered from it before he was well aware. The word is used of erring through ignorance (Lev. 5:18). This was in his time of prosperity, when, though he might not, like Jeshurun, wax fat and kick, and forsake and lightly esteem the Rock of his salvation; or fall into temptations and hurtful lusts, and err from the faith, and be pierced with many sorrows; yet he might become inattentive to the duties of religion, and be negligent of them, which is a common case.—*John Gill*.

Verse 67.—“*Before I was afflicted.*” The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, “*Before I was humbled.*” The Hebrew word has the general sense of being afflicted, and may refer to any kind of trial.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 67.—“*Before I was afflicted.*” Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day.—*Eliza Cook*.

Verse 67.—“*I was afflicted.*” God in wisdom deals with us as some great person would do with a disobedient son, that forsakes his house, and riots among his tenants. His father gives orders that they should treat him ill, affront, and chase him from them, and all, that he might bring him back. The same doth God: man is his wild and debauched son; he flies from the commands of his father, and cannot endure to live under his strict and severe government. He resorts to the pleasures of the world, and revels and riots among the creatures. But God resolves to recover him, and therefore commands every creature to handle him roughly. “Burn him, fire; toss him, tempests, and shipwreck his estate; forsake him, friends; designs, fail him; children, be rebellious to him, as he is to me; let his supports and dependencies sink under him, his riches melt away, leave him poor, and despised, and destitute.” These are all God's servants, and must obey his will. And to what end is all this, but that, seeing himself forsaken of all, he may at length, like the beggared prodigal, return to his father?—*Ezekiel Hopkins*, 1633–1690.

Verse 67.—“I was afflicted.” As men clip the feathers of fowls, when they begin to fly too high or too far; even so doth God diminish our riches, etc., that we should not pass our bounds, and glory too much of such gifts.—*Otho Wermullerus.*

Verse 67.—“But now have I kept thy word.”

Affliction brings Man Home.

“Man like a silly sheep doth often stray,
Not knowing of his way,
Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin
He daily travels in;
There’s nothing will reduce him sooner than
Afflictions to his pen.

He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain
And stormy weather hastens home again.

“Thou, the great Shepherd of my soul, O keep
Me, thy unworthy sheep
From gadding: or if fair means will not do it,
Let foul, then, bring me to it.
Rather then I should perish in my error,
Lord bring me back with terror;
Better I be chastized with thy rod
And Shepherd’s staff, than stray from thee, my God.

“Though for the present stripes do grieve me sore,
At last they profit more,
And make me to observe thy word, which I
Neglected formerly;

Let me come home rather by weeping cross
Then still be at a loss.
For health I’d rather take a bitter pill.
Then eating sweet-meats to be always ill.”

Thomas Washbourne, 1606–1687.

Verse 67.—From the countless throng before the throne of God and the Lamb, we may yet hear the words of the Psalmist, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word.”

There is many an one who will say, “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth” (Job 5:17). One would tell you that his worldly undoing was the making of his heavenly prospects; and another that the loss of all things was the gain of All in All. There are multitudes whom God has afflicted with natural blindness that they might gain spiritual sight; and those who under bodily infirmities and diseases of divers sorts have pined and wasted away this earthly life, gladly laying hold on glory, honour, and immortality instead.—*William Garrett Lewis, in “Westbourne Grove Sermons,” 1872.*

Verse 67.—By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves.—John Mason.

Verse 68.—“Thou art good, and doest good.” There is a good God set before us, that we may not take up with any low pattern of goodness. He is represented to us as all goodness. He is good in his nature; and his work is agreeable to his nature; nothing is wanting to it, or defective

in it. Nothing can be added to it to make it better. Philo saith, “Ο ὅντως ὁν το πρῶτον αγαθόν”: the first being must needs be the first good. As soon as we conceive that there is a God, we presently conceive that he is good, He is good of himself, good in himself, goodness itself, and both the fountain and the pattern of all the good that is in the creatures.

1. As to his NATURE, he is originally “*good*,” good in himself, and good to others; as the sun hath light in himself, and giveth light to all other things. Essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself. Goodness in us is an accessory quality or superadded gift; but in God it is not a quality, but his essence. In a vessel that is gilded with gold the gilding or lustre is a superadded quality; but in a vessel all of gold, the lustre and the substance is the same. God is infinitely good; the creatures’ good is limited, but there is nothing to limit the perfection of God, or give it any measure. He is an ocean of goodness without banks or bottom. Alas! what is our drop to this ocean! God is immutably good; his goodness can never be more or less than it is; as there can be no addition to it, so no subtraction from it. Man in his innocence was *peccabilis*, or liable to sin, afterwards *peccator*, or an actual sinner; but God ever was and is good. Now this is the pattern propounded to us, but his nature is a great deep. Therefore—

2. As to his WORK, “*he doeth good*.” What hath God been acting upon the great theatre of the world but goodness for these six thousand years? Acts 14:17, “Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” He left not himself without a witness, ἀγαθοποιῶν, not by taking vengeance of their idolatries, but by distributing benefits. This is propounded to our imitation, that our whole life may be nothing else but doing good: Matt. 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Well, therefore, doth the Psalmist say, “*Teach me thy statutes.*”—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 68.—“*Thou art good, and doest good.*” We should bless the Lord at all times, and keep up good thoughts of God on every occasion, especially in the time of affliction. Hence we are commanded to glorify God in the fires (Isai. 24:15); and this the three children did in the hottest furnace.... I grant, indeed, we cannot give thanks for affliction as affliction, but either as it is the means of some good to us, or as the gracious hand of God is some way remarkable therein toward us. In this respect there is no condition on this side of hell but we have reason to praise God in it, though it be the greatest of calamities. Hence it was that David, when he speaks of his affliction, adds presently, “*Thou art good, and doest good;*” and he declares (ver. 65), “*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.*” Hence Paul and Silas praised God when they were scourged and imprisoned.—*John Willison, 1680–1750.*

Verse 68.—“*Thou art good.*” The blessed effects of chastisement, as a special instance of the Lord’s goodness, might naturally lead to an acknowledgment of his general goodness, in his own character, and in his unwearied dispensations of love. Judging in unbelieving haste of his providential and gracious dealings, feeble sense imagines a frown, when the eye of faith discerns a smile upon his face; and therefore in proportion as faith is exercised in the review of the past, and the experience of the present, we shall be prepared with the ascription of praise—“*Thou art good.*”—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 69.—“*The proud have forged a lie against me.*” If in the present day the enemies of the truth in their lying writings rail against the orthodox teachers in the Church, that is a very old artifice of the Devil, since David complains that in his day it happened unto him.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 69.—“The proud have forged a lie.” They trim up lies with shadows of truth and neat language; they have mints to frame their lies curiously in, and presses to print their lies withal.—*William Greenhill, 1591–1677.*

Verse 69.—“The proud.” Faith humbleth, and infidelity maketh proud. Faith humbleth, because it letteth us see our sins, and the punishments thereof, and that we have no dealing with God but through the mediation of Christ; and that we can do no good, nor avoid evil, but by grace. But when men know not this, then they think much of themselves, and therefore are proud. Therefore all ignorant men, all heretics, and worldlings are proud. They that are humbled under God’s hands, are humble to men; but they that despise God do also persecute his servants.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 69.—“Forged a lie.” Vatablus translates it, *concinnarunt mendacia*. So Tremellius: *they have trimmed up lies.* As Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, so he can trim up his lies under coverings of truth, to make them the more plausible unto men. And indeed this is no small temptation, when lies made against the godly are trimmed up with the shadows of truth, and wicked men cover their unrighteous dealings with appearances of righteousness. Thus, not only are the godly unjustly persecuted, but simple ones are made to believe that they have most justly deserved it. In this case the godly are to sustain themselves by the testimony of a good conscience.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 69.—“Forged” expresses the essential meaning of the Hebrew word, but not its figurative form, which seems to be that of sewing, analogous to that of weaving, as applied to the same thing, both in Hebrew and in other languages. We may also compare our figurative phrase, *to patch up*, which, however, is not so much suggestive of artifice or skill as of the want of it. The connection of the clauses is, that all the craft and malice of his enemies should only lead him to obey God with a more undivided heart than ever.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 69.—“Forged.” The metaphor may be like the Greek (ράπτειν δόλους), from sewing or patching up: or, from *smearing*, or *daubing* (Delitzsch, Moll, etc.), a wall, so as to hide the real substance. The Psalmist remains true to God despite the falsehoods with which the proud smear and hide his true fidelity.—*The Speaker’s Commentary.*

Verse 69.—“A lie.”—Satan’s two arms by which he wrestles against the godly are violence and lies: where he cannot or dare not, use violence, there be sure he will not fail to fight with lies. And herein doth the Lord greatly show his careful providence, in fencing his children against Satan’s malice and the proud brags of his instruments, in such sort, that their proudest hearts are forced to forge lies; their malice being so great that they must do evil; and yet their power so bridled that they cannot do what they would.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 69.—“I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.” Let the word of the Lord come, let it come; and if we had six hundred necks, we would submit them all to its dictates.—*Augustine.*

Verse 70.—“Their heart is as fat as grease.” The word שָׁמֶן occurs nowhere else in Scripture, but with the Chaldees שָׁמֶן signifies *to fatten, to make fat; also to make stupid and doltish,* because such the fat oftentimes are.... For this reason the proud, who are mentioned in the preceding verse, are described by their fixed resolve in evil, because they are almost insensible; as is to be seen in pigs, who pricked through the skin with a bodkin, and that slowly, as long as the bodkin only touches the fat, do not feel the prick until it reaches to the flesh. Thus the proud, whose great prosperity is elsewhere likened to fatness, have a heart totally

insusceptible, which is insensible to the severe reproofs of the Divine word, and also to its holy delights and pleasures, by reason of the affluence of carnal things; aye, more, is altogether unfitted for good impulses; just as elsewhere is to be seen with fat animals, how slow they are and unfit for work, when, on the contrary, those are agile and quick which are not hindered by this same fatness.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 70.—“*Their heart is as fat as grease.*” This makes them—1. *Senseless* and secure; they are past feeling; thus the phrase is used (Isa. 6:10): “Make the heart of the people fat.” They are not sensible of the teaching of the word of God, or his rod. 2. *Sensual* and voluptuous: “*Their eyes stand out with fatness*” (Psa. 73:7); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them: I would not change conditions with them; “*I delight in thy law.*”—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 70.—“*Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law;*” as if he should say, My heart is a lean heart, a hungry heart, my soul loveth and rejoiceth in thy word. I have nothing else to fill it but thy word, and the comforts I have from it; but their hearts are fat hearts; fat with the world, fat with lust; they hate the word. As a full stomach loatheth meat and cannot digest it; so wicked men hate the word, it will not go down with them, it will not gratify their lusts.—*William Fenner.*

Being anxious to know the medical significance of fatty heart, I applied to an eminent gentleman who is well known as having been President of the College of Physicians. His reply shows that the language is rather figurative than literal. He kindly replied to me as follows:—There are two forms of so-called “fatty heart.” In the one there is an excessive amount of fatty tissue covering the exterior of the organ, especially about the base. This may be observed in all cases where the body of the animal is throughout over fat, as in animals fattened for slaughter. It does not necessarily interfere with the action of the heart, and may not be of much importance in a medical point of view. The second form is, however, a much more serious condition. In this, the muscular structure of the heart, on which its all-important function, as the central propelling power, depends, undergoes a degenerative change, by which the contractile fibres of the muscles are converted into a structure having none of the properties of the natural fibres, and in which are found a number of fatty, oily globules, which can be readily seen by means of the microscope. This condition, if at all extensive, renders the action of the heart feeble and irregular, and is very perilous, not infrequently causing sudden death. It is found in connection with a general unhealthy condition of system, and is evidence of general malnutrition. It is brought about by an indolent, luxurious mode of living, or, at all events, by neglect of bodily exercise and those hygienic rules which are essential for healthy nutrition. It cannot, however, be said to be incompatible with mental vigour, and certainly is not necessarily associated with stupidity. But the heart, in this form of disease, is literally “greasy,” and may be truly described as “fat as grease.” So much for physiology and pathology. May I venture on the sacred territory of biblical exegesis without risking the charge of fatuousness? Is not the Psalmist contrasting those who lead an animal, self-indulgent, vicious life, by which body and mind are incapacitated for their proper uses, and those who can *run* in the way of God’s commandments, *delight* to do his will, and *meditate* on his precepts? Sloth, fatness, and stupidity, *versus* activity, firm muscles, and mental vigour. Body *versus* mind. Man become as a beast *versus* man retaining the image of God.—*Sir James Risdon Bennett, 1881.*

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me,*” etc. I am mended by my sickness, enriched by my poverty, and strengthened by my weakness, and with S. Bernard desire, *Irascaris mihi Domine*, O Lord, be angry with me. For if thou chidest me not, thou considerest me not; if I taste no bitterness, I have no physic; if thou correct me not, I am not thy son. Thus was it with the great-grandchild of David, Manasseh, when he was in affliction, “He besought the Lord his God”: even that king’s iron was more precious to him than his gold, his jail a more happy lodging than his palace, Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. What fools are we, then, to frown upon our afflictions! These, how crabbed soever, are our best friends. They are not indeed for our pleasure, they are for our profit; their issue makes them worthy of a welcome. What do we care how bitter that potion be that brings health.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*” Saints are great gainers by affliction, because “godliness,” which is “great gain,” which is “profitable for all things,” is more powerful than before. The rod of correction, by a miracle of grace, like that of Aaron’s, buds and blossoms, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness, which are most excellent. A rare sight it is indeed to see a man coming out of a bed of languishing, or any other furnace of affliction, more like to angels in purity, more like to Christ who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; more like unto God himself, being more exactly righteous in all his ways, and more exemplarily holy in all manner of conversation.—*Nathanael Vincent*,—1697.

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*” If I have no cross to bear to-day, I shall not advance heavenwards. A cross (that is anything that disturbs our peace), is the spur which stimulates, and without which we should most likely remain stationary, blinded with empty vanities, and sinking deeper into sin. A cross helps us onwards, in spite of our apathy and resistance. To lie quietly on a bed of down, may seem a very sweet existence; but pleasant ease and rest are not the lot of a Christian: if he would mount higher and higher, it must be by a rough road. Alas! for those who have no daily cross! Alas! for those who repine and fret against it!—From “*Gold Dust*,” 1880.

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me,*” etc. There are some things good but not pleasant, as *sorrow* and *affliction*. Sin is pleasant, but unprofitable; and sorrow is profitable, but unpleasant. As waters are purest when they are in motion, so saints are generally holiest when in affliction. Some Christians resemble those children who will learn their books no longer than while the rod is on their backs. It is well known that by the greatest affliction the Lord has sealed the sweetest instruction. Many are not bettered by the judgments they see, when they are by the judgments they have felt. The purest gold is the most pliable. That is the best blade which bends well without retaining its crooked figure.—*William Secker*, 1660.

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me,*” etc. Piety hath a wondrous virtue to change all things into matter of consolation and joy. No condition in effect can be evil or sad to a pious man: his very sorrows are pleasant, his infirmities are wholesome, his wants enrich him, his disgraces adorn him, his burdens ease him; his duties are privileges, his falls are the grounds of advancement, his very sins (as breeding contrition, humility, circumspection, and vigilance), do better and profit him: whereas impiety doth spoil every condition, doth corrupt and embase all good things, doth embitter all the conveniences and comforts of life.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630–1677.

Verse 71.—“*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*” In Miss E. J. Whately’s very interesting Life of her Father, the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, a fact is recorded, as told by Dr. Whately, with reference to the introduction of the larchtree into England. When the plants

were first brought, the gardener, hearing that they came from the south of Europe, and taking it for granted that they would require warmth,—forgetting that they might grow near the snow-line,—put them into a hot-house. Day by day they withered, until the gardener in disgust threw them on a dung-heap outside; there they began to revive and bud, and at last grew into trees. They needed the cold.

The great Husbandman often saves his plants by throwing them out into the cold. The nipping frosts of trial and affliction are oftentimes needed, if God's larches are to grow. It is under such discipline that new thoughts and feelings appear. The heart becomes more dead to the world and self. From the night of sorrow rises the morning of joy. Winter is the harbinger of spring. From the crucifixion of the old man comes the resurrection of the new, as in nature life is the child of death.

"The night is the mother of the day,
And winter of the spring;
And ever upon old decay,
The greenest mosses spring."

James Wareing Bardsley in "Illustrated Texts and Texts Illustrated," 1876.

Verse 71.—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted." It is a remarkable circumstance that the most brilliant colours of plants are to be seen on the highest mountains, in spots that are most exposed to the wildest weather. The brightest lichens and mosses, the loveliest gems of wild flowers, abound far up on the bleak, storm-scalped peak. One of the richest displays of organic colouring I ever beheld was near the summit of Mount Chenebettaz, a hill about 10,000 feet high, immediately above the great St. Bernard Hospice. The whole face of an extensive rock was covered with a most vivid yellow lichen, which shone in the sunshine like the golden battlement of an enchanted castle. There, in that lofty region, amid the most frowning desolation, exposed to the fiercest tempest of the sky, this lichen exhibited a glory of colour such as it never showed in the sheltered valley. I have two specimens of the same lichen before me while I write these lines, one from the great St. Bernard, and the other from the wall of a Scottish castle, deeply embosomed among sycamore trees; and the difference in point of form and colouring between them is most striking. The specimen nurtured amid the wild storms of the mountain peak is a lovely primrose hue, and is smooth in texture and complete in outline; while the specimen nurtured amid the soft airs and the delicate showers of the lowland valley is of a dim rusty hue, and is scurfy in texture, and broken in outline. And is it not so with the Christian who is afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted? Till the storms and vicissitudes of God's providence beat upon him again and again, his character appears marred and clouded by selfish and worldly influences. But trials clear away the obscurity, perfect the outlines of his disposition, and give brightness and blessings to his piety.

"Amidst my list of blessings infinite
Stands this the foremost, that my heart has bled;
For all I bless thee, most for the severe."

—*Hugh Macmillan.*

Verse 71.—"That I might learn thy statutes," He speaks not of that learning which is gotten by hearing or reading of God's word; but of the learning which he had gotten by experience; that he had felt the truth and comfort of God's word more effectual and lively in trouble than he

could do without trouble; which also made him more godly, wise, and religious when the trouble was gone.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 71.—“*That I might learn.*” “I had never known,” said Martin Luther’s wife, “what such and such things meant, in such and such Psalms, such complaints and workings of spirit; I had never understood the practice of Christian duties, had not God brought me under some affliction.” It is very true that God’s rod is as the schoolmaster’s pointer to the child, pointing out the letter, that he may the better take notice of it; thus he pointeth out to us many good lessons which we should never otherwise have learned.—*From John Spencer’s “Things New and Old,” 1658.*

Verse 71.—“*That I might learn.*” As prosperity blindeth the eyes of men, even so doth adversity open them. Like as the salve that remedieth the disease of the eyes doth first bite and grieve the eyes, and maketh them to water, but yet afterward the eyesight is clearer than it was; even so trouble doth vex men wonderfully at the first, but afterwards it lighteneth the eyes of the mind, that it is afterward more reasonable, wise and circumspect. For trouble bringeth experience, and experience bringeth wisdom.—*Otho Wermullerus, 1551.*

Verse 71.—“*Learn thy statutes.*” The Christian has reason to thank God that things have not been accommodated to his wishes. When the mist of tears was in his eyes, he looked into the word of God and saw magnificent things. When Jonah came up from the depths of ocean, he showed that he had learned the statutes of God. One could not go too deep to get such knowledge as he obtained. Nothing now could hinder him from going to Nineveh. It is just the same as though he had brought up from the deep an army of twelve legions of the most formidable troops. The word of God, grasped by faith, was all this to him, and more. He still, however, needed further affliction; for there were some statutes not yet learned. Some gourds were to wither. He was to descend into a further vale of humiliation. Even the profoundest affliction does not, perhaps, teach us everything; a mistake we sometimes make. But why should we compel God to use harsh measures with us? Why not sit at the feet of Jesus and learn quietly what we need to learn?—*George Bowen, in “Daily Meditations,” 1873.*

Verse 71.—“*Statutes.*” The verb from which this word is formed means to engrave or inscribe. The word means a definite, prescribed, written law. The term is applied to Joseph’s law about the portion of the priests in Egypt, to the law about the passover, etc. But in this Psalm it has a more internal meaning; that moral law of God which is engraven on the fleshy tables of the heart; the inmost and spiritual apprehension of his will; not so obvious as the law and the testimonies, and a matter of more direct spiritual communication than his precepts; the latter being more elaborated by the efforts of the mind itself, divinely guided indeed, but perhaps more instrumentally, and less passively, employed. They are continually spoken of as things yet to be learned, either wholly or in part, not objectively apprehended already, like God’s law.... They are learned, not suddenly, but by experience, and through the means of trials mercifully ordained by God; lessons therefore which are deeply engraven on the heart. “Good is it for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes.” “I have more understanding than my teachers, because thy statutes I have observed.”—*John Jebb.*

Verse 72.—“*The law of thy mouth is better unto me,*” etc. Highly prize the Scriptures. Can he make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible “the heart and soul of God.” The rabbins say, that a mountain of sense hangs upon every apex and tittle of Scripture. “The law of the Lord is perfect”: Ps. 19:7. The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact

model and platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the *credenda*, “the things which we are to believe,” and the *agenda*, “the things which we are to practise.” It is “able to make us wise unto salvation”: 2 Tim. 3:15. The Scripture is the standard of truth, the judge of controversies; it is the pole-star to direct us to heaven: Isai. 8:20. “The commandment is a lamp”: Prov. 6:23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid; it is a rock of diamonds; it is a sacred collyrium, or eye-salve; it mends their eyes that look upon it; it is a spiritual optic-glass in which the glory of God is resplendent; It is the panacy, or universal medicine for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the “leaves of the tree of life, for the healing of the nations”: Rev. 22:2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by “the word of truth”? James 1:18. How doth he grow, but by “the sincere milk of the word”? 1 Pet. 2:2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched; it is the sea-mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid; it is the antidote against error and apostasy, the two-edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the “tower of David,” wherein the shields of our faith hang: Cant. 4:4. “Take away the word and you deprive us of the sun,” said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. “This voice which came from heaven we heard.... We have also a more sure word”: 2 Pet. 1:18, 19. O, prize the word written; prizing is the way to profiting. If Cæsar so valued his commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”—*Thomas Watson, in “The Morning Exercises.”*

Verse 72.—“*The law of thy mouth is better unto me.*” The sacred Scriptures are the treasures and pleasures of a gracious soul: to David they were better than thousands of gold and silver. A mountain of transparent pearls, heaped as high as heaven, is not so rich in treasure as these; hence that good man chose these as his heritage for ever, and rejoiced in them as in all riches. A covetous miser could not take such delight in his bags, nor a young heir in a large inheritance, as holy David did in God’s word.

The word *law* comes from a root that signifies to try as merchants that search and prove the wares that they buy and lay up; hence also comes the word for gems and jewels that are tried, and found right. The sound Christian is the wise merchant, seeking goodly pearls; he tries what he reads or hears by the standard or touchstone of Scripture, and having found genuine truths he lays them up to the great enriching of this supreme and sovereign faculty of the understanding.—*Oliver Heywood.*

Verse 72.—The word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts.—*John Mason.*

Verse 72.—One lesson, taught by sanctified affliction, is, the love of *God’s word*. “This is my comfort, in my affliction: thy word hath quickened me.” In reading a part of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm to Miss Westbrook, who died, she said, “Stop, sir, I never said so much to you before—I never could; but now I can say, ‘The word of thy mouth is dearer to me, than thousands of gold and silver.’ What can gold and silver do for me now?”—*George Redford, in “Memoirs of the late Rev. John Cooke, 1828.”*

Verse 72.—“*Thousands of gold and silver.*” Worldly riches are gotten with labour, kept with care, lost with grief. They are false friends, farthest from us when we have most need of

comfort; as all worldlings shall find to be true in the hour of death. For then, as Jonah's gourd was taken from him in a morning, when he had most need of it against the sun; so is it with the comfort of worldlings. It is far otherwise with the word of God; for if we will lay it up in our hearts, as Mary did, the comfort thereof shall sustain us, when all other comfort shall fall us. This it is that makes us rich unto God, when our souls are storehouses, filled with the treasures of his word. Shall we think it poverty to be scant of gold and silver? *An ideo angelus pauper est, quia non habet jumenta*, etc.* Shall we esteem the angels poor, because they have not flocks of cattle? or that S. Peter was poor, because he had not gold nor silver to give unto the cripple? No, he had store of grace, by infinite degrees more excellent than it.

Let the riches of gold be left unto worldlings: these are not current in Canaan, not accounted of in our heavenly country. If we would be in any estimation there, let us enrich our souls with spiritual graces, which we have in abundance in the mines and treasures of the word of God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 72.—The Scripture is an ever-overflowing fountain that cannot be drawn dry, and an inexhausted treasure that cannot be emptied. To this purpose tend those resemblances of the law made use of by David in this Psalm, and no less justly applicable to the gospel; it is not only better than “*gold and silver*,” which are things of value, but “*thousands*,” which implieth abundance. In another verse he compares it to all riches and great spoil, both which contain in them *multiplex genus*, all sorts of valuable commodities, sheep, oxen, lands, houses, garments, goods, moneys, and the like: thus are all sorts of spiritual riches, yea, abundance of each sort, to be had in the gospel. And therefore the Greek fathers compare Scripture verities to precious stones, and our Saviour to a pearl of great price. A minister, in this respect, is called a merchant of invaluable jewels; for, indeed, gospel truths are choice and excellent, as much worth as our souls, as heaven, as salvation is. Nay, should I go higher, look what worth there is in the riches of God’s grace, the precious blood of Christ, that may secondarily be applied to the gospel, which discovereth and offereth both to us.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verses 72, 127.—When David saw how some make void the law of God, he saith, “*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold: yea, above fine gold*,” As if he had said, I love thy law all the more because I see some men esteem and reckon it as if it were dross, and throw it up as void and antiquated, or taking the boldness, as it were, to repeal and make it void, that they may set up their own lusts and vain imaginations. Because I see both profane and superstitious men thus out of love with thy law, therefore my love is more enflamed to it, “*I love it above gold*,” which leads the most of men away captives in the love of it; and I esteem it more than that which is most esteemed by men, and gains men most esteem in this world, “*fine gold*"; yea, as he said (Ps. 19:10) “*more than much fine gold*.”—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 72.—You that are gentlemen, remember what Hierom reports of Nepotianus, a young gentleman of Rome, *qui longa et assidua meditatione Scripturarum pectus suum fecerat bibliothecam Christi*, who by long and assiduous meditation of the Scriptures, made his breast the library of Christ. Remember what is said of King Alfonsus, that he read over the Bible fourteen times, together with such commentaries as those times afforded.

You that are scholars, remember Cranmer and Ridley; the former learned the New Testament by heart in his journey to Rome, the latter in Pembroke-hall walks in Cambridge. Remember what is said of Thomas-à-Kempis,—that he found rest nowhere *nisi in angulo, cum libello*, but in

a corner with this Book in his hand. And what is said of Beza,—that when he was above fourscore years old he could say perfectly by heart any Greek chapter in Paul's Epistles. You that are women, consider what Hierom saith of Paula, Eustochiam, and other ladies, who were singularly versed in the Holy Scriptures. Let all men consider that hyperbolical speech of Luther, that he would not live in Paradise without the Word; and with it he could live well enough in hell. This speech of Luther must be understood *cum grano salis*.—*Edmund Calamy*.¹

Exposition of Verses 73–80

THY hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

⁷⁴ They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

⁷⁶ Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

⁷⁷ Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.

⁷⁸ Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

⁷⁹ Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

⁸⁰ Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

We have now come to the tenth portion, which in each stanza begins with Jod, but it certainly does not treat of jots and titles and other trifles. Its subject would seem to be personal experience and its attractive influence upon others. The prophet is in deep sorrow, but looks to be delivered and made a blessing. Endeavouring to teach, the Psalmist first seeks to be taught (verse 73), persuades himself that he will be well received (74), and rehearses the testimony which he intends to bear (75). He prays for more experience (76, 77), for the baffling of the proud (78), for the gathering together of the godly to him (79), and for himself again that he may be fully equipped for his witness-bearing and may be sustained in it (80). This is the anxious yet hopeful cry of one who is heavily afflicted by cruel adversaries, and therefore makes his appeal to God as his only friend.

73. "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.*" It is profitable to remember our creation, it is pleasant to see that the divine hand has had much to do with us, for it never moves apart from the divine thought. It excites reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, putting forth the careful skill and power of his hands in our forming and fashioning. He took a personal interest in us, making us with his own hands; he was doubly

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 111-119*, vol. 5 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 270–286.

thoughtful, for he is represented both as making and moulding us. In both giving existence and arranging existence he manifested love and wisdom; and therefore we find reasons for praise, confidence, and expectation in our being and well-being. "*Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" As thou hast made me, teach me. Here is the vessel which thou hast fashioned; Lord, fill it. Thou hast given me both soul and body; grant me now thy grace that my soul may know thy will, and my body may join in the performance of it. The plea is very forcible; it is an enlargement of the cry, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands." Without understanding the divine law and rendering obedience to it we are imperfect and useless; but we may reasonably hope that the great Potter will complete his work and give the finishing touch to it by imparting to it sacred knowledge and holy practice. If God had roughly made us, and had not also elaborately fashioned us, this argument would lose much of its force; but surely from the delicate art and marvellous skill which the Lord has shown in the formation of the human body, we may infer that he is prepared to take equal pains with the soul till it shall perfectly bear his image.

A man without a mind is an idiot, the mere mockery of a man; and a mind without grace is wicked, the sad perversion of a mind. We pray that we may not be left without a spiritual judgment: for this the Psalmist prayed in verse 66, and he here pleads for it again; there is no true knowing and keeping of the commandments without it. Fools can sin; but only those who are taught of God can be holy. We often speak of gifted men; but he has the best gifts to whom God has given a sanctified understanding wherewith to know and prize the ways of the Lord. Note well that David's prayer for understanding is not for the sake of speculative knowledge, and the gratification of his curiosity; he desires an enlightened judgment that he may learn God's commandments, and so become obedient and holy. This is the best of learning. A man may abide in the College where this science is taught all his days, and yet cry out for ability to learn more. The commandment of God is exceeding broad, and so it affords scope for the most vigorous and instructed mind: in fact, no man has by nature an understanding capable of compassing so wide a field, and hence the prayer, "give me understanding";—as much as to say—I can learn other things with the mind I have, but thy law is so pure, so perfect, spiritual and sublime, that I need to have my mind enlarged before I can become proficient in it. He appeals to his maker to do this, as if he felt that no power short of that which made him could make him wise unto holiness. We need a new creation, and who can grant us that but the Creator himself? He who made us to live must make us to learn; he who gave us power to stand must give us grace to understand. Let us each one breathe to heaven the prayer of this verse ere we advance a step further, for we shall be lost even in these petitions unless we pray our way through them, and cry to God for understanding.

74. "*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me: because I have hoped in thy word.*" When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others, especially if that grace has made him a man of sound understanding and holy knowledge. God-fearing men are encouraged when they meet with experienced believers. A hopeful man is a God-send when things are declining or in danger. When the hopes of one believer are fulfilled his companions are cheered and established, and led to hope also. It is good for the eyes to see a man whose witness is that the Lord is true; it is one of the joys of saints to hold converse with their more advanced brethren. The fear of God is not a left-handed grace, as some have called it; it is quite consistent with gladness; for if even the sight of a comrade gladdens the God-fearing, how glad

must they be in the presence of the Lord himself! We do not only meet to share each others' burdens, but to partake in each others' joys, and some men contribute largely to the stock of mutual gladness. Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God's word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows. There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us.

75. "*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right.*" He who would learn most must be thankful for what he already knows, and be willing to confess it to the glory of God. The Psalmist had been sorely tried, but he had continued to hope in God under his trial, and now he avows his conviction that he had been justly and wisely chastened. This he not only thought but knew, so that he was positive about it, and spoke without a moment's hesitation. Saints are sure about the rightness of their troubles, even when they cannot see the intent of them. It made the godly glad to hear David say this, "*And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" Because love required severity, therefore the Lord exercised it. It was not because God was unfaithful that the believer found himself in a sore strait, but for just the opposite reason: it was the faithfulness of God to his covenant which brought the chosen one under the rod. It might not be needful that others should be tried just then; but it was necessary to the Psalmist, and therefore the Lord did not withhold the blessing. Our heavenly Father is no Eli: he will not suffer his children to sin without rebuke, his love is too intense for that. The man who makes the confession of this verse is already progressing in the school of grace, and is learning the commandments. This third verse of the section corresponds to the third of Teth (67), and in a degree to several other verses which make the thirds in their octaves.

76. "*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.*" Having confessed the righteousness of the Lord, he now appeals to his mercy, and while he does not ask that the rod may be removed, he earnestly begs for comfort under it. Righteousness and faithfulness afford us no consolation if we cannot also taste of mercy, and, blessed be God, this is promised us in the word, and therefore we may expect it. The words "merciful kindness," are a happy combination, and express exactly what we need in affliction: mercy to forgive the sin, and kindness to sustain under the sorrow. With these we can be comfortable in the cloudy and dark day, and without them we are wretched indeed; for these, therefore, let us pray unto the Lord, whom we have grieved by our sin, and let us plead the word of his grace as our sole reason for expecting his favour. Blessed be his name, notwithstanding our faults we are still his servants, and we serve a compassionate Master. Some read the last clause, "according to thy saying unto thy servant"; some special saying of the Lord was remembered and pleaded: can we not remember some such "faithful saying," and make it the groundwork of our petitioning? That phrase, "according to thy word," is a very favourite one; it shows the motive for mercy and the manner of mercy. Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God.

77. "*Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.*" He was so hard pressed that he was at death's door if God did not succour him. He needed not only mercy, but "mercies," and these must be of a very gracious and considerate kind, even "tender mercies," for he was sore with his wounds. These gentle favours must be of the Lord's giving, for nothing less would suffice; and they must "come" all the way to the sufferer's heart, for he was not able to journey after

them; all he could do was to sigh out, "Oh that they would come." If deliverance did not soon come, he felt ready to expire, and yet he told us but a verse or so ago that he hoped in God's word: how true it is that hope lives on when death seems written on all besides. A heathen said, "dum spiro spero," while I breathe I hope; but the Christian can say, "dum expiro spero," even when I expire I still expect the blessing. Yet no true child of God can live without the tender mercy of the Lord; it is death to him to be under God's displeasure. Notice, again, the happy combination of the words of our English version. Was there ever a sweeter sound than this—"tender mercies"? He who has been grievously afflicted, and yet tenderly succoured is the only man who knows the meaning of such choice language.

How truly we live when tender mercy comes to us. Then we do not merely exist, but live; we are lively, full of life, vivacious, and vigorous. We know not what life is till we know God. Some are said to die by the visitation of God, but we live by it.

"*For thy law is my delight.*" O blessed faith! He is no mean believer who rejoices in the law even when its broken precepts cause him to suffer. To delight in the word when it rebukes us, is proof that we are profiting under it. Surely this is a plea which will prevail with God, however bitter our griefs may be; if we still delight in the law of the Lord he cannot let us die, he must and will cast a tender look upon us and comfort our hearts.

78. "*Let the proud be ashamed.*" He begged that the judgments of God might no longer fall upon himself, but upon his cruel adversaries. God will not suffer those who hope in his word to be put to shame, for he reserves that reward for haughty spirits: they shall yet be overtaken with confusion, and become the subjects of contempt, while God's afflicted ones shall again lift up their heads. Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of.

"*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*" Their malice was wanton, he had not provoked them. Falsehood was employed to forge an accusation against him; they had to bend his actions out of their true shape before they could assail his character. Evidently the Psalmist keenly felt the malice of his foes. His consciousness of innocence with regard to them created a burning sense of injustice, and he appealed to the righteous Lord to take his part and clothe his false accusers with shame. Probably he mentioned them as "the proud," because he knew that the Lord always takes vengeance on proud men, and vindicates the cause of those whom they oppress. Sometimes he mentions the proud, and sometimes the wicked, but he always means the same persons; the words are interchangeable: he who is proud is sure to be wicked, and proud persecutors are the worst of wicked men.

"*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*" He would leave the proud in God's hands, and give himself up to holy studies and contemplations. To obey the divine precepts we have need to know them, and think much of them, hence this persecuted saint felt that meditation must be his chief employment. He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts.

In a similar position to this we have met with the proud in other octaves, and shall meet them yet again. They are evidently a great plague to the Psalmist but he rises above them.

79. "*Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*"

Perhaps the tongue of slander had alienated some of the godly, and probably the actual faults

of David had grieved many more. He begs God to turn to him, and then to turn his people towards him. Those who are right with God are also anxious to be right with his children. David craved the love and sympathy of gracious men of all grades,—of those who were beginners in grace, and of those who were mature in piety—“those that fear thee,” and “those that have known thy testimonies.” We cannot afford to lose the love of the least of the saints, and if we have lost their esteem we may most properly pray to have it restored. David was the leader of the godly party in the nation, and it wounded him to the heart when he perceived that those who feared God were not as glad to see him as aforetime they had been. He did not bluster and say that if they could do without *him* he could very well do without *them*; but he so deeply felt the value of their sympathy, that he made it a matter of prayer that the Lord would turn their hearts to him again. Those who are dear to God, and are instructed in his word, should be very precious in our eyes, and we should do our utmost to be upon good terms with them.

David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion. We know some believers who are gracious, but not intelligent; and, on the other hand, we also know certain professors who have all head and no heart: he is the man who combines devotion with intelligence. We neither care for devout dunces nor for intellectual icebergs. When fearing and knowing walk hand in hand they cause men to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If these are my choice companions I may hope that I am one of their order. Let such persons ever turn to me because they find in me congenial company.

80. *“Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.”* This is even more important than to be held in esteem by good men. This is the root of the matter. If the heart be sound in obedience to God, all is well, or will be well. If right at heart we are right in the main. If we be not sound before God, our name for piety is an empty sound. Mere profession will fail, and undeserved esteem will disappear like a bubble when it bursts; only sincerity and truth will endure in the evil day. He who is right at heart has no reason for shame, and he never shall have any; hypocrites ought to be ashamed now, and they shall one day be put to shame without end; their hearts are rotten, and their names shall rot. This eightieth verse is a variation of the prayer of the seventy-third verse; there he sought sound understanding, here he goes deeper, and begs for a sound heart. Those who have learned their own frailty by sad experience, are led to dive beneath the surface, and cry to the Lord for truth in the inward parts. In closing the consideration of these eight verses, let us join with the writer in the prayer, “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes.”

Notes on Verses 73–80

In this section each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Jod*, or i, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, called in Matthew 5:18, *jot*; one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verses 73–80.—The usual account of this section, as given by the mediæval theologians, is that it is the prayer of man to be restored to his state of original innocence and wisdom by being conformed to the image of Christ. And this squares with the obvious meaning, which is partly a petition for divine grace and partly an assertion that the example of piety and resignation in trouble is attractive enough to draw men’s hearts on towards God, a truth set forth at once by the Passion, and by the lives of all those saints who have tried to follow it.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 73.—“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,” etc. This verse hath a petition for understanding and a reason with it: I am the workmanship of thine hands, therefore give me understanding. There is no man but favours the works of his hands. And shall not the Lord much more love his creatures, especially man, his most excellent creature? whom, if ye consider according to the fashion of his body, ye shall find nothing on earth more precious than he; but in that which is not seen, namely, his soul, he is much more beautiful. So you see, David's reasoning is very effectual; all one as if he should say as he doth elsewhere, “Forsake not, O Lord, the work of thine hands”; thou art my author and maker; thine help I seek, and the help of none other.

No man can rightly seek good things from God, if he consider not what good the Lord hath already done to him. But many are in this point so ignorant, that they know not how wonderfully God did make them; and therefore can neither bless him, nor seek from him, as from their Creator and Conserver. But this argument, drawn from our first creation, no man can rightly use, but he who is through grace partaker of the second creation; for all the privileges of our first creation we have lost by our fall. So that now by nature it is no comfort to us, nor matter of our hope, that God did make us; but rather matter of our fear and distrust, that we have mismade ourselves, have lost his image, and are not now like unto that which God created us in the beginning.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 73.—“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me,” etc. Mark here two things: first, that in making his prayer for holy understanding, he justly accuseth himself and all others of blindness, which proceeded not from the Creator, but from man corrupted. Secondly, that even from his creation he conceived hope that God would continue his work begun in him, because God leaveth not his work, and therefore he beggetteth God to bestow new grace upon him, and to finish that which he had begun in him.—*Thomas Wilcocks, 1586.*

Verse 73.—Hugo ingeniously notices in the different verbs of this verse the particular vices to be shunned: ingratitude, when it is said, “Thy hands have made me”; pride, “and fashioned me”; confidence in his own judgment, “give me understanding”; prying inquisitiveness, “that I may learn thy commandments.”

Verse 73.—“Thy hands.” Hilary and Ambrose think that by the plural “hands” is intimated that there is a more exact and perfect workmanship in man, and as if it were with greater labour and skill he had been formed by God, because *after the image and likeness of God*: and that it is not written that any other thing but man was made by God with both hands, for he saith in Isaiah, “Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth”: Isa. 48:13.*—*John Lorinus, 1569–1634.*

Verse 73.—“Thy hands.” Oh, look upon the *wounds* of thine hands, and forget not the *work* of thine hands: so Queen Elizabeth prayed.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 73.—Some refer the verb עָשָׂה, “made,” to the soul, כּוֹנוֹ, “fashioned,” to the body.—D. H. Mollerus.

Verse 73.—“Made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.” The greatness of God is no hindrance to his intercourse with us, for one special part of the divine greatness is to be able to condescend to the littleness of created beings, seeing that creaturehood must, from its very nature, have this littleness; inasmuch as God must ever be God, and man must ever be man: the ocean must ever be the ocean, the drop must ever be the drop. The greatness of God

compassing our littlenesses about, as the heavens the earth, and fitting into it on every side, as the air into all parts of the earth, is that which makes the intercourse so complete and blessed: "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). Such is his nearness to, such is his intimacy with, the works of his hands.

It is nearness, not distance, that the name Creator implies; and the simple fact of his having *made* us is the assurance of his desire to bless us and to hold intercourse with us.

Communication between the thing made and its maker is involved in the very idea of creation. "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" "Faithful Creator" is his name (1 Pet. 4:19), and as such we appeal to him, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands" (Ps. 138:8).—*Horatius Bonar, in "The Rent Veil,"* 1875.

Verse 73.—"Give me understanding," etc. The book of God is like the apothecary's shop, there is no wound but therein is a remedy; but if a stranger come unto the apothecary's shop, though all these things be there, yet he cannot tell where they are, but the apothecary himself knoweth; so in the Scriptures, there are cures for any infirmities; there is comfort against any sorrows, and by conferring chapter with chapter, we shall understand them. The Scriptures are not wanting to us, but we to ourselves; let us be conversant in them, and we shall understand them, when great clerks who are negligent remain in darkness.—*Richard Stock.*

Verse 73.—"Give me understanding." Let us pray unto God that he would open our understandings; that as he hath given us consciences to guide us, so also he would give eyes to these guides that they may be able to direct us aright. The truth is, it is God only that can soundly enlighten our consciences; and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our studying, and hearing, and reading, and conferring will never be able to do it; it is only in the power of him who made us to do it. He who made our consciences, he only can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right understanding; and therefore let us seek earnestly to him for it.—*William Fenner, 1600–1640.*

Verse 73.—"That I may learn thy commandments." That he might *learn* them so as to know the sense and meaning of them, their purity and spirituality; and so as to do them from a principle of love, in faith, and to the glory of God: for it is not a bare learning of them by heart or committing them to memory, nor a mere theory of them, but the practice of them in faith and love, which is here meant.—*John Gill.*

Verses 73, 74.—From these verses, learn, 1. Albeit nothing can satisfy disbelief, yet true faith will make use of the most common benefit of creation to strengthen itself: "*Thine hands have made me and fashioned me.*" 2. It is a good way of reasoning with God, to ask another gift, because we have received one; and because he hath given common benefits, to ask that he would give us also saving graces: "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*" 3. Seeing that God is our Creator, and that the end of our creation is to serve God, we may confidently ask whatsoever grace may enable us to serve him, as the Psalmist's example doth teach us.... 4. It should be the joy of all believers to see one of their number sustained and borne up in his sufferings; for in the proof and example of one sufferer a pawn is given to all the rest, that God will help them in like case: "*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 74.—"They that fear thee will be glad," etc. They who "fear God" are naturally "glad when they see" and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one

whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath "*hoped in God's word*," and hath not been disappointed. Every such instance affordeth fresh encouragement to all those, who, in the course of their welfare, are to undergo like troubles, and to encounter like temptations. In all our trials let us, therefore, remember, that our brethren, as well as ourselves, are deeply interested in the event, which may either strengthen or weaken the hands of the multitudes.—*George Horne.*

Verse 74.—"*They that fear thee will be glad when they see me*," etc. How comfortable it is for the heirs of promise to see one another, or meet together: *aspectus boni viri delectat*, the very look of a good man is delightful: it is a pleasure to converse with those that are careful to please God, and fearful to offend him. How much affected they are with one another's mercies: "*they will be glad when they see me*," since I have obtained an event answerable to my hope. They shall come and look upon me as a monument and spectacle of the mercy and truth of God. But what mercy had he received? The context seemeth to carry it for grace to obey God's commandments; that was the prayer immediately preceding, to be instructed and taught in God's law (ver. 73). Now they will rejoice to see my holy behaviour, how I have profited and glorified God in that behalf. The Hebrew writers render the reason, "Because then I shall be able to instruct them in those statutes, when they shall see me, their king, study the law of God." It may be expounded of any other blessing or benefit God had given according to his hope; and I rather understand it thus, they will be glad to see him sustained, supported, and borne out in his troubles and sufferings. "They will be glad when they shall see in me a notable example of the fruit of hoping in thy grace."—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 74.—"*Because I have hoped in thy word.*" And have not been disappointed. The Vulgate rendereth it *supersperavi*, I have over-hoped; and then Aben-Ezra glosseth, "*I have hoped in all thy decree*"; even that of afflicting me, as in the next verse.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 75.—"*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right.*" In very early life the tree of knowledge seemed a very fine, a glorious tree in my sight; but how many mistakes have I made upon that subject! And how many are the mistakes which yet abound upon that which we are pleased to call knowledge, in common speech. He that hath read the classics; he that hath dipped into mathematical science; he that is versed in history, and grammar, and common elocution; he that is apt and ready to solve some knotty question, and versed in the ancient lore of learning, is thought to be a man of knowledge; and so he is, compared with the ignorant mass of mankind. But what is all this compared with the knowledge in my text? Knowledge of which few of the learned, as they are called, have the least acquaintance with at all.

"*I know*"—What, David? what do you know?—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Fond as I may yet be of other speculations, I would rather, much rather, possess the knowledge of this man in this text, than have the largest acquaintance with the whole circle of the sciences, as it is proudly called.... I am apprehensive that, in the first clause, the Psalmist speaks, in general, of the ordinances, appointments, providences, and judgments of God; and the assertion is, he doth know that they are right, that they are equitable, that they are wise, that they are fair, and that they are not to be found fault with; and that though men, through folly, bring themselves into distress, and then their hearts fret against God. He was blessed with superior understanding. He excepts nothing: "*I know that all thy judgments are right.*" Then, in the latter part of the text, he makes the matter personal. It might be said, it is an easy thing for

you so to think when you see the revolutions of kingdoms, the tottering of thrones, the distresses of some mortals, and the pains of others, that they are all right. "Yes," saith he, "but I have the same persuasion about all my own sorrows; I do know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me."—*From a Sermon by John Martin, 1817.*

Verse 75.—"*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right,*" etc. The text is in the form of an address to God. We often find this in David, that, when he would express some deep feeling, or some point of spiritual experience, he does so in this way—addressing himself to God. Those who love God delight to hold communion with him; and there are some feelings which the spiritual mind finds peculiar comfort and pleasure in telling to God himself. "*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right.*" God orders all things, and his "*judgments*" here mean his general orderings, decisions, dealings—not afflictions only, though including them. And when the Psalmist says, "*thy judgments*," he means especially God's judgments towards *him*, God's dealings with him, and thus all that had happened to him, or should happen to him. For in the Psalmist's creed there was no such thing as chance. God ordered all that befell him, and he loved to think so He expresses a sure and happy confidence in all that God did, and would do, with regard to him. He trusted fully in God's wisdom, God's power, God's love. "*I know thy judgments are right*"—quite right, right in every way, without one single point that might have been better, perfectly wise and good. He shows the firmest persuasion of this. "*I know,*" he says, not merely, "*I think.*" But these very words, "*I know,*" clearly show that this was a matter of faith, not of sight. For he does not say, "*I can see that thy judgments are right,*" but "*I know.*" The meaning plainly is, "Though I cannot see all—though there are some things in thy dealings which I cannot fully understand—yet I believe, I am persuaded, and thus I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right."

"*Thy judgments.*" Not some of them, but all. He takes into view all God's dealings with him, and says of them without exception, "*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right.*" When the things that happen to us are plainly for our comfort and good, as many of them are, then we thankfully receive what God thus sends to us, and own him as the Giver of all, and bless him for his gracious dealing; and this is right. But all the faith required for this (and some faith there is in it) is to own God as dealing with us, instead of thanklessly receiving the gifts with no thought of the Giver. It is a far higher degree of faith, that says of *all* God's dealings, even when seemingly not for our happiness, "*I know that thy judgments are right.*"

Yet this is the meaning here, or certainly the chief meaning. For though the word "*judgments*" does mean God's dealings of every kind, yet *here* the words that follow make it apply especially to God's afflictive dealings, that is, to those dealings of his that do not seem to be for our happiness; "*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*" The judgments which the Psalmist chiefly had in view, and which he felt so sure were right, were not joys, but sorrows; not things bestowed, but things taken away; those blessings in disguise, those veiled mercies, those gifts clad in the garb of mourning, which God so often sends to his children. The Psalmist knew, and knew against all appearance to the contrary, that these judgments were. "*right.*" Whatever they might be—losses, bereavements, disappointments, pain, sickness—they were right; as right as the more manifest blessings which went before them; quite right, perfectly right; so right that they could not have been better; just what were best; and all because they were God's judgments. That one thing satisfied the Psalmist's mind, and set every doubt at rest. The dealings in themselves he might have

doubted, but not him whose dealings they were. "Thy judgments." That settled all. "And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." This means that, in appointing trouble as his lot, God had dealt with him in faithfulness to his word, faithfulness to his purposes of mercy, with a faithful, not a weak love. He had sent him just what was most for his good, though not always what was most pleasing; and in this he had shown himself faithful. Gently and lovingly does the Lord deal with his children. He gives no unnecessary pain; but that which is needful he will not withhold.—*Francis Bourdillon*, 1881.

Verse 75.—"Thy judgments." There are *judicia oris*, and there are *judicia operis*; the judgments of God's mouth, and the judgments of God's hands. Of the former there is mention at verse 13: "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." And by these "*judgments*" are meant nothing else but the holy law of God, and his whole written word; which everywhere in this Psalm are indifferently called his "*statutes*," his "*commandments*," his "*precepts*," his "*testimonies*," his "*judgments*." And the laws of God are therefore, amongst other reasons, called by the name of "*judgments*," because by them we come to have a right judgment whereby to discern between good and evil. We could not otherwise with any certainty judge what was meet for us to do, and what was needful for us to shun. A *lege tua intellexi*, at verse 104: "By the law have I gotten understanding." St. Paul confesseth (Rom. 7), that he had never rightly known what sin was if it had not been for the law; and he instances in that of lust, *which he had not known to be a sin if the law had not said*, "thou shalt not covet." And no question but these "*judgments*," these *judicia oris*, are all "*right*" too; for it were unreasonable to think that God should make that a rule of right to us, which were itself not right. We have both the name (that of "*judgments*") and the thing too, (that they are "*right*") in the 19th Psalm; where having highly commended the law of God, under the several appellations of the "law," testimonies, statutes and commandments, verses 7 and 8, the prophet then concludeth under this name of "*judgments*," verse 9: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Besides these *judicia oris*, which are God's judgments of *direction*, there are also *judicia operis*, which are his judgments for *correction*. And these do ever include *aliquid pænale*, something inflicted upon us by Almighty God, as it were by way of punishment; something that breedeth in us trouble or grief. The apostle saith (Heb. 12) that every chastening is grievous; and so it is, more or less; or else it could be to us no punishment. And these, again, are of two sorts; yet not distinguished so much by the things themselves that are inflicted, as by the condition of the persons on whom they are inflicted, and especially by the affection and intention of God that inflicteth them. For all, whether public calamities that light upon whole nations, cities, or other greater or lesser societies of men (such as are pestilences, famine, war, inundations, unseasonable weather, and the like;) or private afflictions, that light upon particular families or persons, (as sickness, poverty disgrace, injuries, death of friends, and the like;) all these, and whatsoever other of either kind, may undergo a twofold consideration; in either of which they may not unfitly be termed the judgments of God, though in different respects.

Now we see the several sorts of God's judgments: which of all these may we think is here meant? If we should take them all in, the conclusion would hold them, and hold true too. *Judicia oris*, and *judicia operis*; public and private judgments; those plagues wherewith in fury he punisheth his enemies, and those rods wherewith in mercy he correcteth his children: most certain it is they are all "*right*." But yet I conceive those *judicia oris* not to be so properly meant

in this place; for the exegesis in the latter part of the verse (wherein what are here called *judgments* are there expounded by *troubles*) seemeth to exclude them, and to confine to the text in the proper intent thereof to these *judicia operis* only; but yet to all them of what sort soever; public or private, plagues or corrections. Of all which he pronounceth that they are “right;” which is the predicate of the conclusion: “*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right.*”—*Robert Sanderson.*

Verse 75.—“Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” Mark the emphasis: he doth not barely acknowledge that God was faithful, though notwithstanding he had afflicted him, but faithful in sending the afflictions. Affliction and trouble are not only consistent with God’s love plighted in the covenant of grace; but they are parts and branches of the new-covenant administration. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. There is a difference between these two: the one is like an exception to the rule, *quæ firmat regulam in non exceptis*: the other makes it a part of the rule, God cannot be faithful without doing all things that tend to our good and eternal welfare. The conduct of his providence is one part of the covenant engagement; as to pardon our sins, and sanctify us, and give us glory at the last, so to suit his providence as our need and profit require in the way to heaven. It is an act of his sovereign mercy which he hath promised to his people, to use such discipline as conduceth to their safety. In short, the cross is not an exception to the grace of the covenant, but a part of the grace of the covenant.

The cause of all afflictions is sin, therefore justice must be acknowledged: their end is repentance, and therefore faithfulness must be acknowledged. The end is not destruction and ruin, so afflictions would be acts of justice, as upon the wicked; but that we may be fit to receive the promises, and so they are acts of faithfulness.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 75.—“Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” That is with a sincere intention of doing me good. God thoroughly knows our constitution, what is noxious to our health, and what may remedy our distempers; and therefore accordingly disposeth to us

*Pro jucundis aptissima quæque**

instead of pleasant honey, he sometimes prescribes wholesome wormwood for us. We are ourselves greatly ignorant of what is conducive to our real good, and, were the choice of our condition wholly permitted to us, should make very foolish, very disadvantageous elections. We should (be sure) all of us embrace a rich and plentiful estate; when, as God knows, that would make us slothful and luxurious, swell us with pride and haughty thoughts, encumber us with anxious cares and expose us to dangerous temptations; would render us forgetful of ourselves and neglectful of him. Therefore he wisely disposeth poverty unto us; poverty, the mother of sobriety, the nurse of industry, the mistress of wisdom; which will make us understand ourselves and our dependence on him, and force us to have recourse unto his help. And is there not reason we should be thankful for the means by which we are delivered from those desperate mischiefs, and obtain these excellent advantages?

We should all (certainly) choose the favour and applause of man: but this, God also knows, would corrupt our minds with vain conceit, would intoxicate our fancies with spurious pleasure, would tempt us to ascribe immoderately to ourselves, and sacrilegiously to deprive God of his due honour. Therefore he advisedly suffers us to incur the disgrace and displeasure, the hatred and contempt of men; that so we may place our glory only in the hopes of his favour, and may

pursue more earnestly the purer delights of a good conscience. And doth not this part of divine providence highly merit our thanks?

We would all climb into high places, not considering the precipices on which they stand, nor the vertiginousness of our own brains: but God keeps us safe in the humble valleys, allotting to us employments which we are more capable to manage.

We should perhaps insolently abuse power, were it committed to us: we should employ great parts on unwieldy projects, as many do, to the disturbance of others, and their own ruin: vast knowledge would cause us to overvalue ourselves and contemn others: enjoying continual health, we should not perceive the benefit thereof, nor be mindful of him that gave it. A suitable mediocrity therefore of these things the divine goodness allotteth unto us, that we may neither starve for want, nor surfeit with plenty.

In fine, the advantages arising from afflictions are so many, and so great, that it were easy to demonstrate that we have great reason, not only to be contented with, but to rejoice in, and to be very thankful for, all the crosses and vexations we meet with; to receive them cheerfully at God's hand, as the medicines of our soul, and the condiments of our fortune; as the arguments of his goodwill, and the instruments of virtue; as solid grounds of hope, and comfortable presages of future joy unto us.—*Isaac Barrow*.

Verse 75.—“*Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*” When a father disowns and banishes a child, he corrects him no more. So God may let one whom he intends to destroy go unchastened; but never one with whom he is in covenant.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 75.—“*I know, O LORD,*” etc.

Yet, Lord, in memory's fondest place
I shrine those seasons sad,
When, looking up, I saw thy face
In kind austerity clad.
I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow;
Sweet was the chastisement severe,
And sweet its memory now.
Yes! let the fragrant scars abide,
Love-tokens in thy stead,
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side,
And thorn-encompassed head.
And such thy tender force be still,
When self would swerve or stray,
Shaping to truth the foward will
Along thy narrow way.

—*John Henry Newman, 1829.*

Verse 76.—“*Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.*” In the former verse he acknowledged that the Lord had afflicted him; now in this he prayeth the Lord to comfort him. This is strange that a man should seek comfort at the same hand that strikes him: it is the work of faith; nature will never teach us to do it. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath spoiled, and he will heal us: he hath wounded, and he will bind us up.” Again, we see that the crosses which God lays on his children, are not to confound, not to consume them; only to

prepare them for greater consolations. With this David sustained himself against Shimei's cursing; "The Lord will look on my affliction, and do me good for this evil": with this our Saviour comforts his disciples; "Your mourning shall be turned into joy." As the last estate of Job was better than his first; so shall the Lord render more to his children at the last than now at the first he takes from them: let us therefore bear his cross, as a preparative to comfort.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 76.—"Let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort." Several of the preceding verses have spoken of affliction (verses 67, 71, 75). The Psalmist now presents his petition for alleviation under it. But of what kind? He does not ask to have it removed. He does not "beseech the Lord, that it might depart from him": 2 Cor. 12:8. No. His repeated acknowledgments of the supports vouchsafed under it, and the benefits he had derived from it, had reconciled him to commit its measure and continuance to the Lord. All that he needs, and all that he asks for, is a sense of his "*merciful kindness*" upon his soul. Thus he submits to his justice in his accumulated trials, and expects consolation under them solely upon the ground of his free favour.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 76.—"Let thy merciful kindness," etc. Let me derive my comfort and happiness from a diffusion of thy love and mercy, חַסְדֶּךָ, *chasdecha*, thy exuberant goodness through my soul.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 76.—"According to thy word unto thy servant." If his promise did not please him, why did he make it? If our reliance on the promise did not please him, why did his goodness work it? It would be inconsistent with his goodness to mock his creature, and it would be the highest mockery to publish his word, and create a temper in the heart of his suppliant suited to his promise, which he never intended to satisfy. He can as little wrong his creature as wrong himself, and therefore he can never disappoint that faith which after his own methods casts itself into the arms of his kindness, and is his own workmanship, and calls him author. That goodness which imparted itself so freely to the irrational creation will not neglect those nobler creatures that put their trust in him. This renders God a fit object for trust and confidence.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 76.—"According to thy word." David had a particular promise of a particular benefit; to wit, the kingdom of Israel. And this promise God performed unto him; but his comfort stood not in it; for Saul before him had the kingdom, but the promises of mercy belonged not to him, and therefore, when God forsook him, his kingdom could not sustain him. But David here depends upon the general promises of God's mercy made to his children; wherein he acknowledgeth a particular promise of mercy made to him. For the general promises of mercy and grace made in the gospel are by faith made particular to every believer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 76.—"Thy word unto thy servant." Here we may use the eunuch's question: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" Of himself questionless, under the denomination of God's servant. But then the question returneth,—Is it a word of promise made to himself in particular, or to God's servants in the general? Some say the former, the promises brought to him by Nathan. I incline to the latter, and it teacheth us these three truths:—

1st. That God's servants only are capable of the sweet effects of his mercy and the comforts of his promises. Who are God's servants? (1) Such as own his right and are sensible of his interest

in them: "God, whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 28:23). (2) Such as give up themselves to him, renouncing all other masters. Renounce we must, for we were once under another master (Rom. 6:17; Matt. 6:24; Rom. 6:13; 2 Chron. 30:8). (3) Such as accordingly frame themselves to do his work sincerely: "serve with my spirit" (Rom. 1:9); and, "in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6), even as becomes those who are renewed by the Spirit: diligently (Acts 26:7), and universally (Luke 1:74, 75), and wait upon him for grace to do so (Heb. 12:28). These are capable of comfort. The book of God speaketh no comfort to persons that live in sin, but to God's servants, such as do not live as if they were at their own disposal, but at God's beck. If he say go, they go. They give up themselves to be and do what God will have them to be and do.

2ndly. If we have the benefit of the promise, we must thrust in ourselves under one title or other among those to whom the promise is made; if not as God's children, yet as God's servants. Then the promise is as sure to us as if our name were in it.

3rdly. All God's servants have common grounds of comfort: every one of God's servants may plead with God as David doth. The comforts of the word are the common portion of God's people.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 76.—"Thy word unto thy servant." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 77.—"Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live." If we mark narrowly we shall find that David here seeks another sort of mercy than he sought before. For first he sought mercy to forgive his sins; then he sought mercy to comfort him in his troubles; now he seeks mercy to live, and sin no more. Alas, many seek the first mercy, of remission; and the second mercy of consolation in trouble, who are altogether careless of the third mercy, to live well. It is a great mercy of God to amend thy life: where this is not, let no man think he hath received either of the former. It is a great mercy of God, which not only pardons evil that is done, but strengthens us also to further good that we have not done; and this is the mercy which here David seeks.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 77.—"Let thy tender mercies come unto me," etc. The mercies of God are "*tender mercies*," they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They "*come unto*" us, when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we "*live*" the life of faith, of love, of joy and gladness. And to such as "*delight*" in his law, God will grant these mercies, and this life; he will give them pardon, and, by so doing, he will give them life from the dead.—*George Horne*.

Verse 77.—"Let thy tender mercies," etc. Taking the more literal rendering, the words express high confidence—"Thy tender mercies *shall* come unto me, and I shall live; for thy law is my delight." Had the believer nothing but his own deserts to support his plea at the throne of grace, he could never rise into this high confidence. He goes upon the foundation of the divine goodness, manifested through the anointed One, and he goes surely.—*John Stephen*.

Verse 77.—"Come." Coming to him noteth a personal and effectual application. 1st. A personal application, as in the 41st verse of this Psalm: "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word." David would not be forgotten, or left out or lost in the throng of mankind, when mercy was distributing the blessing to them. 2ndly. Effectual application: which signifieth, 1. The removal of obstacles and hindrances; 2. The obtaining the fruits and effects of this mercy.

First. The removing of obstacles. Till there be a way made, the mercy of God cannot come at us; for the way is barricaded and shut up by our sins: as the Lord maketh a way for his anger (Ps. 78:50), by removing the hindrances, so the Lord maketh way for his mercy, or mercy maketh way for itself, when it removeth the obstruction. Sin is the great hindrance of mercy. We ourselves raise the mists and the clouds which intercept the light of God's countenance; we build up the partition wall which separates between God and us; yet mercy finds the way. Secondly. The obtaining the fruits of mercy.... It is not enough to hear somewhat of God's saving mercies; but we should beg that they may come unto us, be effectually and sensibly communicated unto us, that we may have experience of them in our own souls. A man that hath read of honey, or heard of honey, may know the sweetness of it by guess and imagination; but a man that hath tasted of honey knoweth the sweetness of it in truth: so, by reading and hearing of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, we may guess that it is a sweet thing; but he that hath had an experimental proof of the sweet effects and fruits of it in his own heart perceives that all which is spoken of God's pardoning and comforting of sinners is verified in himself.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 77.—“*Thy law is my delight.*” A child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet he serves him willingly; his will is in the law of the Lord; he is not a pressed soldier, but a volunteer. By the beating of this pulse we may judge whether there be spiritual life in us or no. David professeth that God's law was his delight; he had his crown to delight in, he had his music to delight in; but the love he had to God's law did drown all other delights; as the joy of harvest and vintage exceeds the joy of gleaning.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 78.—“*Let the proud be ashamed,*” etc. Here is the just recompense of his pride. He would fain have honour and pre-eminence, but God will not give them unto him: he flies shame and contempt, but God shall pour them upon him. “*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*” David complains of the wicked and false dealing of his enemies against him; and his prayer is written to uphold us in the like temptation. For Satan is alway like himself, hating them whom the Lord loveth. He can scarce be worse, he can never be better; and therefore with restless malice stirs he up all his cursed instruments in whom he reigns, to persecute those who are loved and protected of the Lord. “*But I will meditate in thy precepts.*” David's enemies fought against him with the weapons of the flesh, wickedness and falsehood: he withstands them by the armour of the Spirit; not meeting wickedness with wickedness, and falsehood with falsehood. For if we fight against Satan with Satan's weapons he will soon overcome us; but if we put upon us the complete armour of God to resist him, he shall flee from us.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 78.—“*Let the proud be ashamed.*” That is, that they may not prosper or succeed in their attempts; for men are ashamed when they are disappointed. All their endeavours for the extirpation of God's people are vain and fruitless, and those things which they have subtilely devised have not that effect which they propounded unto themselves. “*For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.*” The Septuagint have it ἀδίκως, unjustly. Ainsworth readeth, “With falsehood they have depraved me.” It implieth two things: first, that they pretended a cause; but, secondly, David avoucheth his innocence to God; and so, without any guilt of his, they accused, defamed, condemned his actions, as is usual in such cases. When the proud are troublesome and injurious to God's people the saints may boldly commend their cause to God.... The Lord may be appealed unto upon a double account; partly, as he is an

enemy to the proud, and as a friend to the humble (James 4:6; Ps. 138:6); partly, as he is the portion of the afflicted and oppressed (Ps. 140:12). When Satan stirreth up his instruments to hate those whom the Lord loveth, the Lord will stir up his power to help and defend them. Is not this a revengeful prayer?

Answer, No. 1st. Because those who pray it are seeking their own deliverance, that they may more freely serve God by consequence. Indeed, by God's showing mercy to his people, the pride of wicked ones is suppressed (verse 134); but mercy is the main object of the prayer. 2ndly. As it concerneth his enemies, he expresseth it in mild terms—that they may "*be ashamed*"; that is, disappointed, in their counsels, hopes, machinations, and endeavours. And therefore it is not against the persons of his enemies, but their plots and enterprises. In such cases shame and disappointment may even do them good. They think to bring in the total suppression of God's people, but that would harden them in their sins; therefore God's people desire that he would not let their innocence be trampled upon, but disappoint their adversaries, that the proud may be ashamed in the failing of their attempts.

3rdly. The prayers of the righteous for the overthrow of the wicked, are a kind of prophecies; so that, in praying, David doth in effect foretell, that such as dealt perversely should soon be ashamed, since a good cause will not always be oppressed: "But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isa. 66:5).

4thly. Saints have a liberty to imprecate vengeance, but such as must be used sparingly and with great caution: "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul" (Ps. 71:13). Malicious enemies may be expressly prayed against.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 78.—"Let the proud be ashamed." This suggests a word to the wicked. Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God you do not engage her prayers against you. These imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Luke 18:7, 8. They are not empty words—as the imprecations of the wicked poured into the air, and there vanishing with their breath—but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Ahithophel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared—as once a great person said and felt—than an army of twenty thousand men in the field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 78.—"The proud." The wicked, especially the persecutors of God's people, are usually characterized by this term in this Psalm, "*the proud*" (verses 51, 69, 122). Pride puts wicked men upon being troublesome and injurious to the people of God. But why are the persecutors and the injurious called "*the proud*"? 1. Because wicked men shake off the yoke of God, and will not be subject to their Maker, and therefore desist not from troubling his people; "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go"? (Exod. 5:2). What was in his tongue, is in all men's hearts; they contemn God and his laws. Every sin hath a degree of pride, and a depreciation of God included in it, (2 Sam 12:9). 2. Because they are drunk with worldly felicity, and never think of changes. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud" (Ps. 123:4). When men go on prosperously, they are

apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to flout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people, which is a sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please: "They have no changes; therefore they fear not God," and put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps. 55:19, 20): whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. 3. Because they effect a life of pomp, and ease, and carnal greatness, and so despise the affliction, and meanness, and simplicity of God's people. The false church hath usually the advantage of worldly power and external glory; and the true church is known by the Divine power, gifts and graces, and the lustre of holiness. 4. They are called "*proud*," because of their insolent carriage towards the Lord's people; partly in their laws and injunctions, requiring them to give them more honour, respect, and obedience, than in conscience can be afforded them; as Haman would have Mordecai to devote himself to him after the manner of the Persians (Esther 3:5).—*Condensed from Manton.*

Verse 78.—"When any of you," says Cæsarius, "is singing the verse of the Psalm wherein it is said, '*Let the proud be put to shame*,' let him be earnest to avoid pride, that he may escape everlasting shame."—*William Kay.*

Verse 78.—"But I will meditate in thy precepts." He repeateth the same thing often, and surely if the world could not contain the books that might be written of Christ, and yet for our infirmity the Lord hath comprised them in such a few books, and yet one thing in them is often repeated, it sheweth that the matter is weighty, and of us duly and often to be considered. And again we are taught that this is a thing that none do so carefully look unto as they ought. And he sheweth that as his enemies sought by evil means to hurt him; so he sought to keep a good conscience, that so they might not hurt him. Then we must not set policy against policy nor *cretizare cum Cretensibus*; but let us always tend to the word, and keep within the bounds of that, and fight with the weapons that it lendeth us.... If we would give over ourselves to God and his word, and admit nothing but that which agreeth to the word, then should we be made wiser than our enemies.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 78.—"I will meditate in thy precepts." The verb נִשְׁאַח, *asiach*, in the second clause of the verse, may be rendered, "*I will speak of*," as well as, "*I will meditate upon*"; implying that, when he had obtained the victory, he would proclaim the goodness of God, which he had experienced. *To speak of God's statutes*, is equivalent to declaring out of the law how faithfully he guards his saints, how securely he delivers them, and how righteously he avenges their wrongs.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 78.—"Meditate." Truths lie hid in the heart without efficacy or power, till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts.... A sudden carrying a candle through a room, giveth us not so full a survey of the object, as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 79.—"Let those that fear thee turn unto me." Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them "*turn to me*" again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest but intelligent, "*that have known thy testimonies*,"

have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 79.—“*Let those that fear thee turn unto me,*” etc. As he had not his own flesh to fight against only, but the world also, so he did not only himself fight, but he seeketh the help of others. When many see that religion cannot be truly professed but danger will come of it, because many set themselves against it, they flee from it, and go to the greater part, which is the wicked. If we will avoid this, let us join ourselves to God’s children, and they will help us with counsel and advice; for one may be strong when we are weak, another may have counsel when we shall not know what to do; therefore by them we shall be kept from many evil things. So Paul (2 Tim. 1:16), after he had complained of the wrong that many had done unto him, he straight way giveth thanks for the family of Onesiphorus, which refreshed him more than all his enemies could discourage him; so that he durst oppose this one household to the whole rabble of the wicked.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 79.—“*Let those that fear thee,*” etc. You must go to God and beseech him to choose your company for you. Mark what David said and did; in verse 63 he saith, “*I am a companion of all them that fear the Lord*”; yet in this verse he goes to God, and prayeth, saying, *Let those that fear thee, O Lord, turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.*” As if he should say, “Of a truth, Lord, I am a companion of all that do fear thee; but it is not in my power to bend their hearts unto me; the hearts of all men are in thy hands, now therefore “*let those that fear thee turn unto me.*” So do you go to God, and say likewise: Lord, do thou choose my company for me; oh, do thou bow and incline their hearts to be my companions.—*William Bridge*.

Verse 79.—“*Those that fear.*” “*Those that have known.*” Fear and knowledge do make up a godly man. Knowledge without fear breedeth presumption; and fear without knowledge breedeth superstition; and blind zeal, as a blind horse, may be full of mettle, but is ever and anon stumbling. Knowledge must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge; then it is a happy mixture and composition.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 79.—One great means to restore a good understanding among God’s people is prayer. David goeth to God about it: “*Lord, let them turn to me.*” The Lord governeth hearts and interests, both are in his hands, and he useth their alienation or reconciliation, either for judgment or mercy. God, when he pleaseth, can divert from us the comfort of godly friends; and when he pleaseth, he can bring them back again to us. The feet of God’s children are directed by God himself; if they come to us, it is a blessing of God; if not, it is for a correction. He made Jacob and Laban meet peaceably (Gen. 30), and in the next chapter, Jacob and Esau.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 80.—“*Let my heart be sound.*” What is a sound heart? It noteth reality and solidity in grace. The Septuagint hath it, *Let my heart be without spot and blemish.* It implieth the reality of grace, opposed to the bare form of godliness, or the fair shows of hypocrites, and the sudden and vanishing motions of temporaries.

If you would have me unfold what this sound heart is, there is required these four things:—
1. An enlightened understanding; that is, the directive part of the soul; and it is sound when it is kept free from the leaven and contagion of error: “A man of understanding walketh uprightly,” Prov. 15:21. A sound mind is a good help to a sound heart.

2. There is required an awakened conscience, that warneth us of our duty, and riseth up in dislike of sin upon all occasions: "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee" (Prov. 6:22): to have a constant monitor in our bosoms to put us in mind of God, when our reins preach to us in the night season (Ps. 16:7): there is a secret spy in our bosoms that observes all that we do, and think, and speak; a domestic chaplain, that is always preaching to us. His heart is his Bible.

3. There is required a rightly disposed will, or a steadfast purpose to walk with God in all conditions, and to do what is good and acceptable in his sight: "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord," Acts 11:23. Many have light inclinations, or wavering resolutions; but their hearts are not fixedly, habitually bent to please God; therein chiefly lieth this sound heart, that it doth inseparably cleave to God in all things.

4. There is required that the affections be purged and quickened: these are the vigorous motions of the will, and therefore this must be heedfully regarded; purged they must be from that carnality and fleshliness that cleaveth to them. This is called in Scripture the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30:6).—*Condensed from Manton.*

Verse 80.—"Let my heart be sound." "A sound mind in a sound body," was the prayer of a heathen, and his desire was according to the extent of his knowledge; but a heart sound in God's statutes, sound to the very core, with no speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, and like the king's daughter, "all glorious within," this is what the Psalmist prays for, this is what every child of God aims at, and prays for too,—"Even as He is pure."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 80.—"Let my heart be sound."

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by thy grace will we be!
Under thy standard, exalted and royal,
Strong in thy strength, we will battle for thee!
True-hearted, whole-hearted! Fullest allegiance
Yielding henceforth to our glorious King;
Valiant endeavour and loving obedience
Freely and joyously now would we bring.
True-hearted, Saviour, thou knowest our story;
Weak are the hearts that we lay at thy feet,
Sinful and treacherous! yet for thy glory,
Heal them, and cleanse them from sin and deceit
Whole-hearted! Saviour, belovèd and glorious,
Take thy great power, and reign thou alone,
Over our wills and affections victorious,
Freely surrendered, and wholly thine own.
Half-hearted! false-hearted! Heed we the warning!
Only the whole can be perfectly true;
Bring the whole offering, all timid thought scorning,
True-hearted only if whole-hearted too.
Half-hearted! Saviour, shall aught be withholden,
Giving thee part who hast given us all?
Blessings outpouring, and promises golden

Pledging, with never reserve or recall.
Half-hearted! Master, shall any who know thee
Grudge thee their lives, who hast laid down thine own?
Nay; we would offer the hearts that we owe thee,—
Live for thy love and thy glory alone.
Sisters, dear sisters, the call is resounding,
Will ye not echo the silver refrain,
Mighty and sweet, and in gladness abounding,—
“True-hearted, whole-hearted!” ringing again?
Jesus is with us, his rest is before us,
Brightly his standard is waving above.
Brothers, dear brothers, in gathering chorus,
Peal out the watchword of courage and love!
Peal out the watchword, and silence it never,
Song of our spirits rejoicing and free!
“True-hearted, whole-hearted, now and for ever,
King of our lives, by thy grace we will be!”

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–1879) in “Loyal Responses.”

Verse 80.—“Let my heart be sound,” etc. This is a plain difference between a sound heart and a false heart; in the receiving of Christ the sound heart receives him as a favourite receives a prince, he gives up all to him, and lets him have the command of all. A mere innkeeper entertains him that comes next to him; he will take any man’s money, and will give welcome to any man; if it be the worst man that comes he cares not, for he loves gain above all things. Not so the good heart; he welcomes Christ alone, and resigns up all to Christ. Whatsoever is pleasing to Christ he will do it, and whatsoever comes from Christ he will welcome.—*Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) in “The Soules Implantation.”*

Verse 80.—“Be sound.” Heb. *Be perfect*; as the word from the same root is rendered in Job 1:1. Dr. R. Young gives as the meaning of the word as used by the Psalmist, *whole, complete, plain*.
Verse 80.—“Sound in thy statutes,” etc. Though an *orthodox creed* does not constitute true religion, yet it is the basis of it, and it is a great blessing to have it.—*Nicolson, quoted by W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 80.—If you would be faithful to Christ, be sincere in your profession of him, make David’s prayer and desire to be yours: “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.” Religion which is begun in hypocrisy will certainly end in apostasy, and this always carries with it reproach and ignominy.—William Spurstow (–1666).

Verse 80.—“Ashamed.” We may be ashamed either before God or men, ourselves or others.
1. Before God: either in our addresses to him at the throne of grace or when summoned to appear at the last day before the tribunal of his justice. (1) If you understand it of our approach to him, we cannot come into his presence with confidence if we have not a sound heart. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”; 1 John 3:21. We lose that holy familiarity and cheerfulness, when we are unbosoming ourselves to our heavenly Father, when our hearts are not sound. (2) When we are summoned to appear before the tribunal of his justice. Many, now, with a bold impudence, will obtrude themselves upon the worship of God, because they see him not, and have not a due sense of his majesty; but the time will come,

when the most impudent and outbraving sinners will be astonished, even then when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open and made manifest, and hidden things brought to light (1 Cor. 4:5); and every one is to receive his judgment from God according to what he hath done, either good or evil.

2. Before men a man may be ashamed, and so before ourselves and others. (1) Ourselves. It was a saying of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself; be not ashamed of thyself. God hath a spy and deputy within us, and taketh notice of our conformity and unconformity to his will, and, after sin committed, lasheth the soul with the sense of its own guilt and folly, as the body is lashed with stripes: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Rom. 6:21. (2) Before others. And so our shame may be occasioned by our scandals, or our punishments; it is hard to say which is intended here.—*Condensed from Manton.*

Exposition of Verses 81–88

MY soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but I hope in thy word.*

⁸² Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

⁸³ For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; *yet do I not forget thy statutes.*

⁸⁴ How many *are* the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

⁸⁵ The proud have digged pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

⁸⁶ All thy commandments *are* faithful: they persecute me wrongfully: help thou me.

⁸⁷ They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

⁸⁸ Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

This portion of the gigantic Psalm sees the Psalmist *in extremis*. His enemies have brought him to the lowest condition of anguish and depression; yet he is faithful to the law and trustful in his God. This octave is the midnight of the Psalm, and very dark and black it is. Stars, however, shine out, and the last verse gives promise of the dawn. The strain will after this become more cheerful; but meanwhile it should minister comfort to us to see so eminent a servant of God so hardly used by the ungodly: evidently in our own persecutions, no strange thing has happened unto us.

81. "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*" He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God: his one desire was for "thy salvation." But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree,—up to the full measure of his strength, yea, and beyond it till he fainted. So strong was his desire that it produced prostration of spirit. He grew weary with waiting, faint with watching, sick with urgent need. Thus the sincerity and the eagerness of his desires were proved. Nothing else could satisfy him but deliverance wrought out by the hand of God, his inmost nature yearned and pined for salvation from the God of all grace, and he must have it or utterly fail. "*But I hope in thy word.*" Therefore he felt that salvation would come, for God cannot break his promise, nor disappoint the hope which his own word has excited: yea, the fulfilment of his word is near at hand when our hope is firm and our desire fervent. Hope alone can keep the soul from fainting by using the smelling-bottle of the promise. Yet hope does not quench desire for a speedy answer to prayer; it increases our importunity, for it both stimulates ardour and sustains the heart under delays. To faint for salvation, and to be kept from utterly failing by the hope of it, is the frequent experience of the Christian man. We are "faint yet

pursuing." Hope sustains when desire exhausts. While the grace of desire throws us down, the grace of hope lifts us up again.

82. "*Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When will thou comfort me?*" His eyes gave out with eagerly gazing for the kind appearance of the Lord, while his heart in weariness cried out for speedy comfort. To read the word till the eyes can no longer see is but a small thing compared with watching for the fulfilment of the promise till the inner eyes of expectancy begin to grow dim with hope deferred. We may not set times to God, for this is to limit the Holy One of Israel; yet we may urge our suit with importunity, and make fervent enquiry as to why the promise tarries. David sought no comfort except that which comes from God; his question is, "When wilt thou comfort me?" If help does not come from heaven it will never come at all: all the good man's hopes look that way, he has not a glance to dart in any other direction. This experience of waiting and fainting is well-known by full-grown saints, and it teaches them many precious lessons which they would never learn by any other means. Among the choice results is this one—that the body rises into sympathy with the soul, both heart and flesh cry out for the living God, and even the eyes find a tongue, "saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" It must be an intense longing which is not satisfied to express itself by the lips, but speaks with the eyes, by those eyes failing through intense watching. Eyes can speak right eloquently; they use both mutes and liquids, and can sometimes say more than tongues. David says in another place, "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps. 6:8). Specially are our eyes eloquent when they begin to fail with weariness and woe. A humble eye lifted up to heaven in silent prayer may flash such flame as shall melt the bolts which bar the entrance of vocal prayer, and so heaven shall be taken by storm with the artillery of tears. Blessed are the eyes that are strained in looking after God. The eyes of the Lord will see to it that such eyes do not actually fail. How much better to watch for the Lord with aching eyes than to have them sparkling at the glitter of vanity.

83. "*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.*" The skins used for containing wine, when emptied, were hung up in the tent, and when the place reeked with smoke the skins grew black and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. The Psalmist's face through sorrow had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried and tanned. His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution; he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental suffering, and that men would look upon him as an old worn-out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer no purpose. What a metaphor for a man to use who was certainly a poet, a divine, and a master in Israel, if not a king, and a man after God's own heart! It is little wonder if we, commoner folk, are made to think very little of ourselves, and are filled with distress of mind. Some of us know the inner meaning of this simile, for we, too, have felt dingy, mean, and worthless, only fit to be cast away. Very black and hot has been the smoke which has enveloped us; it seemed to come not alone from the Egyptian furnace, but from the bottomless pit; and it had a clinging power which made the soot of it fasten upon us and blacken us with miserable thoughts.

"*Yet do I not forget thy statutes.*" Here is the patience of the saints and the victory of faith. Blackened the man of God might be by falsehood, but the truth was in him, and he never gave it up. He was faithful to his King when he seemed deserted and left to the vilest uses. The

promises came to his mind, and, what was a still better evidence of his loyalty, the statutes were there too: he stuck to his duties as well as to his comforts. The worst circumstances cannot destroy the true believer's hold upon his God. Grace is a living power which survives that which would suffocate all other forms of existence. Fire cannot consume it, and smoke cannot smother it. A man may be reduced to skin and bone, and all his comfort may be dried out of him, and yet he may hold fast his integrity and glorify his God. It is, however, no marvel that in such a case the eyes which are tormented with the smoke cry out for the Lord's delivering hand, and the heart heated and faint longs for the divine salvation.

84. "*How many are the days of thy servant?*" I cannot hope to live long in such a condition, thou must come speedily to my rescue or I shall die. Shall all my short life be consumed in such destroying sorrows? The brevity of life is a good argument against the length of an affliction. Perhaps the Psalmist means that his days seemed too many when they were spent in such distress. He half wished that they were ended, and therefore he asked in trouble, "*How many are the days of thy servant?*" Like a hired servant, he had a certain term to serve, and he would not complain; but still the time seemed long because his griefs were so heavy. No one knows the appointed number of our days except the Lord, and therefore to him the appeal is made that he would not prolong them beyond his servant's strength. It cannot be the Lord's mind that his own servant should always be treated so unjustly; there must be an end to it; when would it be?

"When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?" He had placed his case in the Lord's hands, and he prayed that sentence might be given and put into execution. He desired nothing but justice, that his character might be cleared and his persecutors silenced. He knew that God would certainly avenge his own elect, but the day of rescue tarried, the hours dragged heavily along, and the persecuted one cried day and night for deliverance.

85. "*The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.*" As men who hunt wild beasts are wont to make pitfalls and snares, so did David's foes endeavour to entrap him. They went laboriously and cunningly to work to ruin him, "*they digged pits*"; not one, but many. If one would not take him, perhaps another would, and so they digged again and again. One would think that such haughty people would not have soiled their fingers with digging; but they swallowed their pride in hopes of swallowing their victim. Whereas they ought to have been ashamed of such meanness, they were conscious of no shame, but, on the contrary, were proud of their cleverness; proud of setting a trap for a godly man. "*Which are not after thy law.*" Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour. If men would keep to the statutes of the Lord, they would lift the fallen out of the pit, or fill up the pit so that none might stumble into it; but they would never spend a moment in working injury to others. When, however, they become proud, they are sure to despise others; and for this reason they seek to circumvent them, that they may afterwards hold them up to ridicule.

It was well for David that his enemies were God's enemies, and that their attacks upon him had no sanction from the Lord. It was also much to his gain that he was not ignorant of their devices, for he was thus put upon his guard, and led to watch his ways lest he should fall into their pits. While he kept to the law of the Lord he was safe, though even then it was an uncomfortable thing to have his path made dangerous by the craft of wanton malice.

86. "*All thy commandments are faithful.*" He had no fault to find with God's law, even though he had fallen into sad trouble through obedience to it. Whatever the command might cost him it was worth it; he felt that God's way might be rough, but it was right; it might make him enemies, but still it was his best friend. He believed that in the end God's command would turn out to his own profit, and that he should be no loser by obeying it.

"*They persecute me wrongfully.*" The fault lay with his persecutors, and neither with his God nor with himself. He had done no injury to anyone, nor acted otherwise than according to truth and justice; therefore he confidently appeals to his God, and cries, "*Help thou me.*" This is a golden prayer, as precious as it is short. The words are few, but the meaning is full. Help was needed that the persecuted one might avoid the snare, might bear up under reproach, and might act so prudently as to baffle his foes. God's help is our hope. Whoever may hurt us, it matters not so long as the Lord helps us; for if indeed the Lord help us, none can really hurt us. Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. "*Help, Lord,*" will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient and we cast ourselves upon it without fear.

87. "*They had almost consumed me upon earth.*" His foes had almost destroyed him so as to make him altogether fail. If they could they would have eaten him, or burned him alive; anything so that they could have made a full end of the good man. Evidently he had fallen under their power to a large extent, and they had so used that power that he was well nigh consumed. He was almost gone from off the earth; but almost is not altogether, and so he escaped by the skin of his teeth. The lions are chained: they can rage no further than our God permits. The Psalmist perceives the limit of their power: they could only touch his earthly life and earthly goods. Upon earth they almost ate him up, but he had an eternal portion which they could not even nibble at. "*But I forsook not thy precepts.*" Nothing could drive him from obeying the Lord. If we stick to the precepts we shall be rescued by the promises. If ill-usage could have driven the oppressed saint from the way of right the purpose of the wicked would have been answered, and we should have heard no more of David. If we are resolved to die sooner than forsake the Lord, we may depend upon it that we shall not die, but shall live to see the overthrow of them that hate us.

88. "*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*" Most wise, most blessed prayer! If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life. Lovingkindness itself cannot do us greater service than by making us to have life more abundantly. When we are quickened we are able to bear affliction, to baffle cunning, and to conquer sin. We look to the lovingkindness of God as the source of spiritual revival, and we entreat the Lord to quicken us, not according to our deserts, but after the boundless energy of his grace. What a blessed word is this "lovingkindness." Take it to pieces, and admire its double force of love. "*So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.*" If quickened by the Holy Ghost we shall be sure to exhibit a holy character. We shall be faithful to sound doctrine when the Spirit visits us and makes us faithful. None keep the word of the Lord's mouth unless the word of the Lord's mouth quickens them. We ought greatly to admire the spiritual prudence of the Psalmist, who does not so much pray for freedom from trial as for renewed life that he may be supported under it. When the inner life is vigorous all is well. David prayed for a sound heart in the closing verse of the last octave, and here he seeks a revived

heart; this is going to the root of the matter, by seeking that which is the most needful of all things. Lord let it be heart-work with us, and let our hearts be right with thee.

Notes on Verses 81–88

The whole eight verses, 81–89.—The eleventh letter, *Caph*, signifies the *hollowed hand*. The expositors, however, looking only to the meaning *curved*, which is but half of its import, explain the section as signifying the act of bowing down in penitence or as noting that the fathers of the Old Testament were like veteran soldiers, stooping with years and toil, and bowed down yet further by the heavy weight of the law, only removable by that coming of Christ for which they prayed. Others extend the notion to the saints of the church, weighed down by the sorrows and cares of this life and therefore desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ. The true meaning is to be sought in the full interpretation of the word; for the hand is hollowed either in order to retain something which actually lies in it, or to receive something about to be placed in it by another. Thus the hand may be God's, as the giver of bounty, or man's, as the receiver of it; and the whole scope of the section, as a prayer for speedy help, is that man holds out his hand as a beggar, supplicating the mercy of God.—*Jerome, Ambrose, and others, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 81.—“*My soul fainteth for thy salvation.*” The word here rendered “*fainteth*” is the same that in Ps. 73:26 is translated “*faileth*”: “*My flesh and my heart faileth.*” The idea is, that his strength gave way; he had such an intense *desire* for salvation that he became weak and powerless. Any strong emotion *may* thus prostrate us; and the love of God, the desire of his favour, the longing for heaven may be so intense as to produce this result.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 81.—“*My soul fainteth.*” Fainting is proper to the body, but here it is ascribed to the soul; as also in many other places. The Apostle saith, “*Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds*” (Heb. 12:3); where two words are used, weariness and fainting, both taken from the body. Weariness is a lesser, fainting is a higher degree of deficiency: in weariness, the body requireth some rest or refreshment, when the active power is weakened, and the vital spirits and principles of motion are dulled; but, in fainting, the vital power is contracted, and retireth, and leaveth the outward parts lifeless and senseless. When a man is wearied, his strength is abated; when he fainteth, he is quite spent. These things, by a metaphor, are applied to the soul, or mind. A man is weary, when the fortitude of his mind, his moral or spiritual strength, is broken, or begins to abate, when his soul sits uneasy under sufferings; but when he sinketh under the burden of grievous, tedious, or long affliction, then he is said to faint, when all the reasons and grounds of his comfort are quite spent and he can hold out no longer.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 81.—“*My soul fainteth.*” What is this fainting but the lofty state of raptured contemplation in which the strength of heavenly affections weakens those of earth. Just as the ascent into the highest mountains causes a new respiration, as when Daniel had a great vision from God, he tells us “he fainted and was sick certain days.”—*E. Paxton Hood, 1871.*

Verse 81.—“*My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope.*” Believe under a cloud, and wait for him when there is no moonlight nor starlight. Let faith live and breathe, and lay hold of the sure salvation of God, when clouds and darkness are about you, and appearance of rotting in the prison before you. Take heed of unbelieving hearts, which can fatter lies upon Christ. Beware of “*Doth his promise fail for evermore?*” for it was a man, and not God said it. Who dreameth that a promise of God can fail, fall aswoon, or die? Who can make God sick, or his promises weak? When we are pleased to seek a plea with Christ, let us plead that we hope in him. O

stout word of faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" O sweet epitaph, written upon the grave-stone of a departed believer, namely, "I died hoping, and my dust and ashes believe in life!" Faith's eyes, that can see through a mill-stone, can see through a gloom* of God, and under it read God's thoughts of love and peace. Hold fast Christ in the dark; surely ye shall see the salvation of God. Your adversaries are ripe and dry for the fire. Yet a little while, and they shall go up in a flame; the breath of the Lord, like a river of brimstone, shall kindle about them.—*Samuel Rutherford*, 1600–1661.

Verse 81.—“*For thy salvation.*” Understood in a higher sense, the holy man longs for the coming of the Saviour in the flesh.—*Cornelius Jansen*.

Verse 81.—“*THY salvation.*” A believer in God, how afflicted so ever he be, seeketh not to be delivered but in a way allowed by God; “*My soul fainteth for thy salvation*”; or, till thou deliver me in thy good way.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 81.—“*I hope in thy word.*” David knew where he moored his ship. Hope without a promise is like an anchor without ground to hold by; but David’s hope fixed itself upon the divine word.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 81.—“*I hope in thy word:*” i.e. I hope beyond anything I understand, and beyond anything I can possibly do, and beyond anything I deserve, and beyond all carnal and spiritual consolations, for I desire and look for Thee only. I seek Thee, not Thine: I long to hear “*Thy word,*” that I may obey it in patience and meekness.—*Le Blanc*.

Verses 81, 83.—It is good in all times of persecution or affliction to have an eye both on the promises and on the precepts; for the looking to the promise doth encourage to hope, and the eyeing of the precepts doth prove the hope to be sound. The Psalmist *hoped in the word* (verse 81), and (verse 83), *he forgot not the statutes*.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 82.—“*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*” Has a mother promised to visit her son or daughter? should she not be able to go, the remark of the son or daughter will be: “Alas! my mother promised to come to me: how long have I been looking for her? But a speck has grown on my eye.” “I cannot see, my eyes have failed me”; that is, by looking so intensely for her coming.—*Joseph Roberts*.

Verse 82.—“*Mine eyes fail for thy word.*” He was continuously lifting the eyes to heaven, looking for help from God. He was so perpetually doing this, that at length the eyes themselves became dim.

“*When will thou comfort me?*” He was saying this in his heart; he was saying this with his mouth; he was saying the same thing with his eyes perpetually looking up to heaven.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 82.—“*For thy word.*” The children of God make more of a promise than others do; and that upon a double account: partly, because they value the blessing promised; partly, because they are satisfied with the assurance given by God’s word; so that, whereas others pass by these things with a careless eye, their souls are lifted up to the constant and earnest expectation of the blessing promised. It is said of the hireling, that he must have his wages before the sun go down, because he is poor and hath set his heart upon it (Deut. 24:15); or, as it is in the Hebrew, lifted up his soul to it, meaning thereby both his desire and hope. He esteemeth his wages; for it is the solace of his labours, and the maintenance of his life; and he assuredly expecteth it, upon the promise and covenant of him who setteth him awork. So it is

with the children of God; they esteem the blessings promised, and God's word giveth them good assurance that they do not wait upon him in vain.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 82.—“*Saying, When.*” The same spirit of faith which teaches a man to cry earnestly, teaches him to wait patiently; for as it assures him that mercy is in the Lord's hand, so it assures him, it will come forth in the Lord's time.—*John Mason*, 1688.

Verse 82.—“*When wilt thou comfort me?*” It is a customizable manner of God's working with his children, to delay the answer to their prayers, and to suspend the performance of his promises: not because he is unwilling to give, but because he will have them better prepared to receive.

Tardius dando quod pettimus instantia nobis orationis indicit:† he is slow to give that which we seek, that we should not seek slowly, but may be awakened to instance and fervency in prayer, which he knows to be the service most acceptable unto him, and most profitable unto ourselves.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 82.—“*When wilt thou comfort me?*” Let us complain not of God, but to God. Complaints of God give a vent to murmuring; but complaints to God, to faith, hope, and patience.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 82.—The prophet, to prevent it from being supposed that he was too effeminate and faint-hearted, intimates that his fainting was not without cause. In asking God, “*When will thou comfort me?*” he shows, with sufficient plainness, that he was for a long time, as it were, cast off and forsaken.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 82.—“*When wilt thou comfort me?*” The people of God are sometimes very disconsolate, and need comforting, through the prevalence of sin, the power of Satan's temptations, the hidings of God's face, and a variety of afflictions, when they apply to God for comfort, who only can comfort them, and who has set them to do it; but they are apt to think it long, and enquire, as David here, when it will be.—*John Gill*.

Verse 82.—“*When wilt thou comfort me?*” A poor woman had been long time questioning herself, and doubting of her salvation; when at last the Lord made it good unto her soul that Christ was her own, then her minister said unto her, The Lord will not always give his children a cordial, but he hath it ready for them when they are fainting.—*Thomas Hooker*.

Verse 82.—“*When wilt thou comfort me?*” Comfort is necessary because a great part of our temptations lies in troubles, as well as allurements. Sense of pain may discompose us as well as pleasure entice us. The world is a persecuting as well as a tempting world. The flesh troubleth as well as enticeth. The Devil is a disquieting as well as an ensnaring Devil. But yet comfort, though necessary, is not so necessary as holiness: therefore, though comfort is not to be despised, yet sincere love to God is to be preferred, and, though it be not dispensed so certainly, so constantly, and in so high a degree in this world, we must be contented. The Spirit's comforting work is oftener interrupted than the work of holiness; yet so much as is necessary to enable us to serve God in this world we shall assuredly receive.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 83.—“*A bottle in the smoke.*” Sleep was out of the question, for I was ... almost smothered with the smoke from a wood fire, for there was no chimney. I was indeed “*like a bottle in the smoke,*” turned black and dried almost to cracking; for this was something of what the Psalmist had in view. The bottles being of leather, and being hung up in rooms with large fires of wood, and without chimneys, they became smoke-dried, shrivelled, and unfit for use.—*From “My Wanderings,” by John Gadsby*, 1860.

Verse 83.—“Like a bottle in the smoke.” The tent of a common Arab is so smoky a habitation, that I consider the expression of *a bottle in the smoke*, to be equivalent to that of *a bottle in the tent of an Arab*. There was a fire, we find, in that Arab tent to which Bishop Pococke was conducted when he was going to Jerusalem. How smoky must such an habitation be, and how black all its utensils! Le Bruyn in going from Aleppo to Scanderoon was made sufficiently sensible of this: for being obliged to pass a whole night in a hut of reeds, in the middle of which there was a fire, to boil a kettle of meat that hung over it, and to bake some bread among the ashes, he found the smoke intolerable, the door being the only place by which it could get out of the hut.

To the *blackness* of a goat-skin bottle, in a tent, but to the *meanness* also of such a drinking-vessel, the Psalmist seems to refer, and it was a most natural image for him to make use of, driven from among the vessels of silver and gold in the palace of Saul, to live as the Arabs do and did, and consequently often obliged to drink out of a smoked leather-bottle.—*Thomas Harmer, 1719–1788.*

Verse 83.—“For I am become like a bottle in the smoke.” A bottle in the smoke has very little inflation, fatness, moisture, beauty. Thus God wastes away, debases, and empties his people, while he exercises them with tribulations and the disquiet of hoping and waiting. The glory and eagerness of the flesh must be emptied, that the Divine gifts may find room, and the remembrance of the commandments of God may be restrained, which cannot be well kept in bottles which are swollen, inflated, and filled.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 83.—“A bottle in the smoke.” One object amongst the ancients of such exposure was to mellow the wine by the gradual ascent of the heat and smoke from the fire over which the skin was suspended; and thus the words teach us the uses of affliction in ripening and improving the soul.—*Rosenmüller, quoted in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 83.—“For I am become like a bottle in the smoke,” etc. Satan can afflict the *body* by the *mind*. For these two are so closely bound together that their good and bad estate is shared between them. If the heart be merry the countenance is cheerful, the strength is renewed, the bones do flourish like an herb. If the heart be troubled, the health is impaired, the strength is dried up, the marrow of the bones wasted, etc. Grief in the heart is like a moth in the garment, it insensibly consumeth the body and disordereth it. This advantage of weakening the body falls into Satan’s hands by necessary consequence, as the prophet’s ripe figs, that fell into the mouth of the eater. And surely he is well pleased with it, as he is an enemy both to body and soul. But ‘tis a greater satisfaction to him, in that as he can make the sorrows of the mind produce the weakness and sickness of the body; so can he make the distemper of the body (by a reciprocal requital) to augment the trouble of the mind. How little can a sickly body do? it disables a man for all services; he cannot oft pray, nor read, nor hear. Sickness takes away the sweetness and comfort of religious exercises; this gives occasion for them to think the worse of themselves; they think the soul is weary of the ways of God when the body cannot hold out.—*Richard Gilpin, in “A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations,” 1677.*

Verse 83.—“Like a bottle in the smoke.” In this did the afflicted Psalmist find a striking emblem of his own spiritual state. He waited for the Lord to come. In spirit he was dried up by pressure upon him; and he still waited for the Lord to come, declaring his shrivelled condition. Perhaps his outward man partook of the same sad qualities at this time.... The outward appearance of the man of God, to which he may be alluding, was, however, but the semblance of his spiritual

nature at this period, whatever may have been the visible effects. David was exposed to the calumnious reports of evil-minded men, and to the hot persecution of relentless enemies, till the effect upon his mind was such that his whole spiritual nature resembled, in his own mind, a skin hung up in the smoke for a length of time. Not only was he shrivelled in public estimation, but also in his own mind; not indeed because at this time, and on the ground of the charges made against him, he felt that he deserved it; but because so incessant and multifarious was the bitter invasion of his spirit, that even with all his faith in God, he well-nigh literally sunk under it. The term given in our translation to the original would imply, that he bore himself well notwithstanding—“*For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.*” Whereas the words rendered more literally would convey the import that all this happened to him even while he was in the very way of duty: “*I am become like a bottle in the smoke—I do not forget thy statutes.*” He was directly in the way of the Lord’s appointments for all salvation; yet trouble came. It is sad when our spiritual man becomes shrivelled and dried up because of our falling into sin, or because of guilty omissions; but here seems to be a falling off of the spiritual man, and of the physical man, while the believer is conscious that he is not forgetting the statutes of his gracious God.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 83.—Observe here the difference between the beauty and strength of the body and of the soul: the beauty of the soul groweth fairer by afflictions, whereas that of the body is blasted. David was a bottle shrivelled and shrunk up; yet the holy frame of his soul was not altered: his beauty was gone, but not his grace.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 83.—“*I am become like a bottle in the frost*” (so the Seventy translate it). When spiritual desires burn, carnal desires without doubt cool: on this account followeth, “*Since I am become like a bottle in the frost I do not forget thy righteousness.*” Truly he desireth this mortal flesh to be understood by the bottle, the heavenly blessing by the frost, whereby the lusts of the flesh as it were by the binding of the frost become sluggish: and hence it ariseth that the righteousnesses of God do not slip from the memory so long as we do not meditate apart from them; since what the apostle saith (Rom. 13:14) is brought to pass: “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Therefore when he had said, “*For I have become like a bottle in the frost,*” he added, “*and I do not forget thy righteousnesses,*” that is, I forget them not, because I have become such. For the fervour of lust had cooled, that the memory of love might glow.—*Augustine.*

Verse 84.—“*How many are the days of thy servant?*” etc. Some read the two clauses apart, as if the first were a general complaint of the brevity of human life, such as is to be met with in other Psalms, and more frequently in the book of Job; and next in their opinion, there follows a special prayer of the Psalmist that God would take vengeance upon his enemies. But I rather prefer joining the two clauses together, and limit both to David’s afflictions; as it had been said, Lord, how long hast thou determined to abandon thy servant to the will of the ungodly? when wilt thou set thyself in opposition to their cruelty and outrage, in order to take vengeance upon them? The Scriptures often use the word “*days*” in this sense.... By the use of the plural number is denoted a determinate portion of time, which, in other places, is compared to the “*days of an hireling*”: Job 14:6; Isaiah 16:14. The Psalmist does not, then, bewail in general the transitory life of man, but he complains that the time of his state of warfare in this world had been too long protracted; and, therefore, he naturally desires that it might be brought to a termination. In expostulating with God about his troubles, he does not do so obstinately, or

with a murmuring spirit; but still, in asking how long it will be necessary for him to suffer, he humbly prays that God would not delay to succour him.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 84.—“*When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*” He declares that he does not doubt but that there will be at some period an end to his afflictions, and that there will be a time in which his haters and enemies will be judged and punished. He assumes the fact and therefore enquires the date. Thus in the saints their very impatience of delay does itself prove their confidence of future salvation and deliverance.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 84.—“*When wilt thou execute judgment,*” etc. This is an ordinary prayer, not against any certain persons, but rather generally against God’s enemies, and their evil courses. For the Lord executeth judgment upon his children for their conversion, as Paul (Acts 9), and upon the wicked for their confusion. He prayeth against them that belonged not to God, and yet not so much against their persons as their evil causes; and no otherwise against their persons than as they are joined with the evil causes. Thus we may pray for the confusion of God’s enemies; otherwise we cannot.—*R. Greenham*.

Verse 84.—In this verse there is none of the ten words used in reference to God’s law.—*Adam Clarke*. [Is not judgment one of them?—C. H. S.]

Verse 85.—“*Pits.*” Hajji said he would tell me a tale or two about crocodiles, and he would begin by telling me how they catch them sometimes. A deep pit, he said, is dug by the side of the river, and then covered with doura straw. The crocodiles fall into these pits, and cannot get out again.... There can be no doubt that formerly pits were dug for the crocodiles, as Hajji described, as is the case still in some parts of the world for other animals. To this custom allusion is made in Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 10:2; 35:8; 141:10; Prov. 26:27; Eccles. 10:8; etc. “He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.” Probably also this was the kind of pit referred to in Exod. 21:33: “If a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it”; i.e., not cover it effectually; “and an ass or an ox fall therein,” etc.

Prisoners were sometimes shut up in pits, and left without water, literally to die of thirst. What a dreadful death! It is said that nothing can be more terrible. How dreadful must be their groans!—*John Gadsby*.

Verse 85.—“*The proud have digged pits.*” It seems strange that a proud man should be a digger of pits; but so it is; for pride for a time can submit itself to gain a greater vantage over him whom it would tread under foot. “The wicked is so proud that he seeks not God, yet he croucheth and boweth, to cause heaps of the poor to fall by his might,” Ps. 10:4, 10. So proud Absalom abased himself to meanest subjects that so he might prepare a way to usurpation over his king and father. But mark, he saith not that he had fallen into the pits which his enemies had digged. No, no: in God’s righteous judgments, the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands, while the good escape free. “He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.” Ps. 7:15, 16. Thus Haman hanged the gallows which he raised for Mordecai; and Saul when he thought by subtlety to slay David with the Philistine’s sword (when he sent him out to seek two hundred of their foreskins in a dowry) was disappointed of his purpose; but he himself at length was slain by the sword.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 85.—Let men beware how they *dig pits* for others. All God’s word testifies against such wickedness. How many tests are invented simply for the purpose of entangling men’s consciences and furnishing ground for persecution.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 85.—“Which are not after thy law.” Hebrew, Not after thy law. It may refer to the men or to the practice. The men walk not according to thy law, and their fraudulent practices are not agreeable to thy law. The law of God condemned pits for tame beasts: Exodus 21:33, 34. Though it was lawful for hunters to take wild beasts, yet they were to take heed that a tame beast fell not therein, at their peril.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 85.—“Which are not after thy law.” After God’s law they could not be while they were doing such things. Perhaps he refers to the deed more than to the men: “The proud have digged pits for me, which is not after thy law”—which is against thy law; and they would seem to do it because it is against thy law—delighting in wickedness as they do. Such men would seem to imbibe the foul spirit which Milton ascribes to the fallen archangel: “Evil, be thou my good.” Obviously, however, the words contain this sentiment,—The proud have sought to overthrow me, because they are not obedient to thy law. Hereupon he sets their conduct in the light of God’s holy commandments, that the comparison may be made: “*All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully.*” Whatever the Lord did was done in truth; these men acted against his servant without cause, and in so doing they also acted in defiance of his known will.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 85.—“The wicked have told me fables, but not as thy law” (So the Septuagint). The special reason why he desires to be freed from the company of the wicked is, because they always tempt the pious by relating the pleasures of the world, which are nothing but fables, filthy, fleeting pleasures, more fallacious than real—nothing like the grand and solid pleasure that always flows from a pious observance of the law of the Lord.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 86.—“All thy commandments are faithful.” David setteth down here three points. The one is that God is true; and after that he addeth a protestation of his good conduct and guidance, and of the malice of his adversaries: thirdly, he calleth upon God in his afflictions. Now as concerning the first, he sheweth us that although Satan to shake us, and in the end utterly to carry us away, subtilly and cunningly goeth about to deceive us, we must, to the contrary, learn how to know his ambushes, and to keep us from out of them. So often then as we are grieved with adversity and affliction, where must we begin? See Satan how he pitcheth his nets and layeth his ambushes to induce and persuade us to come into them, what sayeth he? Dost thou not see thyself forsaken of thy God? Where are the promises whereunto thou didst trust? Now here thou seest thyself to be a wretched, forlorn creature. So then thou right well seest that God hath deceived thee, and that the promises whereunto thou trustedst appertain nothing at all unto thee. See here the subtlety of Satan. What is now to be done? We are to conclude with David and say, yet God is true and faithful. Let us, I say, keep in mind the truth of God as a shield to beat back whatsoever Satan is able to lay unto our charge. When he shall go about to cause us to deny our faith, when he shall lie about us to make us believe that God thinketh no more of us, or else that it is in vain for us to trust unto his promises; let us know the clean contrary and believe that it is very plain and sound truth which God saith unto us. Although Satan casteth at us never so many darts, although he have never so exceeding many devices against us, although now and then by violence, sometimes with subtilty and cunning, it seemeth in very deed to us that he should overcome us; nevertheless he shall never bring it to pass, for the truth of God shall be made sure and certain in our hearts.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 86.—“*All thy commandments are faithful.*” The Hebrew is *Faithfulness*; that is to say, they are true, sure, equal, infallible. “*They have persecuted me wrongfully:*” no doubt for asserting God’s truths and commands, and adhering thereto.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 86.—“*They persecute me wrongfully.*” There is a stress on the word *falsely* (or wrongfully); for that is a true saying of a martyr saint,* “The cause, not the pain, makes the martyr.” Wherefore the apostle teaches us, “Let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 86.—“*Help thou me,*” “God help me” is an excellent, comprehensive prayer; it is a pity it should ever be used lightly and as a bye-word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 87.—“*Almost consumed.*” The lives of good men are full of narrow escapes. The righteous are scarcely saved. Many a time their feet do almost slip. Yet he, who has redeemed them, will not let them so fall that they can rise no more. One of their greatest perils is, a temptation to use unlawful means for terminating their trials.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 87.—It should be noticed that he says “*upon the earth:*” for it shows, that even if his enemies had taken away his life on earth, he nevertheless confidently looked for another life in heaven, and that already he had by faith entered into heaven, and was living a heavenly life; so that if the life of the body should be taken away, it was not to be regarded as an evil. They who live such a life speedily recover from despair.—*D. H. Mollerus.*

Verse 88.—“*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*” Finally, the man of God appears entreating to be quickened, that so he may be enabled to keep the divine testimony.... Here is a last resort, but it is a sure one. Let the living principles of divine grace be imparted to the soul, and the believer will be raised above dismay at the face of men. How does the spiritual mind triumph over even the infirmities of the body! We may behold this from the death-bed of the believer, and we may recall this in the lives and deaths of many eminent ones. The man of pure mind goes right to the fountain of life. He goes, with understanding, for he takes in the character in which the Lord hath spoken of himself: “*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.*” All at once he lays aside thought of his enemies; he is present with his God. His desire is to rise into higher spiritual existence, that he may hold closer communion with the Father of lights with whom there is no variableness.—*John Stephen.*

Verse 88.—“*Quicken me,*” etc. He had prayed before, “Quicken me in thy righteousness” (verse 40); but here “Quicken me after thy lovingkindness.” The surest token of God’s good-will towards us is his good work in us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 88.—“*Quicken me.*” Many a time in this Psalm doth David make this petition; and it seems strange that so often he should acknowledge himself a dead man, and desire God to quicken him. But so it is unto the child of God: every desertion and decay of strength is a death. So desirous are they to live unto God, that when they fail in it, and find any inability in their souls to serve God as they would, they account themselves but dead, and pray the Lord to quicken them.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 88.—“*The testimony of thy mouth.*” The title here given to the directory of our duty—“*The testimony of God’s mouth,*” gives increasing strength to our obligations. Thus let every word we read or hear be regarded as coming directly from the “mouth of God” (John 6:63). What reverence! what implicit submission does it demand! May it ever find us in the posture of

attention, humility, and faith! each one of us ready to say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."—*Charles Bridges*.

Exposition of Verses 89–96

FOR ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

⁹⁰ Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

⁹¹ They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

⁹² Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

⁹³ I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

⁹⁴ I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

⁹⁶ I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

89. "*For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.*" The strain is more joyful, for experience has given the sweet singer a comfortable knowledge of the word of the Lord, and this makes a glad theme. After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. Some men are never happier than when they are unsettling everything and everybody; but God's mind is not with them. The power and glory of heaven have confirmed each sentence which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and so confirmed it that to all eternity it must stand the same,—settled in heaven, where nothing can reach it. In the former section David's soul fainted, but here the good man looks out of self and perceives that the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary, neither is there any failure in his word.

The verse takes the form of an ascription of praise: the faithfulness and immutability of God are fit themes for holy song, and when we are tired with gazing upon the shifting scene of this life, the thought of the immutable promise fills our mouth with singing. God's purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be disturbed. Covenant settlements will not be removed, however unsettled the thoughts of men may become; let us therefore settle it in our minds that we abide in the faith of our Jehovah as long as we have any being.

90. "*Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.*" This is an additional glory: God is not affected by the lapse of ages; he is not only faithful to one man throughout his lifetime, but to his children's children after him, yea, and to all generations so long as they keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them. The promises are ancient things, yet they are not worn out by centuries of use, for the divine faithfulness endureth for ever. He who succoured his servants thousands of years ago still shows himself strong on the behalf of all them that trust in him.

"*Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*" Nature is governed by fixed laws; the globe keeps its course by the divine command, and displays no erratic movements: the seasons observe their predestined order, the sea obeys the rule of ebb and flow, and all things else are marshalled in their appointed order. There is an analogy between the word of God and the works of God, and specially in this, that they are both of them constant, fixed, and unchangeable. God's word which established the world is the same as that which he has

embodied in the Scriptures; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and specially by him who is emphatically THE WORD. When we see the world keeping its place and all its laws abiding the same, we have herein assurance that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant, and will not allow the faith of his people to be put to shame. If the earth abideth the spiritual creation will abide; if God's word suffices to establish the world surely it is enough for the establishment of the individual believer.

91. "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances.*" Because the Lord has bid the universe abide, therefore it stands, and all its laws continue to operate with precision and power. Because the might of God is ever present to maintain them, therefore do all things continue. The word which spake all things into existence has supported them till now, and still supports them both in being and in well-being. God's ordinance is the reason for the continued existence of creation. What important forces these ordinances are! "*For all are thy servants.*" Created by thy word they obey that word, thus answering the purpose of their existence, and working out the design of their Creator. Both great things and small pay homage to the Lord. No atom escapes his rule, no world avoids his government. Shall we wish to be free of the Lord's sway and become lords unto ourselves? If we were so, we should be dreadful exceptions to a law which secures the well-being of the universe. Rather while we read concerning all things else—they continue and they serve, let us continue to serve, and to serve more perfectly as our lives are continued. By that word which is settled may we be settled; by that voice which establishes the earth may we be established; and by that command which all created things obey may we be made the servants of the Lord God Almighty.

92. "*Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*" That word which has preserved the heavens and the earth also preserves the people of God in their time of trial. With that word we are charmed; it is a mine of delight to us. We take a double and treble delight in it, and derive a multiplied delight from it, and this stands us in good stead when all other delights are taken from us. We should have felt ready to lie down and die of our griefs if the spiritual comforts of God's word had not uplifted us; but by their sustaining influence we have been borne above all the depressions and despairs which naturally grow out of severe affliction. Some of us can set our seal to this statement. Our affliction, if it had not been for divine grace, would have crushed us out of existence, so that we should have perished. In our darkest seasons nothing has kept us from desperation but the promise of the Lord: yea, at times nothing has stood between us and self-destruction save faith in the eternal word of God. When worn with pain until the brain has become dazed and the reason well-nigh extinguished, a sweet text has whispered to us its heart-cheering assurance, and our poor struggling mind has reposed upon the bosom of God. That which was our delight in prosperity has been our light in adversity; that which in the day kept us from presuming has in the night kept us from perishing. This verse contains a mournful supposition—"unless"; describes a horrible condition—"perished in mine affliction"; and implies a glorious deliverance, for he did not die, but lived to proclaim the honours of the word of God.

93.—"*I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*" When we have felt the quickening power of a precept we never can forget it. We may read it, learn it, repeat it, and think we have it, and yet it may slip out of our minds; but if it has once given us life or renewed that life, there is no fear of its falling from our recollection. Experience teaches, and teaches effectually. How blessed a thing it is to have the precepts written on the heart with the

golden pen of experience, and graven on the memory with the divine stylus of grace. Forgetfulness is a great evil in holy things; we see here the man of God fighting against it, and feeling sure of victory because he knew the life-giving energy of the word in his own soul. That which quickens the heart is sure to quicken the memory.

It seems singular that he should ascribe quickening to the precepts, and yet it lies in them and in all the words of the Lord alike. It is to be noted that when the Lord raised the dead he addressed to them the word of command. He said, "Lazarus, come forth," or, "Maid, arise." We need not fear to address gospel precepts to dead sinners, since by them the Spirit gives them life. Remark that the Psalmist does not say that the precepts quickened him, but that the Lord quickened him by their means: thus he traces the life from the channel to the source, and places the glory where it is due. Yet at the same time he prized the instruments of the blessing, and resolved never to forget them. He had already remembered them when he likened himself to a bottle in the smoke, and now he feels that whether in the smoke or in the fire the memory of the Lord's precepts shall never depart from him.

94. "*I am thine, save me.*" A comprehensive prayer with a prevailing argument. Consecration is a good plea for preservation. If we are conscious that we are the Lord's we may be confident that he will save us. We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save *me*. The need of salvation is better seen by the Lord's people than by any others, and hence their prayer—"save me"; they know that only God can save them, and hence they cry to him alone; and they know that no merit can be found in themselves, and hence they urge a reason fetched from the grace of God,—"*I am thine,*" "*For I have sought thy precepts.*" Thus had he proved that he was the Lord's. He might not have attained to all the holiness which he desired, but he had studiously aimed at being obedient to the Lord, and hence he begged to be saved even to the end. A man may be seeking the doctrines and the promises, and yet be unrenewed in heart; but to seek the precepts is a sure sign of grace; no one ever heard of a rebel or a hypocrite seeking the precepts. The Lord had evidently wrought a great work upon the Psalmist, and he besought him to carry it on to completion. Saving is linked with seeking, "save me, for I have sought"; and when the Lord sets us seeking he will not refuse us the saving. He who seeks holiness is already saved; if we have sought the Lord we may be sure that the Lord has sought us, and will certainly save us.

95.—"*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.*" They were like wild beasts crouching by the way, or highwaymen waylaying a defenceless traveller; but the Psalmist went on his way without considering them, for he was considering something better, namely, the witness or testimony which God has borne to the sons of men. He did not allow the malice of the wicked to take him off from his holy study of the divine word. He was so calm that he could "consider"; so holy that he loved to consider the Lord's "testimonies"; so victorious over all their plots that he did not allow them to drive him from his pious contemplations. If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults. The wicked are the natural enemies of holy men and holy thoughts; if they could, they would not only damage us but destroy us, and if they cannot do this to-day they will wait for further opportunities, ever hoping that their evil designs may be compassed. They have waited

hitherto in vain, and they will have to wait much longer yet; for if we are so unmoved that we do not even give them a thought their hope of destroying us must be a very poor one.

Note the double waiting,—the patience of the wicked who watch long and carefully for an opportunity to destroy the godly, and then the patience of the saint who will not quit his meditations, even to quiet his foes. See how the serpent seed lie in wait as an adder that biteth at the horse's heels; but see how the chosen of the Lord live above their venom, and take no more notice of them than if they had no existence.

96.—“*I have seen an end of all perfection.*” He had seen its limit, for it went but a little way; he had seen its evaporation under the trials of life, its detection under the searching glance of truth, its exposure by the confession of the penitent. There is no perfection beneath the moon. Perfect men, in the absolute sense of the word, live only in a perfect world. Some men see no end to their own perfection, but this is because they are perfectly blind. The experienced believer has seen an end of all perfection in himself, in his brethren, in the best man’s best works. It would be well if some who profess to be perfect could even see the beginning of perfection, for we fear they cannot have begun aright, or they would not talk so exceeding proudly. Is it not the beginning of perfection to lament your imperfection? There is no such thing as perfection in anything which is the work of man. “*But thy commandment is exceeding broad.*” When the breadth of the law is known the notion of perfection in the flesh vanishes: that law touches every act, word, and thought, and is of such a spiritual nature that it judges the motives, desires, and emotions of the soul. It reveals a perfection which convicts us for shortcomings as well as for transgressions, and does not allow us to make up for deficiencies in one direction by special carefulness in others. The divine ideal of holiness is far too broad for us to hope to cover all its wide arena, and yet it is no broader than it ought to be. Who would wish to have an imperfect law? Nay, its perfection is its glory; but it is the death of all glorying in our own perfection. There is a breadth about the commandment which has never been met to the full by a corresponding breadth of holiness in any mere man while here below; only in Jesus do we see it fully embodied. The law is in all respects a perfect code; each separate precept of it is far-reaching in its hallowed meaning, and the whole ten cover all, and leave no space wherein to please our passions. We may well adore the infinity of divine holiness, and then measure ourselves by its standard, and bow before the Lord in all lowness, acknowledging how far we fall short of it.

Notes on Verses 89–96

LAMED.—Verse 89.—Here the climax of the delineation of the suppliant’s pilgrimage is reached. We have arrived at the centre of the Psalm, and the thread of the connexion is purposely broken off. The substance of the first eleven strophes has evidently been: “Hitherto hath the Lord brought me: shall it be that I now perish?” To this the eleven succeeding strophes make answer, “The Lord’s word changeth not; and in spite of all evil forebodings, the Lord will perfect concerning me the work that he hath already begun.”—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*, 1860.

Verse 89.—“*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*” These words are usually rendered as making but one proposition; but the accent *athnab* showeth there are two branches; the one asserting the eternity of God; the other, the constancy and permanency of his word. Thus, 1. “*For ever [art thou] O LORD.*” 2. “*Thy word is settled in heaven.*” So the Syriac readeth it; and Geierus, and, after him, others prove and approve this reading. And so this verse and the following do the better correspond one with the other, if we observe beginning and ending: As

thou art “for ever, O Lord,” and “thy faithfulness is unto all generations,” which are exactly parallel. And so also will the last clauses agree: “Thy word is settled in heaven,” and, “thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.”

It implieth that as God is eternal, so is his word, and that it hath a fit representation both in heaven and in earth: in heaven, in the constant motion of the heavenly bodies; in earth, in the consistency and permanency thereof; that as his word doth stand fast in heaven, so doth his faithfulness on earth, where the afflictions of the godly seem to contradict it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 89.—“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” When Job considers his body turned to dust and worms (Job 19:19, 25), yet by faith he says, “My Redeemer lives,” etc. Even when patience failed in Job, yet *faith* failed not. Though God kill all other graces and comforts, and my soul too, yet he shall not kill my faith, says he. If he separate my soul from my body, yet not faith from my soul. And therefore the just lives by faith, rather than by other graces, because when all is gone, yet faith remains, and faith remains because the *promise* remains: “*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*” And this is the proper and principal meaning of this place.—*Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 89.—“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” If we look at God’s word of promise, as it is in our unsettled hearts, we dream that it’s as ready to waver as our hearts are; as the shadow of the sun and moon in the water seems to shake as much as the water doth which it shines upon. Yet for all this seeming shaking here below, the sun and moon go on in a steadfast course in heaven. So the Psalmist tells us that however our hearts stagger at a promise through unbelief; nay, and our unbelief makes us believe that the promise often is shaken; yet *God’s word is settled*, though not *in our hearts*, yet “*in heaven*”; yea, and there “*for ever*,” as settled as heaven itself is; yea, more than so; for “heaven and earth may pass,” but “not one jot or tittle of the law (and therefore of the gospel) shall fail”: Luke 16:17.—*Anthony Tuckney, 1599–1670.*

Verse 89.—“Settled.” J. M. Good translates the verse as follows—“For ever, O Jehovah, hath thy word given array to the heavens,” and observes that the Hebrew word בָּשָׂר is a military term, and applies to arraying and marshalling the divisions of an army in their proper stations when taking the field. The hosts of heaven are here supposed to be arrayed or marshalled with a like exact order; and to maintain for ever the relative duties imposed on them: while the earth, like the heavens, has as established a march prescribed to it, which it equally fulfils; for all are the servants of the great Creator; and hence, as they change, produce the beautiful regularity of the seasons, the rich returns of harvest, and daily declare the glory of the Lord.

Verse 89.—“In heaven.” Whenever you look to heaven, remember that within you have a God, who hath fixed his residence and shown his glory there, and made it the seat both of his mercy and justice. You have also there a Saviour, who, after he had died for our sins, sat down at the right hand of Majesty, to see his promises accomplished, and by his word to subdue the whole world. There are angels that “do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word”: Ps. 103:20. There are glorified saints, who see God face to face, and dwell with him for evermore, and came thither by the same covenant which is propounded to us, as the charter of our peace and hope. In the outer region of heaven we see the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, move in that fixed course and order wherein God hath set them; and will God show his

constancy in the course of nature, and be fickle and changeable in the covenant of grace, wherein he hath disposed the order and method of his mercies?—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 89, 91.—In these verses there is affirmed to be an analogy between the word of God and the works of God. It is said of his “*word*,” that it is “*settled in heaven*,” and that it sustains its faithfulness from one generation to another. It is said of his “*works*,” and more especially of those that are immediately around us, even of the earth which we inhabit, that as it was established at the first so it abideth afterwards. And then, as if to perfect the assimilation between them, it is said of both in the 91st verse, “*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants*”; thereby identifying the sureness of that word which proceeded from his lips, with the unfailing constancy of that Nature which was formed and is uphelden by his hands.

The constancy of Nature is taught by universal experience, and even strikes the popular eye as the most characteristic of those features which have been impressed upon her. It may need the aid of philosophy to learn how unvarying Nature is in all her processes—how even the seeming anomalies can be traced to a law that is inflexible—how what appears at first to be the caprices of her waywardness, are, in fact, the evolutions of a mechanism that never changes—and that the more thoroughly she is sifted and put to the test by the interrogations of the curious, the more certainly will they find that she walks by a rule which knows no abatement, and perseveres with obedient footstep in that even course from which the eye of strictest scrutiny has never yet detected one hair-breadth of deviation. It is no longer doubted by men of science, that every remaining semblance of irregularity in the universe is due, not to the fickleness of Nature, but to the ignorance of man—that her most hidden movements are conducted with a uniformity as rigorous as *Fate*—that even the fitful agitations of the weather have their law and their principle—that the intensity of every breeze, and the number of drops in every shower, and the formation of every cloud, and all the occurring alternations of storm and sunshine, and the endless shiftings of temperature, and those tremulous varieties of the air which our instruments have enabled us to discover but have not enabled us to explain—that still, they follow each other by a method of succession, which, though greatly more intricate, is yet as absolute in itself as the order of the seasons, or the mathematical courses of astronomy. This is the impression of every philosophical mind with regard to Nature, and it is strengthened by each new accession that is made to science.... But there is enough of patent and palpable regularity in Nature to give also to the popular mind the same impression of her constancy. There is a gross and general experience that teaches the same lesson, and that has lodged in every bosom a kind of secure and steadfast confidence in the uniformity of her processes. The very child knows and proceeds upon it. He is aware of an abiding character and properly in the elements around him, and has already learned as much of the fire, and the water, and the food that he eats, and the firm ground that he treads upon, and even of the gravitation by which he must regulate his postures and his movements, as to prove that, infant though he be, he is fully initiated in the doctrine, that Nature has her laws and her ordinances, and that she continueth therein, and the proofs of this are ever multiplying along the journey of human observation; insomuch that when we come to manhood, we read of Nature’s constancy throughout every department of the visible world. It meets us wherever we turn our eyes.... God has so framed the machinery of my perceptions, as that I am led irresistibly to expect that everywhere events will follow each other in the very train in which I have ever been accustomed to observe them;

and when God so sustains the uniformity of Nature, that in every instance it is rigidly so, he is just manifesting the faithfulness of his character. Were it otherwise, he would be practising a mockery on the expectation which he himself had inspired. God may be said to have promised to every human being that Nature will be constant—if not by the whisper of an inward voice to every heart, at least by the force of an uncontrollable bias which he has impressed on every constitution. So that, when we behold Nature keeping up its constancy, we behold the God of Nature keeping up his faithfulness; and the system of visible things with its general laws, and its successions which are invariable, instead of an opaque materialism to intercept from the view of mortals the face of the Divinity, becomes the mirror which reflects upon the truth that is unchangeable, the ordination that never fails.... And so it is, that in our text there are represented together, as if there was a tie of likeness between them—that the same God who is fixed as to the ordinances of Nature, is faithful as to the declarations of his word; and as all experience proves how firmly he may be trusted for the one, so is there an argument as strong as experience, to prove how firmly he may be trusted for the other. By his work in us he hath awokened the expectation of a constancy in Nature, which he never disappoints. By his word to us, should he awaken the expectation of a certainty in his declarations, this he will never disappoint. It is because Nature is so fixed, that we apprehend the God of Nature to be so faithful. He who never falsifies the hope that hath arisen in every bosom, from the instinct which he himself hath communicated, will never falsify the hope that shall arise in any bosom from the express utterance of his voice. Were he a God in whose hand the processes of nature were ever shifting, then might we conceive him a God from whose mouth the proclamations of grace had the like characters of variance and vacillation. But it is just because of our reliance on the one that we feel so much of repose in our dependence upon the other; and the same God who is so unfailing in the ordinances of his creation, we hold to be equally unfailing in the ordinances of his word.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 90.—“Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.” As he gathered the certainty of God’s word from the endurance of heaven, so now he confirms it by considering the foundation of the earth. Since the foundation of the earth, made by the word of God, abides sure, shall we not think that the foundation of our salvation, laid in Jesus Christ, is much more sure? Though the creatures cannot teach us the way of our salvation (for that we must learn by the word), yet do they confirm that which the word saith, “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever:” Jerem. 31:35, 36. As there Jeremy gathers the stability of the church from the stability of the creatures; so here David confirms the certainty of our salvation by the most certain and unchangeable course of creation; and both of them are amplified by Christ Jesus: “Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot of God’s word shall not fall to the ground.” Let us therefore be strengthened in faith and give glory to God.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 90.—“Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.” Every time we set foot on the ground, we may remember the stability of God’s promises, and it is also a confirmation of faith. Thus,—

1. The stability of the earth is the effect of God’s word; this is the true pillar upon which the earth standeth; for he upholdeth all things by the word of his power; “For he spake, and it was

done; he commanded, and it stood fast": Ps. 33:9. Now, his word of power helpeth us to depend upon his word of promise.

2. Nothing appeareth whereon the globe of the earth should lean and rest: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing:" Job 26:7. Now, that this vast and ponderous body should lean upon the fluid air as upon a firm foundation, is matter of wonder; the question is put in the book of Job: "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?" ch. 38:6. Yet firm it is, though it hang as a ball in the air.... Now, since his word beareth up such a weight, and all the church's weight, and our own burden leaneth on the promise of God, he can, by the power of his word, bear up all without visible means. Therefore his people may trust his providence; he is able to support them in any distresses, when no way of help appeareth.

3. The firmness and stability offereth itself to our thoughts. The earth abideth in the same seat and condition wherein God left it, as long as the present course and order of nature is to continue: Ps. 104:5. God's truth is as immovable as the earth: Ps. 117:2. Surely if the foundation of the earth abideth sure, the foundation of our salvation, laid by Jesus Christ, is much more sure.

4. The stability remains in the midst of changes: Eccles. 1:4. All things in the world are subject to many revolutions, but God's truth is one and the same.

5. In upholding the frame of the world, all those attributes are seen, which are a firm stay to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness. The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the deluge. We cannot look upon this earth without seeing therein a display of those same attributes which confirm our faith, in waiting upon God till his promises be fulfilled to us.—*Condensed from T. Manton.*

Verse 90.—"It abideth." Creation is as the mother, and Providence the nurse which preserveth all the works of God. God is not like man; for man, when he hath made a work, cannot maintain it: he buildeth a ship, and cannot save it from shipwreck; he edifies a house, but cannot keep it from decay. It is otherwise with God; we daily see his conserving power, upholding his creatures; which should confirm us that he will not cast us off, nor suffer us to perish (since we are the works of his hands) if we so depend upon him, and give him glory as our Creator, Conserver, and Redeemer.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 91.—"They continue this day according to thine ordinances," etc. Which of the works of God are not pervaded by a beautiful *order*? Think of the succession of day and night. Think of the revolution of the seasons. Think of the stars as they walk in their majestic courses,—one great law of harmony "binding the sweet influence of the Pleiades, ... and guiding Arcturus with his sons": Job 38:31, 32. Look upwards, amid the magnificence of night, to that crowded concave,—worlds piled on worlds—and yet see the calm grandeur of that stately march;—not a discordant note there to mar the harmony, though wheeling at an inconceivable velocity in their intricate and devious orbits! These heavenly sentinels all keep their appointed watch-towers. These Levites in the upper firmament, light their altar fires "at the time of the evening incense," and quench them again, when the sun, who is appointed to rule the day, walks forth from his chamber. "These wait all upon thee": Ps. 104:27. "*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*"—J. R. Macduff, in "*Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains,*" 1862.

Verse 91.—“*They continue this day according to thine ordinances.*” Man may destroy a plant, but he is powerless to force it into disobedience to the laws given it by the common Creator. “If,” says one, “man would employ it for his use, he must carefully pay attention to its wants and ways, and bow his own proud will to the humblest grass at his feet. Man may forcibly obstruct the path of a growing twig, but it turns quietly aside, and moves patiently and irresistibly on its appointed way.” Do what he may, turf will not grow in the tropics, nor the palm bear its fruit in a cold climate. Rice refuses to thrive out of watery swamps, or cotton to form its fleece of snowy fibres where the rain can reach them. Some of the handsomest flowers in the world, and stranger still, some of the most juicy and succulent plants with which we are acquainted, adorn the arid and desolate sands of the Cape of Good Hope, and will not flourish elsewhere. If you twist the branch of a tree so as to turn the under surface of its leaves towards the sky, in a very little while all those leaves will turn down and assume their appointed position. This process will be performed sooner or later, according to the heat of the sun and the flexibility of the leaves, but none the less it will surely take place. You cannot induce the Sorrowful tree of India to bloom by day, or cause it to cease all the year round from loading the night air with the rich perfume of its orange-like flowers. The philosopher need not go far to find the secret of this. The Psalmist declares it when, speaking of universal nature, he traces the true cause of its immutable order. God he says, “hath established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass;” or, as it is in the Prayer-book version, “hath given them a law which shall not be broken”: Psalm 148:6. Truly is it said in another Psalm (119:91), “*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*” Wilful man may dare to defy his Maker, and set at nought his wise and merciful commands; but not so all nature besides. Well, indeed, is it for us that his other works have not erred after the pattern of our rebellion; that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, with all their accompanying provision, have not ceased! To the precepts imposed upon vegetation when first called into being on creation’s third day, it still yields implicit submission, and the tenderest plant will die rather than transgress. What an awful contrast to this is the conduct of man, God’s noblest work, endowed with reason and a never-dying soul, yet too often ruining his health, wasting and destroying his mental power, defiling his immortal spirit, and, in a word, madly endeavouring to frustrate every purpose for which he was framed.—*James Neil, in “Rays from the Realms of Nature,”* 1879.

Verse 91.—All creatures punctually observe the law he hath implanted on their nature, and in their several capacities acknowledge him their sovereign; they move according to the inclinations he imprinted on them. The sea contains itself in its bounds, and the sun steps not out of his sphere; the stars march in their order: “*They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*” If he orders things contrary to their primitive nature they obey him. When he speaks the word, the devouring fire becomes gentle, and toucheth not the hair of the children he will preserve; the hunger-starved lions suspend their ravenous nature when so good a morsel as Daniel is set before them; and the sun, which had been in perpetual motion since its creation, obeys the writ of ease God sent in Joshua’s time, and stands still.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 91.—“*All are thy servants.*” We should consider how great is that perversity by which man only, formed in the image of God, together with reprobate angels, has fallen away from

obedience to God; so that what is said of all other creatures cannot be said of him, unless renewed by singular grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 91.—“*For all are thy servants.*” Since all creatures must serve God, therefore we ought neither to use them for any other purpose, nor turn them to the service of sin. The creature by the sin of our first parents has been made subject to vanity, and groans and longs to be delivered, Rom. 8: Christians, therefore, who use the creature and the world, should use as not abusing, 1 Cor. 7; but enjoy them with praise of the divine majesty and goodness, 1 Tim. 4.—*Solomon Gesner*.

Verse 91.—“*All are thy servants.*”

Say not, my soul, “From whence
Can God relieve my care?”
Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.

Thomas T. Lynch, 1855.

Verse 92.—“*Unless thy law had been my delights,*” etc. This text sets out the great benefit and comfort which David found in the law of God in the time of his affliction. It kept him from perishing: “*Had not thy law been my delights, I had perished in my affliction*”.... David speaks this (saith Musculus) of the distressful condition he was in when persecuted by Saul, forced to fly to the Philistines, and sometimes to hide himself in the rocks and caves of the earth. It is very likely (saith he) that he had the book of God’s law with him, by the reading of which he mitigated and allayed his sorrows, and kept himself pure from communicating with the heathen in their superstitions. The Greek scholiasts say that David uttered these words when driven from Saul, and compelled to live among the Philistines, etc. For he would have been allured to have communicated with them in their impieties had he not carried about him the meditation of the word of God.

The word of God delighted in is the afflicted saint’s antidote against ruin and destruction. The word of God is the sick saint’s salve, the dying saint’s cordial, a precious medicine to keep God’s people from perishing in time of affliction. This upheld Jacob from sinking, when his brother Esau came furiously marching to destroy him (Gen. 32:12). He pleaded, “And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good,” etc. Thus the promise of God supported him. This also upheld Joshua and enabled him courageously to fight the Lord’s battles, because God had said, “He would never leave him nor forsake him” (Josh. 1:5). Melanthon saith that the Landgrave of Hesse told him at Dresden that it had been impossible for him to have borne up under the manifold miseries of so long an imprisonment, *Nisi habuisset consolationem verbo divino in suo corde*, but for the comfort of the Scriptures in his heart.—*Edmund Calamy* (1600–1666), in “*The Godly Man’s Ark*.”

Verse 92.—Certainly the reading of most part of the Scriptures must needs be a very comfortable thing; and I think a godly heart (disposed as it ought to be) can hardly tell how to be sad while it does it. For what a comfort is it for a man to read an earthly father’s letters sent to him, though they were written long ago? With what care do we keep such letters in our chests? With how much delight do we ever and anon take them out and look upon them? and with how much sorrow do we lose them? Is my love to my *earthly* father so great, and shall my love to my *heavenly* Father be less? Can my heart choose but rejoice and my bones flourish like an herb, as oft as I look upon my Redeemer’s last will and testament, whereby I know that he

gave me so much, and that he doth so much for me continually, and that I shall be ever with him?

How is David ever and anon talking of his *delight in the law of God*, and in his statutes and testimonies. It was to him instead of all other delights; standing by him when all delights else left him; “*Unless thy law had been my delight (or, my very great delight), I should then have perished in mine affliction,*” ver. 92. Let *princes sit and speak* against him never so much; yet will he meditate in God’s statutes, ver. 23. Let him have never so many *persecutors and enemies*; yet will he not decline from God’s testimonies, ver. 157. Let him be in a strange place, there shall God’s statutes be his song, ver. 54. Let him be a *stranger in the earth* all his life; so that he be not a stranger to God’s commandments he cares not, ver. 19. Although he should have never so much *contempt* cast upon him, yet will he not forget God’s precepts, ver. 141. Although his *soul* should be *continually in his hand*, yet that should not make him forget God’s law. Yea, although he became like a *bottle in the smoke*, yet will he not forget God’s precepts, ver. 83. And therefore was it that he rejoiced, because he had been *afflicted* upon this account, that it made him learn God’s statutes. He cared for not other *wealth*. “*Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart,*” ver. 111. Neither cared he much for *life*, but only to keep God’s word, ver. 17. Whatever he had said before, or meant to say next, he still cries, “*Teach me thy statutes,*” and, “*I have longed for thy precepts,*” etc.; or some such expression or other. He could not forbear to speak of them, for they were still before him, ver. 30. No wonder, then, that he meditated upon them so often, as he saith he did. “*O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day,*” ver. 97. And “*Thy testimonies are my meditation,*” ver. 99. God’s commandments were to David sweeter in his mouth than honey, to talk and discourse of them, ver. 103.—*Zachary Bogan, 1653.*

Verse 92.—The persons to whose *delight* the word of God actually conduces are the children of God, and none else. None but they are prepared to take in the consolation of the word.

1. As they only are spiritually enlightened to discern the great and comfortable things contained in it, enlightened in a manner in which no others are: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

2. As they have the highest value for the word of God, this prepares them for receiving consolation from it.

3. As they have their hearts and ways suited to the word of God, this is another reason of the delight they fetch from it. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,” and take pleasure in them; “but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). The comforts of the word are spiritual; and only the spiritual heart, as it is renewed by grace, can taste and relish them. The delight which the people of God have from the word, is a privilege peculiar to themselves: and this word hath enough to give delight to all of their number.—*Daniel Wilcox, 1676–1733.*

Verse 92.—“*My delights.*” The word signifieth: delights in the plural number. Many were the sorrows of David’s life; but against them all he found as many comforts and delectations in God’s word. With such variety of holy wisdom hath God penned his word, that it hath convenient comfort for every state of life, and therefore the children of God account nothing so dear as it; they prefer it to their appointed food.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 92.—“Thy law ... my delights ... in mine affliction.” I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle at most) was allowed to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock—a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, “Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away.”—*Alexander Wallace, in “The Bible and the Working Classes,” 1853.*

Verse 92.—This verse I may call a Perfume against the Plague; The Sick Man's Salve; The Afflicted Man's Consolation; and a blessed Triumph, in and over all troubles.—Richard Greenham.

Verse 93.—“I will never forget thy precepts,” etc. Forgetfulness must be striven against in every possible way, lest it should gradually creep in, through ingratitude, old age, weakness of mind, or other overwhelming cares. See verses 16, 61, 83.—Martin Geier.

Verse 93.—“I will never forget thy precepts,” etc. This afflicted good man is now comforted; his comfort came from his delight in God's law; he thinks of it, he feels the force of it, and therefore to the end that he might ever receive the like comforts, he will bind himself by a promise to the Lord that he will never forget his precepts; adding a reason, namely, that they were to him spirit and life.

“With them hast thou quickened me.” Quickened he was, as he saith, by God, but yet also by the word, soundly preached, savingly understood, and particularly applied to the conscience. Thus then doth the power of Christ's death make us to walk on in newness of life. No *aqua vitae*, or *celestis*, like unto this, by which we have inward peace of conscience, and an outward obedience to God's commandments. David rejoiced in this blessing, so ought we: we desire to be ever quick, and cheerful to all good duties; it is only God, by his Spirit, in the word, that can give it.—*Richard Greenham.*

Verse 93.—“With them thou hast quickened me.” The quickening Spirit delights to work by means of the word; but though the word be the means, yet the benefit comes from God: “For with them *thou* hast quickened me.” Life comes from the fountain of life. The gospel is a sovereign plaster; but it is God's hand that must apply it, and make it stick; make it to be peace, comfort, and quickening to our souls. There is a double quickening, when, from dead, we are made living; or when, from cold, and sad, and heavy, we are made lively ... and so not only have life, but enjoy it more abundantly, according to Christ's gracious promise (John 10:10); that they may be living, lively, kept still in vigour. Now, this second quickening may be taken, either more largely, for the vitality of grace; or, strictly, for actual comfort. Largely taken; so God quickens by increasing the life of grace; either internally, by promising the life of grace; or morally and externally, by promising the life of glory. More strictly, his quickening may be taken for comfort and support in his affliction; so it is likely to be taken here: he had said immediately before, “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction”; and now, “I

will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." It was great comfort and support to him; and therefore he should prize the word as long as he lived.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 93.—"Thou hast quickened me." Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Read the word, not only as a history, but labour to be affected with it. Let it not only inform you, but inflame you. "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord": Jer. 23:29. Go not from the word till you can say as those disciples, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Luke 24:32.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 94.—"I am thine, save me." David, a man after God's own heart, would be saved, but not after the manner of the men of this world, that would be saved to be their own and to enjoy themselves at their own will; but he in being saved would be God's, and at his disposing: "I am thine, save me."

There is a threefold strength in this argument.

1. The *law of nature*, which obligeth a father to be good to his child, the husband to his wife, etc., and God hath subjected himself more unto the law of nature, he lies more under it, than any of these; and doth more perfectly, fully, and gloriously fulfil this law of nature than any; there is no father like him, no friend, no husband like him. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yet will I not forget thee:" Isai. 49:15. A mother can hardly do it; nature teacheth her to have bowels, and a merciful remembrance towards her child; much more will I, saith God.

2. When we can say to God, "I am thine," we plead *the covenant which God hath made with us*, wherein he is become our father and friend: and this is that which was pleaded in Isai. 63:16: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not (because they are gone, and so have no cognizance of us now); yet thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." See what a conclusion here is made; doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore we call to thee for help.

3. There is this encouragement and strength that the spirit of a man receives in thus arguing with God, *that if he can say in truth, "I am thine," God much more will say to the creature, "I am thine."* If we have so much love to offer ourselves to God, to become his; much more will the love of God make him to become ours; for God loves first, and most, and surest. If mine heart rise toward God, much more is the heart of God toward me; because there love is in the fountain. Never did a spouse speak to her husband, whom her soul loved to the highest, more willingly, and say, "I am thine," than the spirit of an upright man saith to God, "Lord, I am thine." And he loves him with a *love of thankfulness*. Hast thou given thyself to me, saith he, and shall I then withhold myself from thee? Hast thou, who art so great, done all this for me, and shall I stand out against thee? The gracious man will willingly acknowledge himself to be the Lord's. The saints often do this: David above twenty times comes with this acknowledgment in this Psalm, and in Psalm 116:16: "I am thy servant; I am thy servant." To say it once was not enough; he saith it again, to show the sincerity of his spirit, and to witness that his heart was fully pleased with this, that he was not his own, but the Lord's. The knowledge of our interest in God doth much further our approaches to God. When a man is once assured, and can say with a clear spirit, "I am thine," he will naturally cry, "Save me." Such a man is a man of prayer, he is much in addresses to God, and conversing with him.—*Joseph Symonds, 1653.*

Verse 94.—"I am thine." This is an excellent motive to draw from the Lord help in trouble,—"I am thine." Thine by creation, I was made by thee; thine by *adoption*, I was assigned over to thee; thine by *donation*, I was given to thee; thine by *marriage*, I was espoused to thee; thine

by *redemption*. I was purchased by thee; thine by *stipulation*, I have vowed myself unto thee.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 94.—“*For I have sought thy precepts.*” See here how David qualifies his protestation: from his earnest affection to the word of God, he proves that he was God’s man and not his own servant. It is not words, but affections and actions which must prove us to be the Lord’s. *Tuus sum, quia id solum quod tuum est quæsivi:* I am thine because I sought nothing but that which is thine, and how I might please thee. *Mihi in tuis justificationibus est omne patrimonium:* in the observance of thy precepts is all my patrimony.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 95.—“*The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.*” Two things again he notes in his enemies; diligence, in waiting all occasions whereby to do him evil; and cruelty without mercy, for their purpose was to destroy him: wherein, still we see how restless and insatiable is the malice of the wicked against the godly. Daniel’s preservation in the lions’ den was a great miracle; but it is no less a marvellous work of God, that the godly who are the flock of Christ, are daily preserved in the midst of the wicked, who are but ravening wolves, and thirst for the blood of the saints of God, having a cruel purpose in their heart if they might perform it, utterly to destroy them.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 95.—“*But I will consider thy testimonies.*” It was a grievous temptation to be sought for to be given up to slaughter, but a greater mercy to consider God’s testimonies, even then when his life was sought for. Had it not been for the consideration of God’s testimonies, a thousand to one he had fallen away.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 96.—“*I have seen an end of all perfection,*” etc. These words are variously rendered and understood by interpreters, who in this variety do very much conspire and agree in the same sense. The *Chaldee Paraphrase* renders the words thus, “*I have seen an end of all things about which I have employed my care; but thy commandment is very large.*” The *Syriac* version thus, “*I have seen an end of all regions and countries*” (that is, I have found the compass of the habitable world to be finite and limited) “*but thy commandment is of a vast extent.*” Others explain it thus, “*I have seen an end of all perfection,*” that is, of all the things of this world which men value and esteem at so high a rate; of all worldly wisdom and knowledge, of wealth, and honour, and greatness, which do all perish and pass away; “*but thy law is eternal, and still abideth the same*”; or, as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it. “The word of the Lord endureth for ever.”—*John Tillotson*, 1630–1694.

Verse 96.—“*I have seen an end of all perfection.*” Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome; Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken; Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled; Absalom, the fairest, deformed.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 96.—“*I have seen an end of all perfection,*” etc. The Psalmist’s words offer us a double comfort and encouragement. We may read them in two ways: (1) “I have seen an end of all perfection; *for thy commandment is exceeding broad*”; and (2) “I have seen an end of all perfection, *but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*”

Read in the first way, they suggest the animating thought, that our haunting consciousness of imperfection springs from the bright and awful perfection of the Law we are bent on obeying, of the ideal we have set before us. It is not because we are worse than those who are without law, or who are a law unto themselves, that we are restless and dissatisfied with ourselves; but because we measure both ourselves and our fellows by the lofty standard of God’s

commandment. It is because that commandment is so broad, that we cannot embrace it; it is because it is so high, that we cannot attain to it; it is because it is so perfect, that we cannot perfectly obey it.

But we may read the verse in another way, and still derive comfort and encouragement from it. We may say: "I have seen an end of all perfection in myself, and in the world; *but thy* commandment is exceeding broad: *that* is perfect, though *I* am imperfect, and in its perfection *I* find the promise of my own." For shall God give a law for human life, and that law remain for ever unfulfilled! Impossible! "The gifts of God are without repentance"—irreversible, never to be lessened or withdrawn. His purpose is not to be made of none effect by our weaknesses and sins. In the Law he has shown us what he would have us to be. And shall we never become what he would have us to be? Can the Law remain for ever without any life that corresponds to it and fulfils it? Nay, God will never take back the fair and perfect ideal of human life depicted in his Law, never retract his purpose to raise the life of man till it touches and fulfils its ideal. And so the very Law which is our despair is our comfort also; for if *that* be perfect we must become perfect; its perfection is the pledge of ours.—*From "The Expositor," 1876.*

Verse 96.—"I have seen an end of all perfection." David's natural eye had seen the end of many human perfections, and the eye of his understanding saw the end of them all. He had seen some actually end, and he saw that all must end. Adam did not continue in that perfection which had no imperfection in it; how then shall any of his children continue in what is at best an imperfect perfection?—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 96.—"I have seen an end," etc. The laws of Lycurgus among the Grecians, and of Numa among the Romans, had somewhat of good in them, but not all; prohibited somewhat that was evil, but not all that was evil. But the Christian religion is of a larger extent, both in its precepts and prohibitions: "*I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" A man with the eye of his body may behold an end of many worldly perfections, of many fair estates, great beauties, large parts, hopeful families; but a man with the eye of his soul (or by faith) may see an end of all earthly perfections. He may see the world in a flame, and all its pomp and pride, and glory, and gallantry, and crowns and sceptres, and riches, and treasures, turned into ashes. He may see the heavens passing away like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, and the earth, with the things thereon, consumed; and all its perfections, which men doated so much on, vanished into smoke and nothing. It is easy to see to the end of all terrene perfections, but it is difficult, yea, impossible, to see to the end of divine precepts: "*But thy commandments are exceeding broad,*" of a vast latitude, beyond our apprehension. They are so deep that none can fathom them, Ps. 36:6, so high that they are established in heaven, Ps. 119:48; so long that they endure for ever. 2 Pet. 1; and so broad, that none can measure them. They are not only "*broad*," but "*exceeding broad*": "higher than heaven, longer than the earth, broader than the sea." The commands of God reach the inward parts, the most secret motions and retired recesses of the soul. They reach all the privy thoughts, they pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. 4:12. They reach to all our actions; to those that seem smallest and of less concernment, as well as to those that are greater and of more concernment.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 96.—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad." As there is more mercy in the gospel than we are able to comprehend, so there is more holiness in the law than we are able to

comprehend. No man ever saw into the depths of that righteousness. There is an infinite holiness in the law. "*I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" He speaks not in the concrete, I have seen an end of *perfect things*, but in the abstract, "*an end of perfection*," I have come to the outside or to the very bottom of all (a man may soon travel through all the perfections that are in the world, and either see their end, or see that they end); "*but thy commandment is exceeding broad*," that is, it is exceedingly broader than any of these perfections; I cannot see the end of it, and I know it shall never have an end. There is a vastness of purity and spiritualness in the law.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 96.—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad." It is so by the comprehensive applicableness of its grand, simple rules. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." It is so by the ample order of its special injunctions. Where is there a spot without a signal of the divine will? It is so by laying an authoritative hand on the first principles and origin from which any thing can proceed, in human spirit and action; then it reaches to all things that do or can proceed thence. It asserts a jurisdiction over all thought and inward affection. All language is uttered under this same jurisdiction. All that the world and each man is in action about. And even over what is not done it maintains its authority, and pronounces its dictates and judgments. It is a positive thing with respect to what is negative, omission, non-existence. Like the divine government in the material world, over the wastes, deserts, and barren sands. And from these spaces of nothing (as it were) it can raise up substantial forms of evil, of sin, in evidence against men. As at the resurrection men will rise from empty wastes, where it would not have been suspected that any were concealed. Let a man look back on all his omissions, and think what the divine law can raise from them against him. Thus the law in its exceeding breadth, is vacant nowhere; it is not stretched to this wide extent by chasms and void spaces. If a man could find one such, he might there take his position for sin with impunity, if not with innocence.—*John Foster, 1768–1843*.

Verse 96.—"Thy commandment is exceeding broad." In the popular religious literature of the present times, the terms "broad" and "free" are of frequent occurrence. The fascination that surrounds them is enhanced by the use, at the same time, of their opposites, "narrow" and "bigoted." By an adroit manipulation of these terms and their equivalents, the heterodoxy of the day is labouring to stamp out the doctrine and spirit of the evangelical faith, and to allure the Christian multitude within the influence of the spreading rationalistic drift. Going to the market where the heterodox wares are exhibited with labels so attractive, the unsuspecting purchaser soon discovers that "their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter." Is the time not come when the adherents of the true faith should make an effort to wrest from their opponents the monopoly in the use of these terms, which they seem desirous of establishing for themselves? Those who, in the spirit of their Master, abide most closely by, and contend most tenaciously for, the whole faith that has been delivered to the saints, must be the most liberal-minded and catholic; and those who forsake the "old paths" must, in proportion to the extent of their departures, become contracted in their mental grasp, and narrow in their soul. Is not the Bible—the whole Bible—the only manual of Broad-churchism in its truest and highest sense? Is not the revelation of God's Son in us, the great soul-expanding power? "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Must we not infer, from the words of Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," that the mind which apprehends the truth is a

home of mental liberty? Does not strict conformity of the life to God's law produce real breadth of character? For "*Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" Is not the gospel system the only true Broad-churchism—"the perfect law of liberty"? Is not the believer—and the more so in proportion to the strength of his faith—the only true Broad-churchman, "increasing with the increase of God," "filled with all the fulness of God"?—James Kerr, in "*The Modern Scottish Pulpit*," 1880.

Verse 96.—"*Exceeding broad.*" Notwithstanding many things do show the way of life to be narrow, yet unto the godly man it is a way of great breadth; though not for sin, yet for duty and delight. He makes haste and progress in it.—*Robert Trail*, 1642–1716.

Verse 96.—Take notice that the law, which is your mark, is *exceeding broad*. And yet not the more easy to be hit; because you must aim to hit it, in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you cannot hit it at all.—*Stephen Marshall*.

Exposition of Verses 97–104

O HOW love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers: for they testimonies *are* my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

97. "*O how love I thy law!*" It is a note of exclamation. He loves so much that he must express his love, and in making the attempt he perceives that it is inexpressible—and therefore cries, "*O how I love!*" We not only reverence but love the law, we obey it out of love, and even when it chides us for disobedience we love it none the less. The law is God's law, and therefore it is our love. We love it for its holiness, and pine to be holy; we love it for its wisdom, and study to be wise; we love it for its perfection, and long to be perfect. Those who know the power of the gospel perceive an infinite loveliness in the law as they see it fulfilled and embodied in Christ Jesus. "*It is my meditation all the day.*" This was both the effect of his love and the cause of it. He meditated in God's word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it. He could not have enough of it, so ardently did he love it: all the day was not too long for his converse with it. His matin prayer, his noonday thought, his evensong were all out of Holy Writ; yea, in his worldly business he still kept his mind saturated with the law of the Lord. It is said of some men that the more you know them the less you admire them; but the reverse is true of God's word. Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. When "thy law," and "my meditation" are together all the day, the day grows holy, devout, and happy, and the heart lives with God. David turned away from all else; for in the preceding verse he tells us that he had seen an end of all perfection; but he turned in unto the law and tarried there the whole day of his life on earth, growing henceforth wiser and holier.

98. "*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies.*" The commands were his book, but God was his teacher. The letter can make us knowing, but only the divine Spirit can make us wise. Wisdom is knowledge put to practical use. Wisdom comes to us through obedience: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." We learn not only from promise, and doctrine, and sacred history, but also from precept and command; In fact, from the commandments we gather the most practical wisdom, and that which enables us best to cope with our adversaries. A holy life is the highest wisdom and the surest defence. Our enemies are renowned for subtlety, from the first father of them, the old serpent, down to the last cockatrice that has been hatched from the egg; and it would be vain for us to try to be a match with them in the craft and mystery of cunning, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. We must go to another school and learn of a different instructor, and then by uprightness we shall baffle fraud, by simple truth we shall vanquish deep-laid scheming, and by open candour we shall defeat slander. A thoroughly straightforward man, devoid of all policy, is a terrible puzzle to diplomats; they suspect him of a subtle duplicity through which they cannot see, while he, indifferent to their suspicions, holds on the even tenor of his way, and baffles all their arts. Yes, "honesty is the best policy." He who is taught of God has a practical wisdom such as malice cannot supply to the crafty; while harmless as a dove he also exhibits more than the serpent's wisdom.

"*For they are ever with me.*" He was always studying or obeying the commandments; they were his choice and constant companions. If we wish to become proficient we must be indefatigable. If we keep the wise law ever near us we shall become wise, and when our adversaries assail us we shall be prepared for them with that ready wit which lies in having the word of God at our fingers' ends. As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his shield, so must we never have the word of God out of our minds; it must be ever with us.

99. "*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*" That which the Lord had taught him had been useful in the camp, and now he finds it equally valuable in the schools. Our teachers are not always to be trusted; in fact, we may not follow any of them implicitly, for God holds us to account for our personal judgments. It behoves us then to follow closely the chart of the Word of God, that we may be able to save the vessel when even the pilot errs. If our teachers should be in all things sound and safe, they will be right glad for us to excel them, and they will ever be ready to own that the teaching of the Lord is better than any teaching which they can give us. Disciples of Christ who sit at his feet are often better skilled in divine things than doctors of divinity. "*For thy testimonies are my meditation.*" This is the best mode of acquiring understanding. We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest.

David does not hesitate to speak the truth in this place concerning himself, for he is quite innocent of self-consciousness. In speaking of his understanding he means to extol the law and the Lord, and not himself. There is not a grain of boasting in these bold expressions, but only a sincere childlike desire to set forth the excellence of the Lord's word. He who knows the truths taught in the Bible will be guilty of no egotism if he believes himself to be possessed of more important truth than all the agnostic professors buried and unburied.

100. "*I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*" The men of old age, and the men of old time, were outdone by the holier and more youthful learner. He had been taught to observe in heart and life the precepts of the Lord, and this was more than the most venerable sinner had ever learned, more than the philosopher of antiquity had so much as aspired to know. He had the word with him, and so outstripped his foes; he meditated on it, and so outran his friends; he practised it, and so outshone his elders. The instruction derived from Holy Scripture is useful in many directions, superior from many points of view, unrivalled everywhere and in every way. As our soul may make her boast in the Lord, so may we boast in his word. "There is none like it: give it me," said David as to Goliath's sword, and we may say the same as to the word of the Lord. If men prize antiquity they have it here. The ancients are had in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine precepts? "The old is better" says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days.

101. "*I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.*" There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil. David had zealously watched his steps and put a check upon his conduct,—he had refrained his feet. No one evil way could entice him, for he knew that if he went astray but in one road he had practically left the way of righteousness, therefore he avoided every false way. The by-paths were smooth and flowery, but he knew right well that they were evil, and so he turned his feet away, and held on along the straight and thorny pathway which leads to God. It is a pleasure to look back upon self-conquests,—"I have refrained," and a greater delight still to know that we did this out of no mere desire to stand well with our fellows, but with the one motive of keeping the law of the Lord. Sin avoided that obedience may be perfected is the essence of this verse; or it may be that the Psalmist would teach us that there is no real reverence for the book where there is not carefulness to avoid every transgression of its precepts. How can we keep God's word if we do not keep our own works from becoming vile?

102. "*I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.*" They are well taught whom God teaches. What we learn from the Lord we never forget. God's instruction has a practical effect,—we follow his way when he teaches us; and it has an abiding effect,—we do not depart from holiness. Read this verse in connection with the preceding and you get the believer's "I have," and his "I have not": he is good both positively and negatively. What he did, namely, "refrained his feet," preserved him from doing that which otherwise he might have done, namely, "departed from thy judgments." He who is careful not to go an inch aside will not leave the road. He who never touches the intoxicating cup will never be drunk. He who never utters an idle word will never be profane. If we begin to depart a little we can never tell where we shall end. The Lord brings us to persevere in holiness by abstinence from the beginning of sin; but whatever be the method he is the worker of our perseverance, and to him be all the glory.

103. "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*" He had not only heard the words of God, but fed upon them: they affected his palate as well as his ear. God's words are many and varied, and the whole of them make up what we call "the word": David loved them each one, individually, and the whole of them as a whole; he tasted an indescribable sweetness in them. He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their

sweetness he cries, "How sweet!" Being God's words they were divinely sweet to God's servant; he who put the sweetness into them had prepared the taste of his servant to discern and enjoy it. David makes no distinction between promises and precepts, doctrines and threatenings; they are all included in God's words, and all are precious in his esteem. Oh for a deep love to all that the Lord has revealed, whatever form it may take.

"*Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*" When he did not only eat but also speak the word, by instructing others, he felt an increased delight in it. The sweetest of all temporal things fall short of the infinite deliciousness of the eternal word: honey itself is outstripped in sweetness by the word of the Lord. When the Psalmist fed on it he found it sweet; but when he bore witness of it it became sweeter still. How wise it will be on our part to keep the word on our palate by meditation and on our tongue by confession. It must be sweet to our taste when we think of it, or it will not be sweet to our mouth when we talk of it.

104. "*Through thy precepts I get understanding.*" God's direction is our instruction. Obedience to the divine will begets wisdom of mind and action. As God's way is always best, those who follow it are sure to be justified by the result. If the Lawgiver were foolish his law would be the same, and obedience to such a law would involve us in a thousand mistakes; but as the reverse is the case, we may count ourselves happy to have such a wise, prudent, and beneficial law to be the rule of our lives. We are wise if we obey and we grow wise by obeying!

"*Therefore I hate every false way,*" Because he had understanding, and because of the divine precepts, he detested sin and falsehood. Every sin is a falsehood; we commit sin because we believe a lie, and in the end the flattering evil turns a liar to us and we find ourselves betrayed. True hearts are not indifferent about falsehood, they grow warm in indignation; as they love the truth, so they hate the lie. Saints have a universal horror of all that is untrue, they tolerate no falsehood or folly, they set their faces against all error of doctrine or wickedness of life. He who is a lover of one sin is in league with the whole army of sins; we must have neither truce nor parley with even one of these Amalekites, for the Lord hath war with them from generation to generation, and so must we. It is well to be a good hater. And what is that? A hater of no living being, but a hater of "every false way." The way of self-will, of self-righteousness, of worldliness, of pride, of unbelief, of hypocrisy,—these are all false ways, and therefore not only to be shunned, but to be abhorred.

This final verse of the strophe marks a great advance in character, and shows that the man of God is growing stronger, bolder, and happier than aforetime. He has been taught of the Lord, so that he discerns between the precious and the vile, and while he loves the truth fervently he hates falsehood intensely. May all of us reach this state of discrimination and determination, so that we may greatly glorify God.

Notes on Verses 97–104

Verse 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" He speaketh not of his knowing, reading, hearing, speaking, or outward practising of the law, but of *love* to the law: this is more than all the former: all the former may be without this, but this cannot be without the former. We may know, read, hear, speak, yea, preach the law, and all God's word, as also outwardly perform outward works prescribed and commanded by the law, and yet not love it; but where this love is there cannot but be all the former. Love is the principal affection of all other; like a queen commanding and overruling all the rest; all the rest depend upon it; yea, sometimes also the judgment itself. As the love is set, whether rightly or wrongly, towards good or evil, so are all the affections

swayed; yea, judgment itself sometimes blinded by love, erreth, as the love itself erreth; and so words and all actions are accordingly. Doth not daily experience daily teach the truth hereof? Moreover, besides this observation of this word, in respect of other, and in a kind of opposition unto other; let us observe two other things therein: 1. The first person; 2. The present tense. He saith not, O how is thy word to be loved, namely, by others; but O, how do *I myself* love thy law or thy word! Neither doth he say, O, how have I loved thy law in times past, or, how will I love it hereafter, how unfeignedly do I purpose to love it, when I shall be advanced unto and settled in my kingdom; or, how would I love it if I were so advanced and settled, or were I in this or that estate, or had this or that which I yet have not, or that others have; the prophet, I say, speaketh not in such manner; but he speaketh, as in the first person, so also in the present tense, saying, O how do I (now, such as I am) love thy law! Both these things are very worthy of our observation, and they be in the greater in respect of the person of the prophet; for albeit the name of the writer of this Psalm be not expressed in the title thereof (as in many other Psalms), yet the stream of most interpreters carrieth it to David. The matter also and style of the Psalm, compared with the matter and style of other Psalms which are David's, do both savour of David, and argue it was written by David.... Whether David were now in full and quiet possession of his kingdom (though not without many adversaries), or whether he was only known to be the heir-apparent, appointed to succeed Saul (as most do think), or whether he were for a time in flight from the cruel and rebellious insurrection of his unnatural son Absalom, yet is it a great matter that here he speaketh of his great love towards the law of God. If he were in full and quiet possession of his kingdom, then had he many other things that he might have loved, and wherewith the hearts of such princes are commonly taken up, yea, also stolen away from those things that are much more worthy of love. What need I speak of the daily experience, whereby the truth hereof is manifest in far more mean persons than princes are? If David were in exile or flight, a man would think that his wife, and children, and other friends, as also his country, would have so occupied and fully possessed his heart, that there should have been little place for other things therein; but that rather he should have said, Oh, how love I those things! Oh, how is my heart troubled with thoughts of them, and care for them in my great love towards them! Moreover, that neither any troubles on the one side, wherewith David was continually exercised; nor his honours, riches, or pleasures either in possession or in hope on the other side, did extinguish, or cool, or abate his love, is it not a thing of great note?

The next word to be observed is that word “*how*”: “Oh *how* love I thy law!” This noteth the manner or measure of his love. It is a word of admiration, or a note of comparison; so is it taken in divers other places ... it noteth a kind of excess or excellency, even such as cannot be well expressed. The prophet seemeth to speak with a kind of sighing, as being so ravished with love towards the law of God, that he was even sick of love, as the church saith (Cant. 2:5; 5:8), she was sick of love towards Christ: so seemeth the prophet to be sick of love towards the word of God. This word “*how*,” also importeth a comparison, and noteth a greater love in David towards the word than towards riches or any other thing; in which respect he saith afterward in this very Psalm (ver. 127), that he loveth the Lord’s commandments “above gold, yea, above fine gold”; yea, as whosoever so loveth not Christ, that in respect of Christ, and for Christ’s sake, he forsaketh father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, wife and children, and his own life also (much more riches and other things not to be compared to life) is not worthy of him; so he that

doth not love the word above all other things; yea, he that hateth not all other things below here, in respect of the word, is not worthy of the word. Christ himself loved the word of God more than he loved any riches; for did he not for the performance of the word submit himself to such want, that the foxes had holes, and the birds had nests, but he had not whereon to lay his head? and that, although he were the heir of all things, yet he was ministered unto by certain women? He loved the word of God more than he loved his mother, brethren, and sisters.... Yea, Christ loved the word of God more than he loved his own life; for did he not lay down his life to fulfil the word of God?... If Christ Jesus himself loved the word more than all other things, yea, more than his life, which was more than the life of all angels, was there not great reason why David should love it in like manner? had not David as much need of it as Christ?...

"It is my meditation." The noun "*meditation*" seemeth to be more than if he had said only that he meditated. For he seemeth to mean that though he did often think upon other matters, yet he made nothing his "*meditation*" but that which he here speaketh of, and that this was his only, or his chief and principal meditation and set study.

The object of David's meditation is not only to be understood of the bare letter of the word, as if he did always meditate of some text or other of the word before written; but also of the matters contained in the word; as of the justice, power, wisdom, mercy and goodness of God; of the frailty, corruption, and wickedness that is in man naturally, of the sins that God forbiddeth, and of the virtues that God commandeth in the word, and other the like. For he that meditateth of these things, though he meditate not of any one text of the word, yet he may be truly said to meditate of the word.

"All the day." We are not to imagine that the prophet did nothing else but meditate on the word; but this, first of all; that no day passed over his head wherein he did not meditate on the word; yea, that he took every occasion of meditating on the word. He was never weary of meditating. Though he had many other things wherein to employ himself, yet he forgot not the meditation of the word. His mind was not by any other employment alienated from the meditation of the word, but the more thereby provoked thereunto. As a man that hath laboured never so much one day in his calling, is not to be wearied thereby, but that he laboureth afresh the next day, and so day after day: so was it with the prophet touching this act of meditation. Secondly, when he saith he meditated on the word continually, or all the day, he meaneth that he did nothing at any time of the day without meditation on the word for doing thereof. Therefore we may safely say that continual meditation is more necessary than continual praying, as being necessary before the doing of everything, and in the very doing of everything; yea, even before the said duty of prayer, and in the very act thereof, this work of meditation of the word is always necessary; as without which, we know not either for what to pray, or in what sort and manner to pray: it is God's word only that can and must teach us both to pray for and also how to pray.—*Thomas Stoughton, in "Two Profitable Treatises," 1616.*

Verse 97.—"O how love I thy law!" Who without love attempts anything in the law of God, does it coldly, and quickly gives it up. For the mind cannot give itself earnestly and perseveringly to things which are not loved. Only he who loves the law makes it his meditation all the day.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 97.—"O how love I thy law!" Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and to have fifteen years added to my life, I would be much more frequent in my applications to the throne of grace.

Were I to renew my studies, I would take my leave of those accomplished trifles—the historians, the orators, the poets of antiquity—and devote my attention to the Scriptures of truth. I would sit with much greater assiduity at my Divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This wisdom, whose fruits are peace in life, consolation in death, and everlasting salvation after death—this I would trace—this I would seek—this I would explore through the spacious and delightful fields of the Old and New Testament.—*James Hervey*, 1713–14–1758.

Verse 97.—This most precious jewel is to be preferred above all treasures. If thou be hungry, it is meat to satisfy thee; if thou be thirsty, it is drink to refresh thee; if thou be sick, it is a present remedy; if thou be weak, it is a staff to lean unto; if thine enemy assault thee, it is a sword to fight withal; if thou be in darkness, it is a lanthorn to guide thy feet; if thou be doubtful of the way, it is a bright shining star to direct thee; if thou be in displeasure with God, it is the message of reconciliation; if thou study to save thy soul, receive the word engrafted, for that is able to do it: it is the word of life. Whose loveth salvation will love this word, love to read it, love to hear it; and such as will neither read nor hear it, Christ saith plainly, they are not of God. For the spouse gladly heareth the voice of the bridegroom; and "my sheep hear my voice," saith the Prince of pastors (John 10:27).—*Edwin Sandys*, 1519–1587.

Verse 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" As faith worketh by love unto God, so it worketh by love unto his word. Love me, love my word: love a king, love his laws. So it did on David; so it should do on us: "*O how love I thy law!*" saith David. "*O how love I thy law!*" should every one of us say; not only because it is a good law, but chiefly because it is God's law.—*Richard Capel*, 1586–1656.

Verse 97.—"*O how love I thy law!*" He calls God himself to be judge of his love to the word; witnessing thereby that it was no counterfeit love, but complete and sincere love which he bore unto it. The like protestation was used by S. Peter: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love thee!"—*William Cowper*.

Verse 97.—"*Thy law.*" In every one of these eight verses the Bible is spoken of as the Lord's, as, indeed, all through the Psalm. Who is the author of Scripture? God. What is the matter of Scripture? God; it was not fit that any should write of God, but God himself. What is the end of Scripture? God. Why was the Scripture written, but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God? As Cæsar wrote his own commentaries; so God; when there was none above him of whom he could write, he wrote of himself; by histories, laws, prophecies, and promises, and many other doctrines, hath he set himself forth to be the Creator, Preserver, Deliverer, and Glorifier of mankind; and all this is done in a perfect manner.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 97.—"*It is my meditation.*" Holy Scripture is not a book for the slothful; it is not a book which can be interpreted without, and apart from, and by the deniers of, that Holy Spirit by whom it came. Rather is it a field, upon the surface of which, if sometimes we gather manna easily and without labour, and given, as it were, freely to our hands, yet of which also, many portions are to be cultivated with pains and toil ere they will yield food for the use of man. This bread of life also is to be eaten in the wholesome sweat of our brow.—*Richard Chenevix French*, 1807–.

Verse 98.—"*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies.*" Now he praiseth the word for the singular profit and fruit which he reaped by it; to wit, that he learned wisdom by it. And this he amplifies, by comparing himself with three sorts of men; his

enemies, his teachers, and the ancients. And this he doth, not of vain glory (for bragging is far from him who is governed by the Spirit of grace); but to commend the word of the Lord, and to allure others to love it, by declaring to them what manifold good be found in it.

“Wiser than mine enemies.” But how can this be, seeing that our Saviour saith that the men of this world are wiser in their own generation than the children of God? The answer is, our Saviour doth not call worldlings wise men simply; but *wiser in their own generation*; that is, wise in things pertaining to this life. Or as Jeremy calls them, “wise to do evil”; and when they have so done, wise to conceal and cloak it. All which in very deed is but folly; and therefore David, who by the light of God’s word saw that it was so, could not be moved to follow their course. Well; there is a great controversy between the godly and the wicked: either of them in their judgment accounts the other to be fools; but it is the light of God’s word which must decide it.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 98.—“Wiser than mine enemies.” They are wiser than their enemies as to security against their attempts, and that enmity and opposition that they carry on against them; they are far more safe by walking under the covert of God’s protection than their enemies can possibly be, who have all manner of worldly advantages. A godly-wise man is careful to keep in with God: he is more prepared and furnished, can have a higher hope, more expectation of success, than others have; or, if not, he is well enough provided for, though all things fall out never so cross to his desires. As to success, who hath made wiser provision, think you, he that hath made God his friend, or he that is borne up with worldly props and dependences? they that are guided by the Spirit of God, or they that are guided by Satan? those that make it their business to walk with God step by step, or those that not only forsake him, but provoke him to his face? those that break with men, and keep in with God, or those that break with God? Surely, a child of God hath more security by piety than his enemies can have by secular policy, whereby they think to overreach and ruin him. The safety of a child of God lieth in two things: 1. God is his friend. 2. As long as God hath work for him to do, he will maintain him, and bear him out in it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 98.—“They are ever with me.” The meaning of the last clause is not merely, “*it is ever with me,*” but “*it is for ever to me,*” i.e., mine, my inalienable, indefeasible possession.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 98.—“They are ever with me.” God gives knowledge to whom he pleaseth; but those that meditate most, thrive most. This may imply also that the word should be a ready help. Such as derive their wisdom from without cannot have their counsellors always with them to give advice. But, when a man hath gotten the word in his heart, he finds a ready help: he hath a seasonable word to direct him in all difficulties, in all straits, and in all temptations, to teach him what to do against the burden of the present exigence; to teach him what to do and what to hope for.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 98.—“They are ever with me.” A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verses 98, 99, 100.—*Three sorts of men he mentioneth, “*enemies,*” “*teachers,*” “*ancients*”; the enemies excel in policy, teachers in doctrine, and ancients in counsel; and yet by the word was David made wiser than all these. Malice sharpens the wit of enemies, and teacheth them the arts of opposition; teachers are furnished with learning because of their office; and ancients

grow wise by experience; yet David, by the study of the word, excelled all these.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 99.—“*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*” Even where the preacher is godly, partaker of that grace himself, whereof he is an ambassador to others, it falls out oftentimes that greater measure of light and grace is communicated by his ministry to another than is given to himself; as Augustine first illuminated and converted by Ambrose did far excel, both in knowledge and spiritual grace, him that taught him. And herein God wonderfully shows his glory, that, whoever be the instrument, he is the dispenser of light and glory, giving more by the instrument than it hath in itself. And this is so far from being to a godly teacher a matter of grief, that it is rather a matter of glory.—*William Cowper.*

Verse 99.—“*I have more understanding than all my teachers.*” It is no reflection upon my teachers, but rather an honour to them, for me to improve so as to excel them, and no longer to need them. By *meditation* we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our hearts, which they cannot.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 100.—“*I understand ... because I keep.*” Would we know the Lord? let us keep his commandments. “By thy precepts,” saith David, that is, by the observance of thy precepts, “I get understanding,” “If any man do my will” (saith our blessed Saviour, John 7:17), “he shall know my doctrine.” Βούλει Θεόλογος γενέσθαι? τὰς εντογάς φυλασσε, saith Nazienzen: Wouldst thou be a divine? do the commandments; for action is (as it were) the basis of contemplation. It is St. Gregory’s observation concerning the two disciples who, whilst Christ talked with them, knew him not; but in performing an act of hospitality towards him, to wit, breaking bread with him, they knew him, that they were enlightened, not by hearing him, but by doing divine precepts, *Quisquis ergo vult audita intelligere; festinet ea quæ jam audire potuit, opere implere,* Whosoever therefore will understand, let him first make haste to do what he heareth.—*Nathanael Hardy, 1618–1670.*

Verse 100.—“*I understand more than the ancients.*” The ordinary answer of ignorant people is, “What! must we be wiser than our forefathers?” And yet those same people would be richer than their forefathers were. The *maximum quod sic* of a Christian is this,—he must grow in grace, till his head reach up to heaven, till grace is perfected in glory.—*Christopher Love, 1618–1651.*

Verse 100.—“*More than the ancients.*” Understanding gotten by the precepts of the word is better than understanding gotten by long experience. It is better in four regards. First, It is *more exact*. Our experience reacheth but to a few things; but the word of God reacheth to all cases that concern true happiness. The word is the result of God’s wisdom, who is the Ancient of days; therefore exceeds the wisdom of the ancients, or experience of any men, or all men. Secondly, as it is more exact, so a *more sure way* of learning wisdom, whereas experience is more uncertain. Many have much experience, yet have not a heart to see and to gather wisdom from what they feel: Deut. 29:2–4. Thirdly, It is *safer and cheaper* way of learning, to learn by rule, than to come home by weeping cross, and to learn wisdom by our own smart. Experience is too expensive a way; and, if we had nothing else to guide us, into how many thousand miseries should we run? Fourthly, It is *shorter*. The way by age and experience is a long way; and so, for a long time, all a man’s younger age must needs be miserable and foolish. Now, here you may come betimes to be wise by studying the word of God. It concerns a man, not only to

be wise at length, but to be wise betimes. The foolish virgins were wise too late; but never were any wise too soon.—*Condensed from Thomas Manton.*

Verse 100.—If this way [the Word of God] were thus perfect in David's time, what is it by the addition of so many parcels of Scripture since? If it then gave wisdom to the simple (Ps. 19:7); if it made David, being brought up but as a shepherd, *wiser than* his enemies, than *his ancients*, than his teachers; as an angel of God in discerning right from wrong (2 Sam. 14:17); able to guide the people by the skilfulness of his hands (Ps. 78:72); what kind of wisdom is there which we may not now gather from thence? What depth of natural philosophy have we in Genesis and Job! what flowers of rhetoric in the prophets! what force of logic in Saint Paul's epistles! what art of poetry in the Psalms! what excellent moral precepts, not only for private life, but for the regulation of families and commonwealths in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! to which may be added in a second rank as very useful, though apocryphal, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. What reasonable and just laws have we in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which moved the great Ptolemy to hire the Septuagint to translate them into Greek: what unmatchable antiquity, variety, and wonderful events, and certainty of story, in the books of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles, together with Ruth and Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and, since Christ, in the sacred Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. And, lastly, what profound mysteries have we in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel, and the Revelation of Saint John. But in this it infinitely exceeds the wisdom of all human writings, that it is alone “able to make a man wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). Upon these considerations, Charles the Fifth of France, surnamed *The Wise*, not only caused the Bible to be translated into French, but was himself very studious in the Holy Scriptures. And Alphonsus, King of Arragon, is said to have read over the whole Bible fourteen several times, with Lyra's notes upon it; though he were otherwise excellently well learned, yet was the law of God his delight, “more desired of him than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”—*George Hakewell, 1579–1649.*

Verse 101.—“*I have refrained my feet,*” etc. 1. We have David's practice: “*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*” 2. His end or motive: “*That I might keep thy word;*” that he might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience.

First, In his practice. You may note the seriousness of it: “*I have refrained my feet.*” By the *feet* are meant the affections: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,” Eccl. 5:1. Our affections which are the rigorous bent of the soul, do engage us to practice; therefore fitly resembled by the feet, by which we walk to any place that we do desire: so that, “*I have refrained my feet,*” the meaning is, I keep a close and strict hand over my affections, that they might not lead me to sin. Then you may note the extent of it; he doth not only say, I refrained from evil, but universally, “*from every evil way.*” But how could David say this is truth of heart, if conscious of his offence in the matter of Uriah? Answer: This was the usual frame and temper of his soul, and the course of his life; and such kind of assertions concerning the saints are to be interpreted, *voce et canatu, licet non semper eventu.* This was his errand and drift, his purpose and endeavour, his usual course, though he had his failings.

Secondly, What was his end and motive in this? “*That I might keep thy word;*” that I might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience, and adhere to his word universally, impartially.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 101.—“*I have refrained my feet,*” etc. Where there is real holiness, there is a holy hatred, detestation, and indignation against all ungodliness and wickedness, and that upon holy accounts: “*I have refrained my feet from every evil way.*” But why? “*That I may keep thy word.*” “Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way;” ver. 104. The good that he got by divine precepts stirred up his hatred against every false way: verse 128, “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.” His high esteem of every precept raised up in him a holy indignation against every evil way. A holy man knows that all sin strikes at the holiness of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the being of God, and the law of God; and therefore his heart rises against all; he looks upon every sin as the Scribes and Pharisees that accused Christ; and as that Judas that betrayed Christ; and as that Pilate that condemned Christ; and as those soldiers that scourged Christ; and as those spears that pierced Christ; and therefore his heart cries out for justice upon all.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 101.—“*Refrained ... that I might keep.*” By doing what is right we come both to know right and to be better able to do it.—“*Plain Commentary.*”

Verse 101.—“*I have refrained my feet,*” etc. The word “*refrained*” warns us that we are naturally borne by our feet into the path of every kind of sin, and are hurried along it by the rush of human passions, so that even the wise and understanding need to check, recall, and retrace their steps, in order that they may keep God’s word, and not become castaways. And further note that the Hebrew verb here translated “*refrained*” is even stronger in meaning, and denotes, “*I fettered, or imprisoned, my feet,*” whereby we may learn that no light resistance is enough to prevent them from leading us astray.—*Agellius and Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 102.—By *mishhalim*, “*judgments,*” is meant God’s law; for thereby he will judge the world. And the word “*departed not*” intimateth both his exactness and constancy: his exactness, that he did not go a hair’s-breadth from his direction; “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Deut. 5:32); and his constancy is implied in it, for then we are said to depart from God and his law, when we fall off from him in judgment and practice. Jer. 32:40.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 102.—“*Thou hast taught me.*” God teacheth two ways:—1. By common illumination. 2. By special operation.

1. By common illumination, barely enlightening the mind to know or understand what he propoundeth by his messengers: so God showed it to the heathen: Rom. 1:20. But then, 2. By way of special operation, effectually inclining the will to embrace and prosecute duties so known: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”: Jer. 31:33. This way of teaching is always effectual and persuasive. Now, in this sense they are taught of God, so that they do not only get an ear to hear, but a heart to understand, learn, and practise. This teaching is the ground of constancy, because, (1) They that are thus taught of God see things more clearly than others do; God is the most excellent teacher. (2) They know things more surely, and with certainty of demonstration, whereas others have but dubious conjectures, and loose and wavering opinions about the things of God. (3) This teaching is so efficacious and powerful, as that the effect followeth: “Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in

thy truth" (Ps. 86:11.) (4) God reneweth this teaching, and is always at hand to guide us, and give counsel to us, which is the cause of our standing.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 102.—"For thou hast taught me." Lest it should seem that David ascribed the praise of godliness to himself, or that it came from any goodness in him that he did refrain his feet from every evil way, he gives here all the glory to God, protesting, that because God did teach him, therefore he declined not. Wherefrom we learn, that if at any time we stand, or if when we have fallen we rise and repent, it is ever to be imputed to God that teacheth us; for there is no evil so abominable, but it would soon become plausible to us, if God should leave us to ourselves. David was taught by his ordinary teachers, and he did reverence them; but that he profited by them he ascribes unto God. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; God must give the increase.—*William Cowper*.

Verse 103.—"How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" Even the words of a fellow-creature of earth, how inexpressibly sweet sometimes, how beyond all calculation precious! All gold and silver would be despised in comparison with them. They come freighted with love, and the heart is enriched with them as though the breath of God had come into it. But does not this rainbow of earthly joy die gradually out? Do not the enrapturing words sooner or later become exsiccated in the memory, and may they not meet with contemptuous treatment as remembrancers of an earthly illusion? Indeed they do; indeed they may.

Nevertheless the heart may find its happiness, its true and undying happiness, *in words*. At this moment there is nothing in the whole world so much to be desired as certain words. Words of love. Words expressive of infinite love. Treasures, pleasures, honours, of earth, what are they? My unsatisfied soul cries out, Give me words. Words whereby I may know the love that God has towards me. Words declaring the unchangeable attachment of the Saviour. Words purifying my heart. Emboldening me in prayer. Exhibiting to me the blissful future. Words that shall give life to my dead powers, and change me from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.—*George Bowen*, in "*Daily Meditations*," 1873.

Verse 103.—"How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" etc. There is given to the regenerated a new, supernatural sense, a certain divine, spiritual taste. This is in its whole nature diverse from any of the other five senses, and something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling of it. Now the beauty of holiness is that which is perceived by this spiritual sense, so diverse from all that natural men perceive in them; or, this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. The Scripture often represents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste and a spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ, John 4:32, 34. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of ... My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures where the nature and evidence of true and sincere godliness are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, keeps his eye on it all along, and pursues it to the end. The excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste and delight. *God's law*, that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature, is all along represented as the great object of the

love, the complacence, and rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments *above gold, yea, the finest gold*, and to which they are *sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb*; and that upon account of their holiness. The same Psalmist declares that this is the sweetness that a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: Ps. 19:7–10.—*Jonathan Edwards*, 1703–1758.

Verse 103.—“*How sweet are thy words unto my taste!*” Why does he not rather say, How pleasant are thy words to my ears? than that they are sweet to his taste and his mouth? I answer: It is most meet that when God speaks by the mouth of his ministers we should be hearers, and the words of God should be the most joyous of all to our ears. But it is also the practice of the godly to converse about the words of God, and their words are so sweet to their own taste that they are more pleased and delighted than by any honey from the comb. And this is most necessary when either there is a scarcity of teachers, as with David in the wilderness or dwelling among the Philistines; or when those who hold the office of teaching, adulterate and vitiate the pure word of God.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 103.—That which is here called, “*word*,” I take rather for “*judgments*,” partly because in the proper tongue the word is left out, and partly because he had used this word “*judgments*” in the verse immediately going before. But some will say, How can the judgments of God be “*sweet*,” which are so troublesome, fearful, and grievous? I answer, that the godly have no greater joy than when they feel either the mercies of God accomplished towards them that fear him, or his judgments showered upon the reprobates.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 103.—“*Unto my taste.*” “*To my mouth.*” That is, I take as great pleasure in talking, conferring, and persuading, thy judgments, as my mouth, or the mouth of any that loveth honey, delighteth therewith.—*Richard Greenham*.

Verse 103.—“*Sweeter.*” As there are always among violets some that are very much sweeter than others, so among texts there are some that are more precious to us than others.—*Henry Ward Beecher*, 1879.

Verse 103.—An affectionate wife often says, “My husband! your words are sweeter to me than honey; yea, they are sweeter than the sugar-cane.” “Alas! my husband is gone,” says the widow: “how sweet were his words! Honey dropped from his mouth: his words were ambrosia.”—*Joseph Roberts*.

Verse 104.—“*Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*” In this sentence the prophet seems to invert the order set down in verse 101. He had said, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word,” where the avoiding of evil is made the means of profiting by the word; here his profiting by the word is made the cause of avoiding evil. In the one verse you have an account of his beginning with God; in the other, of his progress.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 104.—“*I hate every false way,*” David saith, “*I hate every false way*”; I hate not only the way, when I have been misled into it, but I hate to go in it; and he professeth at the 163rd verse, “*I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.*” To abstain from and forbear lying is a sign of a gracious heart, much more to hate and abhor it. A godly man not only doth that which is good, but he delights to do it, his soul cleaves to it; he is in his element when he is doing it, nothing comes more suitably to him than the business of his duty, he loveth to do it, yea, he loveth it when he cannot do it; Rom. 7:22. Paul complained much that his corruptions clogged, hindered and shackled him; he was in lime twigs as to the doing of good, yet (saith he) “I delight

in the law of God after the inward man"; that is, the inward man delightfully moves after the law of God, when I am basely moved by my corrupt heart, and stirred by temptation against it. Now, as a godly man not only chooseth to do the holy will of God, but delights and rejoiceth to do it, and hath sweet content in doing it; so likewise a godly man not only refuseth to do the will of the flesh, or to follow the course of the world, but hates to do it, and is never so discontented with himself as when through carelessness and neglect of his watch he hath been overtaken and hath fallen. A carnal man may forbear the doing of evil, and do what is materially good, but he never abhors what is evil, nor delights in what is good. Though he abstain from acting those things which God forbids, yet he doth not say, with Job, "God forbid, I should act them." ... To delight in good is better than the doing of it, and to abhor evil is better than abstaining from it. And if we compare the nature of sin with the new nature of a godly man, we may see clear grounds why his abstinence from sin is joined with an abhorrence of it.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 104.—"Through thy precepts I get understanding." Spiritual understanding is connected with the taste of spiritual sweetness. (Compare Proverbs 2:10, 11.) "The sweetness of the lips"—as the wise man observes—"increaseth learning. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." Prov. 16:21, 23. Thus having learned "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," we are encouraged to "go on to perfection"—"growing *in grace* and in the knowledge of Christ." For the connexion between "grace and knowledge" is clearly manifested.—*Charles Bridges.*

Verse 104.—"I hate every false way." Universality in this is a sure sign of sincerity. Herod spits out some sins, when he rolls others as sweet morsels in his mouth. A hypocrite ever leaves the devil some nest-egg to sit upon, though he take many away. Some men will not buy some commodities, because they cannot have them at their own price, but they lay out the same money on others; so hypocrites forbear some sins, yea, are displeased at them, because they cannot have them without disgrace or disease, or some other disadvantage; but they lay out the same love upon other sins which will suit better with their designs. Some affirm that what the sea loseth in one place it gaineth in another; so what ground the corruption of the unconverted loseth one way, it gaineth another. There is in him some one lust especially which is his favourite; some king sin, like Agag, which must be spared when others are destroyed. "In this let the Lord be merciful to thy servant," saith Naaman. But now the regenerate laboureth to cleanse himself from all pollutions, both of flesh and spirit. 2 Cor. 7:1.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 104.—"I hate." The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love*; love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; love to the people of God, and to mankind. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old Testament and the New, are innumerable. The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished. Prov. 8:13. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this, Psalm 97:10. "Ye that love the Lord, *hate* evil." And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity: Ps. 101:2, 3, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I *hate* the work of them that turn aside." So Ps. 119, verse 128, and the present place. Again, Ps. 139:21: "Do not I *hate* them, O Lord, that hate thee?"—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 104.—“I hate.” Hatred is a stabbing, murdering affection, it pursues sin with a hot heart to death, as an avenger of blood, that is to say, of the blood of the soul which sin would spill, and of the blood of Christ which sin hath shed. Hate sin perfectly and perpetually and then you will not spare it but kill it presently. Till sin be hated it cannot be mortified; you will not cry against it, as the Jews did against Christ, Crucify it! Crucify it! but shew indulgence to it as David did to Absalom and say, Deal gently with the young man,—with this or that lust, for my sake.

Mercy to sin is cruelty to the soul.—*Edward Reyner, 1600–1670.*

Verse 104.—“False way.” It is not said, “evil way,” but “false way”: or, as it is in the original, every path of lying and falsehood. Falsehood is either in point of opinion or practice. If you take it in the first sense, for falsehood in opinion or error in judgment, or false doctrine, or false worship, this sentence holds good. Those that get understanding by the word are established against error, and not only established against error, or against the embracing or possession of it, but they hate it.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 104.—“False way.” All sin is a *lie*. By it we attempt to cheat God. By it we actually cheat our souls: Prov. 14:12. There is no delusion like the folly of believing that a course of sin will conduce to our happiness.—*William S. Plumer.*²

² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 111-119*, vol. 5 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 287–341.