

The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest path covered in fallen leaves, with sunlight filtering through the trees. This scene is framed by a large, inverted triangle that tapers towards the bottom. The triangle is outlined with two thin, parallel gold lines. The text is centered within this triangular frame.

The Psalm of the Cross

**An Exposition of
Psalm 22.**

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TITLE. “To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar. A Psalm of David.” This ode of singular excellence was committed to the most excellent of the temple songsters; the chief among ten thousand is worthy to be extolled by the chief Musician; no meaner singer must have charge of such a strain; we must see to it that we call up our best abilities when Jesus is the theme of praise. The words Aijeleth Shahar are enigmatical, and their meaning is uncertain; some refer them to a musical instrument used upon mournful occasions, but the majority adhere to the translation of our margin, “Concerning the kind of the morning.” This last interpretation is the subject of much enquiry and conjecture. Calmet believed that the psalm was addressed to the music master who presided over the band called the “Morning Hind,” and Adam Clarke thinks this to be the most likely of all the conjectural interpretations, although he himself inclines to the belief that no interpretation should be attempted, and believes that it is a merely arbitrary and unmeaning title, such as Orientals have always been in the habit of appending to their songs. Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm, that we cannot but believe that the title indicates the Lord Jesus under a well-known poetical metaphor; at any rate, Jesus is the Hind of the morning concerning whom David here sings.

SUBJECT. This is beyond all others ***THE PSALM OF THE CROSS.*** It may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, “***My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?***” and ends, according to some, in the original with “It is finished.” For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this psalm, “there is none like it.” It is the photograph of our Lord’s saddest hours, the record of his dying

words, the lachrymatory [small vessel] of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this psalm

DIVISION. From the commencement to the twenty-first verse is a most pitiful cry for help, and from verse 21 to 31 is a most precious foretaste of deliverance. The first division may be subdivided at the tenth verse, from verse 1 to 10 being an appeal based upon covenant relationship; and from verse 10 to 21 being an equally earnest plea derived from the imminence of his peril.

1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*
2. *O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not.*
3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*
4. *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*
5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*
6. *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*
7. *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.*
8. *Saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*
9. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.*
10. *I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*
11. *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*

12. *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*
13. *They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*
14. *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*
15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*
16. *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.*
17. *I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.*
18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*
19. *But be thou not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.*
20. *Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.*
21. *Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*
22. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*
23. *Ye that fear the Lord praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him. and fear him; all ye the seed of Israel.*
24. *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.*
25. *My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*
26. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.*
27. *All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*
28. *For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.*

29. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

30. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

This was the startling cry of Golgotha: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. The Jews mocked, but the angels adored when Jesus cried this exceeding bitter cry. Nailed to the tree we behold our great Redeemer in extremities, and what see we? Having ears to hear let us hear, and having eyes to see let us see! Let us gaze with holy wonder, and mark the flashes of light amid the awful darkness of that midday-midnight. First, our Lord's faith beams forth and deserves our reverent imitation; he keeps his hold upon his God with both hands and cries twice,

"My God, my God!" The spirit of adoption was strong within the suffering Son of Man, and he felt no doubt about his interest in his God. Oh that we could imitate this cleaving to an afflicting God! Nor does the sufferer distrust the power of God to sustain him, for the title used — "*El*" — signifies *strength*, and is the name of the Mighty God. He knows the Lord to be the all-sufficient support and succour of his spirit, and therefore appeals to him in the agony of grief, but not in the misery of doubt. He would fain know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. What an enquiry is this before us!

"Why hast thou forsaken me?" We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances. **"Why?"** what is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted? **"Hast:"** it is done, and the Saviour is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question; it is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threatening of forsaking which made the great Surety cry aloud, he endured that forsaking in very

deed. **“Thou:”** I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but *thou*, my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea, worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God. **“Forsaken:”** if thou hadst chastened I might bear it, for thy face would shine; but to forsake me utterly, ah! why is this? **“Me:”** thine innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why leavest thou *me* to perish? A sight of self seen by penitence, and of Jesus on the cross seen by faith will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated between us and our God. **“Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”** The Man of Sorrows had prayed until his speech failed him, and he could only utter moanings and groanings as men do in severe sicknesses, like the roarings of a wounded animal. To what extremity of grief was our Master driven? What strong crying and tears were those which made him too hoarse for speech! What must have been his anguish to find his own beloved and trusted Father standing afar off, and neither granting help nor apparently hearing prayer! This was good cause to make him “roar.” Yet there was reason for all this which those who rest in Jesus as their Substitute well know.

2. O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not.

For our prayers to appear to be unheard is no new trial, Jesus felt it before us, and it is observable that he still held fast his believing hold on God, and cried still, **“My God.”** On the other hand his faith did not render him less importunate, for amid the hurry and horror of that dismal day he ceased not his cry, even as in Gethsemane he had agonized all through the gloomy night. Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this he set us an example of obedience to his own words, “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray in; and no delay or apparent denial, however grievous, should tempt us to forbear from importunate pleading

3. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

However ill things may look, there is no ill in thee, O God! We are very apt to think and speak hardly of God when we are under his afflicting hand, but not so the obedient Son. He knows too well his Father's goodness to let outward circumstances libel his character. There is no unrighteousness with the God of Jacob, he deserves no censure; let him do what he will, he is to be praised, and to reign enthroned amid the songs of his chosen people. If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason. If we cannot perceive any ground for the delay, we must leave the riddle unsolved, but we must not fly in God's face in order to invent an answer. While the holiness of God is in the highest degree acknowledged and adored, the afflicted speaker in this verse seems to marvel how the holy God could forsake him, and be silent to his cries. The argument is, thou art holy, Oh! why is it that thou dost disregard thy holy One in his hour of sharpest anguish? We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions.

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

This is the rule of life with all the chosen family. Three times over is it mentioned, they *trusted*, and *trusted*, and *trusted*, and never left off trusting, for it was their very life; and they fared well too, for "*thou didst deliver them.*" Out of all their straits, difficulties, and miseries faith brought them by calling their God to the rescue; but in the case of our Lord it appeared as if faith would bring no assistance from heaven, he alone of all the trusting ones was to remain without deliverance. The experience of other saints may be a great consolation to us when in deep waters if faith can be sure that their deliverance will be ours; but when we feel ourselves sinking, it is poor comfort to know that others are swimming. Our Lord here pleads the past dealings of God with his people as a reason why he should not be left alone; here again he is an example to us in the skilful use of the weapon of all prayer. The use of the plural pronoun "*our*" shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the cross. We say, "Our Father

which art in heaven,” and he calls those “*our fathers*” through whom we came into the world, although he was without father as to the flesh.

5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*

As if he had said, “How is it that I am now left without succour in my overwhelming griefs, while all others have been helped?” We may remind the Lord of his former loving-kindnesses to his people, and beseech him to be still the same. This is true wrestling; let us learn the art. Observe, that ancient saints *cried* and *trusted*, and that in trouble we must do the same; and the invariable result was that they were not ashamed of their hope, for deliverance came in due time; this same happy portion shall be ours. The prayer of faith can do the deed when nothing else can. Let us wonder when we see Jesus using the same pleas as ourselves, and immersed in griefs far deeper than our own.

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

“*But I am a worm, and no man.*” This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between “I AM” and “*I am a worm!*” yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding upon the tree. He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery — the very essence of agony — in the dying pangs of crucifixion. Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn that was heaped upon him and the weakness which he felt, and therefore he adds, “*and no man.*” The privileges and blessings which

belonged to the fathers he could not obtain while deserted by God, and common acts of humanity were not allowed him, for he was rejected of men; he was outlawed from the society of earth, and shut out from the smile of heaven. How utterly did the Saviour empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes!

“A reproach of men” — their common butt and jest; a byword and a proverb unto them: the sport of the rabble, and the scorn of the rulers. Oh the caustic power of reproach, to those who endure it with patience, yet smart under it most painfully!

“And despised of the people.” The *vox populi* [voice of the people] was against him. The very people who would once have crowned him then contemned him, and they who were benefited by his cures sneered at him in his woes. Sin is worthy of all reproach and contempt, and for this reason Jesus, the Sinbearer, was given up to be thus unworthily and shamefully entreated.

7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn.” Read the evangelistic narrative of the ridicule endured by the Crucified One, and then consider, in the light of this expression, how it grieved him. The iron entered into his soul. Mockery has for its distinctive description “cruel mockings;” those endured by our Lord were of the most cruel kind. The scornful ridicule of our Lord was universal; all sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting him. Priests and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when he was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which shall we wonder at the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the bleeding Saviour? How can we ever complain of ridicule after this?

“They shoot out the lip, they shake the head.” These were gestures of contempt. Pouting, grinning, shaking of the head, thrusting out of the tongue, and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord; men made faces at him before whom angels veil their faces and adore. The basest signs of disgrace

which disdain could devise were maliciously cast at him. They punned upon his prayers, they made matter for laughter of his sufferings, and set him utterly at nought. Herbert sings of our Lord as saying, —

*“Shame tears my soul, my body many a wound;
Sharp nails pierce this, but sharper that confound;
Reproaches which are free, while I am bound.
Was ever grief like mine?”*

8. *Saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

Here the taunt is cruelly aimed at the sufferer’s faith in God, which is the tenderest point in a good man’s soul, the very apple of his eye. They must have learned the diabolical art from Satan himself, for they made rare proficiency in it. According to Matthew 27:39-44, there were five forms of taunt hurled at the Lord Jesus; this special piece of mockery is probably mentioned in this psalm because it is the most bitter of the whole; it has a biting, sarcastic irony in it, which gives it a peculiar venom; it must have stung the Man of Sorrows to the quick. When we are tormented in the same manner, let us remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and we shall be comforted. On reading these verses one is ready, with Trapp, to ask, Is this a prophecy or a history? for the description is so accurate. We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the Jewish scoffers. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth trusted in God: why then was he permitted to perish? Jehovah had aforetime delivered those who rolled their burdens upon him: why was this man deserted? Oh that they had understood the answer! Note further, that their ironical jest, *“seeing he delighted in him,”* was true. The Lord did delight in his dear Son, and when he was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, he still was well pleased with him. Strange mixture! Jehovah delights in him, and yet bruises him; is well pleased, and yet slays him.

9. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts.*

“But thou art he that took me out of the womb.” Kindly providence attends with the surgery of tenderness at every human birth; but the Son of Man, who was marvelously begotten of the Holy Ghost, was in an especial manner watched over by the Lord when brought forth by Mary. The destitute state of Joseph and Mary, far away from friends and home, led them to see the cherishing hand of God in the safe delivery of the mother, and the happy birth of the child; that Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to believe shall never lack reasons for believing.

“Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts.” Was our Lord so early a believer? Was he one of those babes and sucklings out of whose mouths strength is ordained? So it would seem; and if so, what a plea for help! Early piety gives peculiar comfort in our after trials, for surely he who loved us when we were children is too faithful to cast us off in our riper years. Some give the text the sense of “gave me cause to trust, by keeping me safely,” and assuredly there was a special providence which preserved our Lord’s infant days from the fury of Herod, the dangers of travelling, and the ills of poverty.

10. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.

“I was cast upon thee from the womb.” Into the Almighty arms he was first received, as into those of a loving parent. This is a sweet thought. God begins his care over us from the earliest hour. We are dandled upon the knee of mercy, and cherished in the lap of goodness; our cradle is canopied by divine love, and our first totterings are guided by his care.

“Thou art my God from my mother’s belly.” The psalm begins with ***“My God, my God,”*** and here, not only is the claim repeated, but its early date is urged. Oh noble perseverance of faith, thus to continue pleading with holy ingenuity of argument! Our birth was our weakest and most perilous period of existence; if we were then secured by Omnipotent tenderness, surely we have no cause to suspect that divine goodness will fail us now. He who was our

God when we left our mother, will be with us till we return to mother earth, and will keep us from perishing in the belly of hell.

11-21. The crucified Son of David continues to pour out his complaint and prayer. We need much grace that while reading we may have fellowship with his sufferings. May the blessed Spirit conduct us into a most clear and affecting sight of our Redeemer's woes.

11. *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*

“Be not far from me.” This is the petition for which he has been using such varied and powerful pleas. His great woe was that God had forsaken him, his great prayer is that he would be near him. A lively sense of the divine presence is a mighty stay to the heart in times of distress.

“For trouble is near; for there is none to help.” There are two ***“fors,”*** as though faith gave a double knock at mercy's gate; that is a powerful prayer which is full of holy reasons and thoughtful arguments. The nearness of trouble is a weighty motive for divine help; this moves our heavenly Father's heart, and brings down his helping hand. It is his glory to be our very present help in trouble. Our Substitute had trouble in his inmost heart, for he said, “the waters have come in, even unto my soul;” well might he cry, ***“be not far from me.”*** The absence of all other helpers is another telling plea. In our Lord's case none either could or would help him, it was needful that he should tread the winepress alone; yet was it a sore aggravation to find that all his disciples had forsaken him, and lover and friend were put far from him. There is an awfulness about absolute friendlessness which is crushing to the human mind, for man was not made to be alone, and is like a dismembered limb when he has to endure heart-loneliness.

12. *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*

The mighty ones in the crowd are here marked by the tearful eye of their victim. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers,

and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties. Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. They were brutal as bulls, many, and strong, and the Rejected One was all alone, and bound naked to the tree. His position throws great force into the earnest entreaty, **“Be not far from me.”**

13. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

Like hungry cannibals they opened their blasphemous mouths as if they were about to swallow the man whom they abhorred. They could not vomit forth their anger fast enough through the ordinary aperture of their mouths, and therefore set the doors of their lips wide open like those who gape. Like roaring lions they howled out their fury, and longed to tear the Saviour in pieces, as wild beasts raven over their prey. Our Lord’s faith must have passed through a most severe conflict while he found himself abandoned to the tender mercies of the wicked, but he came off victorious by prayer; the very dangers to which he was exposed being used to add prevalence to his entreaties.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

Turning from his enemies, our Lord describes his own personal condition in language which should bring the tears into every loving eye. **“I am poured out like water.”** He was utterly spent, like water poured upon the earth; his heart failed him, and had no more firmness in it than running water, and his whole being was made a sacrifice, like a libation poured out before the Lord. He had long been a fountain of tears; in Gethsemane his heart welled over in sweat, and on the cross he gushed forth with blood; he poured out his strength and spirit, so that he was reduced to the most feeble and exhausted state.

“And all my bones are out of joint,” as if distended upon a rack. Is it not most probable that the fastenings of the hands and feet, and the jar occasioned by fixing the cross in the earth, may have dislocated the bones of the Crucified One? If this is not intended, we must refer the expression to that extreme weakness which would occasion relaxation of the muscles and a general sense of parting asunder throughout the whole system.

“My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” Excessive debility and intense pain made his inmost life to feel like wax melted in the heat. The Greek liturgy uses the expression, “thine unknown sufferings,” and well it may. The fire of Almighty wrath would have consumed our souls for ever in hell; it was no light work to bear as a substitute the heat of an anger so justly terrible. Dr. Gill wisely observes, “if the heart of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, melted at it, what heart can endure, or hands be strong, when God deals with them in his wrath?”

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

“My strength is dried up like a potsherd.” Most complete debility is here portrayed; Jesus likens himself to a broken piece of earthenware, or an earthen pot, baked in the fire till the last particle of moisture is driven out of the clay. No doubt a high degree of feverish burning afflicted the body of our Lord. All his strength was dried up in the tremendous flames of avenging justice, even as the paschal lamb was roasted in the fire.

“My tongue cleaveth to my jaws;” thirst and fever fastened his tongue to his jaws. Dryness and a horrible clamminess tormented his mouth, so that he could scarcely speak.

“And thou hast brought me into the dust of death;” so tormented in every single part as to feel dissolved into separate atoms, and each atom full of misery; the full price of our redemption was paid, and no part of the Surety’s body or soul escaped its share of agony. The words may set forth Jesus as having wrestled with Death until he rolled into the dust with his

antagonist. Behold the humiliation of the Son of God! The Lord of Glory stoops to the dust of death. Amid the mouldering relics of mortality Jesus condescends to lodge! Bishop Mant's version of the two preceding verses is forcible and accurate: —

*“Pour'd forth like water is my frame;
My bones asunder start;
As wax that feels the searching flame,
Within me melts my heart.
My wither'd sinews shrink unstrung
Like potsherd dried and dead:
Cleaves to my jaws my burning tongue
The dust of death my bed.”*

16. *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.*

We are to understand every item of this sad description as being urged by the Lord Jesus as a plea for divine help; and this will give us a high idea of his perseverance in prayer.

“For dogs have compassed me.” Here he marks the more ignoble crowd, who, while less strong than their brutal leaders, were not less ferocious, for there they were howling and barking like unclean and hungry dogs. Hunters frequently surround their game with a circle, and gradually encompass them with an ever-narrowing ring of dogs and men. Such a picture is before us. In the centre stands, not a panting stag, but a bleeding, fainting man, and around him are the enraged and un pitying wretches who have hounded him to his doom. Here we have the “hind of the morning” of whom the psalm so plaintively sings, hunted by bloodhounds, all thirsting to devour him.

“The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:” thus the Jewish people were unchurched, and that which called itself an assembly of the righteous is justly for its sins marked upon the forehead as an *“assembly of the wicked.”* This is not the only occasion when professed churches of God have become synagogues of Satan, and have persecuted the Holy One and the Just.

“They pierced my hands and my feet.” This can by no means refer to David, or to any one but Jesus of Nazareth, the once crucified but now exalted Son of God. Pause, dear reader, and view the wounds of thy Redeemer.

17. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

So emaciated was Jesus by his fastings and sufferings that he says,

“I may tell all my bones.” He could count and recount them. The posture of the body on the cross, Bishop Horne thinks, would so distend the flesh and skin as to make the bones visible, so that they might be numbered. The zeal of his Father’s house had eaten him up; like a good soldier he had endured hardness. Oh that we cared less for the body’s enjoyment and ease and more for our Father’s business! It were better to count the bones of an emaciated body than to bring leanness into our souls.

“They look and stare upon me.” Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Saviour’s nakedness, and shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their cruel eyes upon his miseries. Let us blush for human nature, and mourn in sympathy with our Redeemer’s shame. The first Adam made us all naked, and therefore the second Adam became naked that he might clothe our naked souls.

18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The garments of the executed were the perquisites of the executioners in most cases, but it was not often that they cast lots at the division of the spoil; this incident shows how clearly David in vision saw the day of Christ, and how surely the Man of Nazareth is he of whom the prophets spake: “these things, *therefore*, the soldiers did.” He who gave his blood to cleanse us gave his garments to clothe us. As Ness says, “this precious Lamb of God gave up his golden fleece for us.” How every incident of Jesus’ griefs is here stored up in the treasury of inspiration, and

embalmed in the amber of sacred song; we must learn hence to be very mindful of all that concerns our Beloved, and to think much more of everything which has a connection with him. It may be noted that the habit of gambling is of all others the most hardening, for men could practise it even at the cross-foot while besprinkled with the blood of the Crucified. No Christian will endure the rattle of the dice when he thinks of this.

19. But be thou not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

“But be thou not far from me, O Lord.” Invincible faith returns to the charge, and uses the same means, viz., importunate prayer. He repeats the petition so piteously offered before. He wants nothing but his God, even in his lowest state. He does not ask for the most comfortable or nearest presence of God, he will be content if he is not far from him; humble requests speed at the throne.

“O my strength, haste thee to help me.” Hard cases need timely aid: when necessity justifies it we may be urgent with God as to time, and cry, “make haste;” but we must not do this out of willfulness. Mark how in the last degree of personal weakness he calls the Lord ***“my strength;”*** after this fashion the believer can sing, “when I am weak, then am I strong.”

20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

“Deliver my soul from the sword.” By the sword is probably meant entire destruction, which as a man he dreaded; or perhaps he sought deliverance from the enemies around him, who were like a sharp and deadly sword to him. The Lord had said, “Awake, O sword,” and now from the terror of that sword the Shepherd would fain be delivered as soon as justice should see fit.

“My darling from the power of the dog.” Meaning his soul, his life, which is most dear to every man. The original is, “my only one,” and therefore is our soul dear, because it is our only soul. Would that all men made their souls their darlings, but many treat them as if they were not worth so much as the mire of the streets.

The dog may mean Satan, that infernal Cerberus, that cursed and cursing cur; or else the whole company of Christ's foes, who though many in number were as unanimous as if there were but one, and with one consent sought to rend him in pieces. If Jesus cried for help against the dog of hell, much more may we. *Cave canem*, beware of the dog, for his power is great, and only God can deliver us from him. When he fawns upon us, we must not put ourselves in his power; and when he howls at us, we may remember that God holds him with a chain.

21. *Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*

Having experienced deliverance in the past from great enemies, who were strong as the unicorns, the Redeemer utters his last cry for rescue from death, which is fierce and mighty as the lion. This prayer was heard, and the gloom of the cross departed. Thus faith, though sorely beaten, and even cast beneath the feet of her enemy, ultimately wins the victory. It was so in our Head, it shall be so in all the members. We have overcome the unicorn, we shall conquer the lion, and from both lion and unicorn we shall take the crown.

22-31. The transition is very marked; from a horrible tempest all is changed into calm. The darkness of Calvary at length passed away from the face of nature, and from the soul of the Redeemer, and beholding the light of his triumph and its future results the Saviour smiled. We have followed him through the gloom, let us attend him in the returning light. It will be well still to regard the words as a part of our Lord's soliloquy upon the cross, uttered in his mind during the last few moments before his death.

22. *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren." The delights of Jesus are always with his church, and hence his thoughts, after much distraction, return at the first moment of relief to their usual channel; he forms fresh designs for the benefit of his beloved

ones. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, “Saying, ***I will declare thy name unto my brethren***, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Among his first resurrection words were these, “Go to my brethren.” In the verse before us, Jesus anticipates happiness in having communication with his people; he purposes to be their teacher and minister, and fixes his mind upon the subject of his discourse. The ***name***, *i.e.*, the character and conduct of God are by Jesus Christ’s gospel proclaimed to all the holy brotherhood; they behold the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him, and rejoice greatly to see all the infinite perfections manifested in one who is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. What a precious subject is the name of our God! It is the only one worthy of the only Begotten, whose meat and drink it was to do the Father’s will. We may learn from this resolution of our Lord, that one of the most excellent methods of showing our thankfulness for deliverances is to tell to our brethren what the Lord has done for us. We mention our sorrows readily enough; why are we so slow in declaring our deliverances?

“In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” Not in a little household gathering merely does our Lord resolve to proclaim his Father’s love, but in the great assemblies of his saints, and in the general assembly and church of the first-born. This the Lord Jesus is always doing by his representatives, who are the heralds of salvation, and labour to praise God. In the great universal church Jesus is the One authoritative teacher, and all others, so far as they are worthy to be called teachers, are nothing but echoes of his voice. Jesus, in this second sentence, reveals his object in declaring the divine name, it is that God may be praised; the church continually magnifies Jehovah for manifesting himself in the person of Jesus, and Jesus himself leads the song, and is both precentor and preacher in his church. Delightful are the seasons when Jesus communes with our hearts concerning divine truth; joyful praise is the sure result.

23. Ye that fear the Lord praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him. and fear him; all ye the seed of Israel.

“Ye that fear the Lord praise him.” The reader must imagine the Saviour as addressing the congregation of the saints. He exhorts the faithful to unite with him in thanksgiving. The description of “fearing the Lord” is very frequent and very instructive; it is the beginning of wisdom, and is an essential sign of grace. “I am a Hebrew and I fear God” was Jonah’s confession of faith. Humble awe of God is so necessary a preparation for praising him that none are fit to sing to his honour but such as reverence his word; but this fear is consistent with the highest joy, and is not to be confounded with legal bondage, which is a fear which perfect love casteth out. Holy fear should always keep the key of the singing pew. Where Jesus leads the tune none but holy lips may dare to sing.

“All ye the seed of Jacob glorify him.” The genius of the gospel is praise. Jew and Gentile saved by sovereign grace should be eager in the blessed work of magnifying the God of our salvation. *All* saints should unite in the song; no tongue may be silent, no heart may be cold. Christ calls us to glorify God, and can we refuse?

“And fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.” The spiritual Israel all do this, and we hope the day will come when Israel after the flesh will be brought to the same mind. The more we praise God the more reverently shall we fear him, and the deeper our reverence the sweeter our songs. So much does Jesus value praise that we have it here under his dying hand and seal that all the saints must glorify the Lord.

24. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

“For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.” Here is good matter and motive for praise. The experience of our covenant Head and Representative should encourage all of us to bless the God of grace. Never was man so afflicted as our Saviour in body and soul from friends and foes, by heaven and hell, in life and death; he was the foremost in the ranks of the afflicted, but all those afflictions were sent in love,

and not because his Father despised and abhorred him. 'Tis true that justice demanded that Christ should bear the burden which as a substitute he undertook to carry, but Jehovah always loved him, and in love laid that load upon him with a view to his ultimate glory and to the accomplishment of the dearest wish of his heart. Under all his woes our Lord was honourable in the Father's sight, the matchless jewel of Jehovah's heart.

“Neither hath he hid his face from him.” That is to say, the hiding was but temporary, and was soon removed; it was not final and eternal.

“But when he cried unto him, he heard.” Jesus was heard in that he feared. He cried *in extremis* and *de profundis*, and was speedily answered; he therefore bids his people join him in singing a *Gloria in excelsis*. Every child of God should seek refreshment for his faith in this testimony of the Man of Sorrows. What Jesus here witnesses is as true to-day as when it was first written. It shall never be said that any man's affliction or poverty prevented his being an accepted suppliant at Jehovah's throne of grace. The meanest applicant is welcome at mercy's door:

***“None that approach his throne shall find
A God unfaithful or unkind.”***

25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

“My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.” The one subject of our Master's song is the Lord alone. The Lord and the Lord only is the theme which the believer handleth when he gives himself to imitate Jesus in praise. The word in the original is “from thee,” — true praise is of celestial origin. The rarest harmonies of music are nothing unless they are sincerely consecrated to God by hearts sanctified by the Spirit. The clerk says, “Let us sing to the praise and glory of God;” but the choir often sing to the praise and glory of themselves. Oh when shall our service of song be a pure offering? Observe in this verse how Jesus loves the public praises of the saints, and thinks with pleasure of the great congregation. It would be wicked on our part

to despise the twos and threes; but, on the other hand, let not the little companies snarl at the greater assemblies as though they were necessarily less pure and less approved, for Jesus loves the praise of the great congregation.

“I will pay my vows before them that fear him.” Jesus dedicates himself anew to the carrying out of the divine purpose in fulfilment of his vows made in anguish. Did our Lord when he ascended to the skies proclaim amid the redeemed in glory the goodness of Jehovah? And was that the vow here meant? Undoubtedly the publication of the gospel is the constant fulfilment of covenant engagements made by our Surety in the councils of eternity. Messiah vowed to build up a spiritual temple for the Lord, and he will surely keep his word.

26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

“The meek shall eat and be satisfied.” Mark how the dying Lover of our souls solaces himself with the result of his death. The spiritually poor find a feast in Jesus, they feed upon him to the satisfaction of their hearts, they were famished until he gave himself for them, but now they are filled with royal dainties. The thought of the joy of his people gave comfort to our expiring Lord. Note the characters who partake of the benefit of his passion; ***“the meek,”*** the humble and lowly. Lord, make us so. Note also the certainty that gospel provisions shall not be wasted, ***“they shall eat;”*** and the sure result of such eating, ***“and be satisfied.”***

“They shall praise the Lord that seek him.” For a while they may keep a fast, but their thanksgiving days must and shall come.

“Your heart shall live for ever.” Your spirits shall not fail through trial, you shall not die of grief, immortal joys shall be your portion. Thus Jesus speaks even from the cross to the troubled seeker. If his dying words are so assuring, what consolation may we not find in the truth that he ever liveth to make intercession for us! They who eat at Jesus’ table receive the fulfilment of the promise, ***“Whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”***

27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

In reading this verse one is struck with the Messiah's missionary spirit. It is evidently his grand consolation that Jehovah will be known throughout all places of his dominion.

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord.” Out from the inner circle of the present church the blessing is to spread in growing power until the remotest parts of the earth shall be ashamed of their idols, mindful of the true God, penitent for their offences, and unanimously earnest for reconciliation with Jehovah. Then shall false worship cease,

“And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” O thou only living and true God. This hope which was the reward of Jesus is a stimulus to those who fight his battles.

It is well to mark the order of conversion as here set forth; they shall ***“remember”*** — this is reflection, like the prodigal who came unto himself; ***“and turn unto Jehovah”*** — this is repentance, like Manasseh who left his idols and ***“worship”*** — this is holy service, as Paul adored the Christ whom once he abhorred.

28. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.

“For the kingdom is the Lord's.” As an obedient Son the dying Redeemer rejoiced to know that his Father's interests would prosper through his pains. “The Lord reigneth” was *his* song as it is ours. He who by his own power reigns supreme in the domains of creation and providence, has set up a kingdom of grace, and by the conquering power of the cross that kingdom will grow until all people shall own its sway and proclaim that.

“And he is the governor among the nations.” Amid the tumults and disasters of the present the Lord reigneth; but in the halcyon days of peace the rich fruit of his dominion will be apparent to every eye. Great Shepherd, let thy glorious kingdom come.

29. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

“*All they that be fat upon earth,*” the rich and great are not shut out. Grace now finds the most of its jewels among the poor, but in the latter days the mighty of the earth “*shall eat,*” shall taste of redeeming grace and dying love, and shall “*worship*” with all their hearts the God who deals so bountifully with us in Christ Jesus. Those who are spiritually fat with inward prosperity shall be filled with the marrow of communion, and shall worship the Lord with peculiar fervour. In the covenant of grace Jesus has provided good cheer for our high estate, and he has taken equal care to console us in our humiliation, for the next sentence is, “*all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him.*” There is relief and comfort in bowing before God when our case is at its worst; even amid the dust of death prayer kindles the lamp of hope.

While all who come to God by Jesus Christ are thus blessed, whether they be rich or poor, none of those who despise him may hope for a blessing.

“*None can keep alive his own soul.*” This is the stern counterpart of the gospel message of “look and live.” There is no salvation out of Christ. We must hold life, and have life as Christ’s gift, or we shall die eternally. This is very solid evangelical doctrine, and should be proclaimed in every corner of the earth, that like a great hammer it may break in pieces all self-confidence.

30. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

“*A seed shall serve him.*” Posterity shall perpetuate the worship of the Most High. The kingdom of truth on earth shall never fail. As one generation is called to its rest, another will arise in its stead. We need have no fear for the true apostolic succession; that is safe enough.

“*It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.*” He will

reckon the ages by the succession of the saints, and set his accounts according to the families of the faithful. Generations of sinners come not into the genealogy of the skies. God's family register is not for strangers, but for the children only.

31. *They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.*

“They shall come.” Sovereign grace shall bring out from among men the blood-bought ones. Nothing shall thwart the divine purpose. The chosen shall come to life, to faith, to pardon, to heaven. In this the dying Saviour finds a sacred satisfaction. Toiling servant of God, be glad at the thought that the eternal purpose of God shall suffer neither let nor hindrance.

“And shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born.” None of the people who shall be brought to God by the irresistible attractions of the cross shall be dumb, they shall be able to tell forth the righteousness of the Lord, so that future generations shall know the truth. Fathers shall teach their sons, who shall hand it down to their children; the burden of the story always being ***“that he hath done this,”*** or, that ***“It is finished.”*** Salvation's glorious work is done, there is peace on earth, and glory in the highest. ***“It is finished,”*** these were the expiring words of the Lord Jesus, as they are the last words of this Psalm. May we by living faith be enabled to see our salvation finished by the death of Jesus!

