

PSALM 106

We must give glory to God by making confession, not only of his goodness but our own badness, which serve as foils to each other. Our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel; this is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with Hallelujah; for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close (v. 47). I rather think it was penned by David at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the last two verses in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it (~~1~~³¹⁶ 1 Chronicles 16:34-36), "Gather us from among the heathen;" for we may suppose that in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites, when David was forced to wander. In this psalm we have,

I. The preface to the narrative, speaking honour to God (v. 1, 2), comfort to the saints (v. 3), and the desire of the faithful towards God's favour (v. 4, 5).

II. The narrative itself of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocations at the Red Sea (v. 6-12), lusting (v. 13-15), mutinying (v. 16-18), worshipping the golden calf (v. 19-23), murmuring (v. 24-27), joining themselves to Baal-peor (v. 28-31), quarrelling with Moses (v. 32, 33), incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan (v. 34-39). To this is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin (v. 40-46).

III. The conclusion of the psalm with prayer and praise (v. 47, 48). It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that, being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

PRAISE FOR DIVINE GOODNESS

We are here taught,

I. To bless God (v. 1, 2): *Praise you the Lord*, that is,

1. Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. *He is good and his mercy endures for ever*; let us therefore own our obligations to him and make him a return of our best affections and services.

2. Give him the glory of his greatness, his *mighty acts*, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed. *Who can utter these?* Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it? They are so many that they cannot be numbered, so mysterious that they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told; still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must *show forth his praise*; we may show forth some of it, but *who can show forth all?* Not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

II. To bless the people of God, to call and account them happy (v. 3): *Those that keep judgment are blessed*, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are those whose principles are sound — *They keep judgment* (they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable); they *do righteousness*, are just to God and to all men, and herein they are steady and constant; they do it *at all times*, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

III. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it, accordingly, with all seriousness, as the psalmist here, v. 4, 5.

1. He has an eye to the lovingkindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness: “*Remember me, O Lord!* to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, *with the favour which thou bearest to thy*

people.” As there are a people in the world who are in a peculiar manner God’s people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy.

2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness: *O visit me with thy salvation.* “Afford me (says Dr. Hammond) that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee.” Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort.

3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good (v. 5): “*That I may see the good of thy chosen* and be as happy as the saints are; and happier I do not desire to be.” God’s people are here called his *chosen*, his *nation*, his *inheritance*; for he has set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them and glorified in them. The chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness and of their glorying, which is their pleasure, and their praise. God’s people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and those who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God’s nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any man; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

PSALM 106:6-12

THE SINS OF THE ISRAELITES

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now that the church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that *therefore* he has done right, because *we have done wickedly*; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that, though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

I. God’s afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God (v. 6): “*We have sinned with our fathers*, that is, like our fathers, after the

similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, *to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord,*" ^{<HEB>}Numbers 32:14; ^{<LXX>}Matthew 23:32. And see how they lay a load upon themselves, as becomes penitents: "*We have committed iniquity, that which is in its own nature sinful, and we have done wickedly; we have sinned with a high hand presumptuously.*" Or this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins: *We have sinned with our fathers,* for we were in their loins and we *bear their iniquity,* ^{<HEB>}Lamentations 5:7.

II. They bewail the sins of their fathers when they were first formed into a people, which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even further than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take occasion from the history of Israel's rebellions to lament the depravity and perverseness of man's nature and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1. The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them (v. 7): *They understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. *Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have understood.* They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel, above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And, as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least *they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies* in them. *Therefore* God is distrusted because his favours are not remembered.

2. Their perverseness arising from this stupidity: *They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* The provocation was, despair of deliverance (because the danger was great) and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, ^{<HEB>}Exodus 14:11, 12. Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was *at the sea, at the Red Sea,* when they had newly come out of Egypt and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet

they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but he had brought them out of Egypt on purpose to *kill them in the wilderness*. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red Sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them notwithstanding their provocations, v. 8-11.

(1.) He forced a passage for them through the sea: *He rebuked the Red Sea* for standing in their way and retarding their march, *and it was dried up* immediately; as, in the creation, *at God's rebuke the waters fled*, ^{<194E>}Psalm 104:7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he *led them* into the sea, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as *through the wilderness*. He encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See ^{<2612>}Isaiah 63:12-14.

(2.) He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them quickly, but God *saved them from the hand of him that hated them*, namely, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account. *From the hand of his enemy*, who was just ready to seize them, *God redeemed them* (v. 10), interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors.

(3.) To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red Sea, which was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians (v. 11): *The waters covered their enemies*, so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame; for, the next tide, they were thrown up dead upon the shore, ^{<1243>}Exodus 14:30. *There was not one of them left alive*, to bring tidings of what had become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them, as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us (v. 8): *it was for his name's sake*. Though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, nor make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, *that he might make his mighty power to be known*, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays (^{<1447>}Numbers 14:17, 19), *Let the power of my*

Lord be great and pardon the iniquity of this people. The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin and sparing sinners is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present (v. 12): *Then believed they his words*, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had, in mercy to them, brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then *they feared the Lord and his servant Moses*, ^{<0143>}Exodus 14:31. Then *they sang his praise*, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, ^{<0151>}Exodus 15:1. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, *Those that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and those that murmured shall learn doctrine*, ^{<0201>}Isaiah 29:24.

^{<0463>}PSALM 106:13-33

PROVOCATIONS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians (^{<4305>}1 Corinthians 10:5, etc.); for these things were *written for our admonition*, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

I. The cause of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, v. 13.

1. They minded not what he had done for them: *They soon forgot his works*, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. Those that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them (God took notice of this, ^{<0143>}Exodus 32:8, *They have turned aside quickly*): *They made haste, they forgot his works* (so it is in the margin), which some make to be two separate instances of their sin. *They made haste*; their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and because they were not they questioned whether they should ever be there and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way; whereas *he that believeth does not*

make haste, ²³⁸⁶ Isaiah 28:16. And, withal, *they forgot his works*, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the premises proved. This is mentioned again (v. 21, 22): *They forgot God their Saviour*; that is, they forgot that he had been their Saviour. Those that forget the works of God forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them *in Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea*, things which we at this distance cannot, or should not, be unmindful of. They are called *great things* (for, though the great God does nothing mean, yet he does some things that are in a special manner great), *wondrous works*, out of the common road of Providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and *terrible things*, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten. Even miracles that were seen passed away with them as tales that are told.

2. They minded not what God had said to them nor would they depend upon it: *They waited not for his counsel*, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves about which they did not consult him and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan directly, and had not patience to tarry God's time. The delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained (v. 24): *They believed not his word*, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and (v. 25), *They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord*, who gave them counsel which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, ⁰⁴⁴⁶ Numbers 14:6, 7, etc. Those that will not wait for God's counsel shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

II. Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it to them (v. 14): *They lusted a lust* (so the word is) *in the wilderness*; there, where they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding, being supported entirely by miracles, so that this was a reflection upon the

wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were also, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither. They had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word. They did not only wish for flesh, *but they lusted exceedingly* after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called *lusting after evil things* (⁴³⁰⁶1 Corinthians 10:6), though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, ⁴⁹⁵⁰Psalm 105:40. Yet this was not all: *They tempted God in the desert*, where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See ⁴⁹⁸⁹Psalm 78:19, 20. Now how did God show his displeasure against them for this. We are told how (v. 15): *He gave them their request*, but gave it them in anger, and with a curse, for he *sent leanness into their soul*; he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, *while the flesh was yet between their teeth*, as we read, ⁴⁴¹³Numbers 11:33. It was the consumption of the life. Note,

(1.) What is asked in passion is often given in wrath.

(2.) Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, have, at the same time, leanness in their souls, no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies and starve their souls. *Then* God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then *the soul delights itself in fatness*, ²⁵⁸²Isaiah 55:2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them both in church and state (v. 16): *They envied Moses* his authority *in the camp*, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel and chief justice in all their courts; they envied *Aaron* his power, as *saint of the Lord*, consecrated to the office of high priest, and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so-much-admired right of primogeniture. Note, Those are preparing ruin for themselves who envy those whom God has put honour upon and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon those who

put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord. How did God show his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble (v. 17, 18); we have the story, ^(CHG)Numbers 16:32, 35.

(1.) Those that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by *the earth, which opened and swallowed them up*, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government.

(2.) Those that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority in things pertaining to God suffered the vengeance of heaven, for *fire came out from the Lord and consumed them*, and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to divine justice. *The flame burnt up the wicked*; for though they vied with *Aaron, the saint of the Lord*, for holiness (^(CHG)Numbers 16:3, 5), yet God adjudged them wicked, and as such cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, where the law was given, and where God had expressly said, *Thou shalt neither make any graven image nor bow down to it*; they did both: *They made a calf and worshipped it*, v. 19.

(1.) Herein they bade defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the moral world: —

[1.] That of human reason; for *they changed their glory*, their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud or a bright one), without any manner of visible similitude, *into the similitude of Apis*, one of the Egyptian idols, *an ox that eateth grass*, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, v. 20. Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have so done. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained by St. Paul (^(R13)Romans 1:23) to be the *changing of the glory of the incorruptible God*.

[2.] That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spoke to them, but in the works he wrought for them, *wondrous works*, which declared aloud that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God and is alone to be worshipped, v. 21, 22.

(2.) For this God showed his displeasure by declaring the decree that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he *spoke of destroying them* (v. 23), and certainly he would have done it if *Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach* (v. 23), if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's *chosen, his elect, in whom his soul delights, who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.*

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God (v. 24): *They despised the pleasant land.* Canaan was a pleasant land, ^{<0407>}Deuteronomy 8:7. They undervalued it when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the guidance of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They *believed not God's word* concerning it, but *murmured in their tents*, basely charging God with a design upon them in bringing them thither that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, ^{<0442>}Numbers 14:2, 3. And, when they were reminded of God's power and promise, they were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord that they attempted to stone those who spoke to them, ^{<0440>}Numbers 14:10. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land. A promise is left us of entering into it; but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that. This also was so displeasing to God that *he lifted up his hand against them*, in a way of threatening, *to destroy them in the wilderness*; nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest (^{<0511>}Psalm 95:11; ^{<0448>}Numbers 14:28); nay, and he threatened that their children also should be *overthrown and scattered* (v. 26, 27), and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan (v. 28): *They joined themselves to Baal-peor*, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporeal and in spiritual whoredom, ^{<021>}Numbers 25:1-3. Those that did often partake of the altar of the living God now *ate the sacrifices of the dead*, of the idols of Moab (that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified), or sacrifices to the infernal deities on the behalf of their dead friends. *Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions* (v. 29), in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands, and his threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great that, long after, it is said, *They were not cleansed from it*, ^{<627>}Joshua 22:17. God testified his displeasure at this,

(1.) By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away 24,000 of those impudent sinners.

(2.) By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate for the suppressing of the sin and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God that upon it *the plague was stayed*, v. 30. By this, and some other similar acts of public justice on that occasion (^{<021>}Numbers 25:4, 5), the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall. When the proper officers did their duty God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But, Phinehas herein signaling himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was *counted to him for righteousness to all generations* (v. 31), and, in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. *He shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices*, who had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, v. 30) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they *angered God at the waters of strife* (v. 32), which refers to that story, ^{<021>}Numbers 20:3-5. And that which aggravated it now was that *it went ill with Moses for their sakes*; for, though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking that they put him into a passion, and, having now grown very old and off his guard, *he spoke unadvisedly with his lips*

(v. 33), and not as became him on that occasion; for he said in a heat, *Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?* This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation, to keep our mouth as with a bridle (~~1881~~ Psalm 39:1-3), and to *take heed to our spirits*, that they admit not resentments too much; for, when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to *speake unadvisedly*. But it is charged upon the people as their sin: *They provoked his spirit* with that with which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet. God shows his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan for their misconduct upon this occasion, by which,

(1.) God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does their sin deserve who have spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? *If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

(2.) God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them and grieve their spirits.

~~1881~~ PSALM 106:34-48

THE DIVINE COMPASSION

Here, I. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's conduct in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

1. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those which fetched them out of Egypt; for by the time they

were just settled in Canaan they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe,

(1.) The steps of their apostasy.

[1.] They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (v. 34); when they had got the good land God had promised them they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

[2.] When they spared them they promised themselves that, notwithstanding this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them. But the way of sin is down-hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to *destroy the heathen* the next news we hear is, They were *mingled among the heathen*, made leagues with them and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they *learned their works*, v. 35. That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound than be cured or made sound by it.

[3.] When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too (v. 36): *They served their idols* in the same manner, and with the same rites, that they served them; and they became *a snare to them*. That sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

[4.] When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last (v. 37, 38), in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter: *They sacrificed their sons and daughters*, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror. They *shed innocent blood*, the most innocent, for it was infant-blood, nay, it was the *blood of their sons and their daughters*. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting

forth of water, and there is no villany which those that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly *gives them up to a reprobate mind*, ^{41B}Romans 1:28.

(2.) Their sin was, in part, their own punishment; for by it,

[1.] They wronged their country: *The land was polluted with blood*, v. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it which were designed to be its honour.

[2.] They wronged their consciences (v. 39): *They went a whoring with their own inventions*, and so debauched their own minds, and were *defiled with their own works*, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected? For his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God.

(1.) He fell out with them for it, v. 40. He was angry with them: *The wrath of God*, that consuming fire, *was kindled against his people*; for from them he took it as more insulting and ungrateful than from the heathen that never knew him. Nay, he was sick of them: *He abhorred his own inheritance*, which once he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any are to God in profession the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at our door.

(2.) Their enemies then fell upon them, and, their defence having departed, made an easy prey of them (v. 41, 42): *He gave them into the hands of the heathen*. Observe here how the punishment answered to the sin: They *mingled with the heathen and learned their works*; from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, who is a tempter, will be a tormentor. The heathen hated them. Apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when those that *hated them ruled over them*, and they were brought into subjection under them, no marvel that they oppressed them and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between *his service and the service of the kings of the countries*, ^{41B}2 Chronicles 12:8.

(3.) When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, v. 43. This refers to the days of the Judges, when God often raised up deliverers and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry and *provoked God with their counsel*, their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they *were brought very low for their iniquity*. Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, are justly debased, and humbled, and brought low, by the judgments of God.

(4.) At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, v. 44-46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, cast down, but not cast off. God appeared for them,

[1.] As a God of mercy, who looked upon their grievances, *regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them* (so some), who looked over their complaints, for he *heard their cry* with tender compassion (~~CHR~~ Exodus 3:7) and overlooked their provocations; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he *repented, according to the multitude of his mercies*, and reversed the sentence. Though he is not a *man that he should repent*, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God, who pities us, and changes his way.

[2.] As a God of truth, who *remembered for them his covenant*, and made good every word that he had spoken; and therefore, bad as they were, he would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise.

[3.] As a God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. *He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives*, and hated them, and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs, and, *when a man's ways please the Lord*, will make even *his enemies to pity him and be at peace with him*. When God pities men shall. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia — A God at peace with us makes every thing at peace.*

II. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance. Even when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people still there was occasion to pray, *Lord, turn again our captivity* (^{Psalm 126:1, 4}); so here (v. 47), *Save us, O Lord our God! and gather us from among the heathen*. We may suppose that many who were forced into foreign countries, in the times of the Judges (as Naomi was, ^{Ruth 1:1}), had not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, *Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name*, not only that they may have cause to give thanks and hearts to give thanks, that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished, and so may *triumph in thy praise*, over those that had in scorn challenged them to *sing the Lord's song in a strange land*.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it (v. 48): *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting*. He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then *let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah*, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises, and confessions. According to this rubric, or directory, we find that when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung all the people said *Amen*, and praised the Lord by saying, *Hallelujah*. By these two comprehensive words it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises which, as their mouth, they offer up to God, according to his will, saying *Amen* to the prayers and *Hallelujah* to the praises.