

**SINGING OF PSALMS**  
**THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT,**

**or a Vindication of that Gospel Ordinance**  
**in Five Sermons upon Ephesians 5:19,**

**Whereon are asserted and cleared**  
**1. That**  
**2. What**  
**3. How**  
**4. Why we must sing.**

**By Thomas Ford, Minister of the Gospel in Exeter.**

*James 5:13* "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms."

*Psalms 47:7* "For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding."

## TO THE READER.

READER,

It is confessed, and cannot be denied, that there are already but too many books in the world, so there are enough written in the vindication of this gospel-ordinance, if man would heed and read them as they ought to do. And this consideration (besides others) so swayed the author, as no importunity could prevail with him to publish these sermons till he was enforced to it, beyond and against his own opinion and inclination, by others, threatening to print the notes (which some had taken in shorthand) though they were imperfect. Therefore it is desired, if any fault be, the blame may light on those who are most guilty, the author at worst being but an accessory. When these sermons were preached, it was his desire and prayer to God, that they might be imprinted on the hearts of those that heard them; and it pleased the Lord (let him have all the glory) to second his desires and endeavours with a blessing so far, as some who had neglected singing were convinced; others, that were wavering, were confirmed, and many better informed in the nature, end and use of that duty, which formerly they little understood or heeded. They were principally intended for the more ignorant, (such as the most are who question, or deny the singing of David's psalms) and therefore contrived and framed with the greatest plainness so as they might best serve to give understanding unto the simple.

'Tis desired and hoped that the wiser and more understanding reader will take no offence at that plainness which was affected and studied for the benefit and edification of a popular auditory. Truth is nevertheless comely when she walks abroad in a plain and homely dress. But there needs no apology, since plain dealing (we used to say) is always best. There are three sorts unto whom these sermons are more especially directed, or (if you will have it so) dedicated.

First, such as deny singing of David's psalms to be a duty.

Second, such as neglect that duty very much, especially in private.

Thirdly, such as do it both in public and private, yet know not how to carry themselves in it as becometh Christians.

Now it is earnestly desired that all and every of these will be pleased to read them over, and when they have so done, if they find nothing either to convince them of the duty, or quicken them to it, or direct them in it, I shall willingly yield they have lost their labour for once, hoping they will as freely acknowledge that it is not the first time they have done so. I say again, search and see, and when you have proved all, hold fast that which is good; and I do the rather press and persuade to it, because (as I conceive) singing of psalms is of greater concernment than most men are aware of. We use it as a part of that religious worship which we give and yield to the only living and true God, and therefore had need, as of a good warrant for doing it, so of a good understanding and frame of spirit so to do it, as therein to please God, and benefit our own souls. If there be no ordinance of God for it, we cannot in reason expect a blessing from God in it; nay we had need be humbled for our former using it. If it appears to be a duty (which I hope these plain sermons do in some sort demonstrate) let us be humbled for our former carelessness, and endeavour henceforward to reap more benefit by it. For this I dare say, that of all religious exercises, there is none wherein God hath been less honoured, or men less edified than in this of singing David's psalms. If that which is here presented may be of any use, either to persuade such as are otherwise minded, or to confirm such as are already persuaded, and direct them how to wait upon God as they ought, for a blessing in this duty, let the God of all grace have the glory, which is the joint desire of him that preached, and them that publish these sermons.

Farewell.

# SINGING OF PSALMS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT

## THE FIRST SERMON

*"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Ephesians 5:19.*

The subject matter of this text is Singing of Psalms, a duty which many continue to do, but few understand the nature, end, and use of it. Others (not a few) do not sing at all, yea, deny it to be a duty. For conviction of the one, and direction of the other, I shall so handle the words read as attending these two things especially, *viz.* the lawfulness and the usefulness of singing David's psalms.

The doctrinal part of this epistle you have in the three first chapters; the use begins with the fourth chapter, where the apostle applies the doctrine of the rich and free grace of God, exhorting them to walk worthy of that vocation wherewith they were called, doing all duties, both such as concern them as Christians in common, and such as belong to them respectively in particular relations, as husbands, wives, parents, &c. Not to hold you long about the order and connection of these general precepts, *v.18*, the apostle admonishes them not to be drunk with wine, as being most contrary to that accurate and circumspect walking required and expected of Christians, *v.15*, and then enforces his admonition by an argument drawn from the inconvenience or mischief of so foul and beastly a sin, there's excess in it, excess in expenses, opposite to frugality, and excess in delights, opposite to temperance; or (as some understand it) *mores dissoluti*, all manner of looseness and wicked lewdness follow it, or all kinds of riot and lasciviousness go along with it. It follows, *v.19*, (But be filled with the Spirit), as if he should say, I will shew you another, and a better way of good fellowship, wherein you may drink your fill, health it, and pledge one another in that which is wholesome and useful, and delightful too. (Be ye filled with the Spirit). The Spirit is opposed to wine, and filling with the Spirit to excessive pouring in of wine or strong drink. The Spirit is not only water to cleanse and wash, but wine to cheer and refresh; labour you to be filled with the Spirit, or to be full of goodness, *Rom. 15:14*.

In this nineteenth verse he shews what are the effects of the Spirit when men are filled with it, and that in way of allusion to the manner of men when they are in their cups; then their tongues talk, they talk, and sing, and say they know not what. Now (saith the apostle) be ye but filled with the Spirit, and that will make you merry and wise too. Merry in a good and godly sort, it will make you talk and sing, and rejoice in a spiritual manner, lo as to glorify God, edify yourselves and one another. In a word, the apostle here teaches Christians how to be merry in the Lord, and how to express their rejoicing in God, and that is in singing of psalms.

Particulars in the words observable are these:

1. He exhorts to singing of psalms.
2. He advises what psalms are to be sung.
3. He directs how to sing those psalms.

Or these that, what, how, why, we must sing.

1. For the duty itself: we must sing.
2. For the matter: we must sing psalms and spiritual songs.
3. For the manner: we must sing in, or with the heart.
4. For the end: we must sing unto the Lord.

I shall lay down only one general doctrine, in handling of which I shall take into consideration all the aforesaid particulars.

**DOCTRINE:** That singing of psalms is a duty of Christians under the New Testament.

That it was the duty of God's people under the Old Testament, and that they did well in it, having a warrant for it; I presume no sober man will question. All the doubt is concerning the times of the New Testament, and

yet not so much whether psalms are now to be sung, as what psalms we are to sing, and what manner of singing there ought to be.

That which I intend, and shall endeavour to prove, is that it is the duty of Christians under the New Testament to sing David's psalms, and to this end I shall first make use of, and urge the strength and force of my text, and that other parallel place, *Col. 3:16*, clearing them from the exceptions which lie against them, and then answer other objections made against the psalms which we sing, and our manner of singing them.

First, 'Tis clear and unquestionable that the apostle in both places calls for singing of psalms as a duty to be done by all Christians. In this chapter, *v.4*, he allows no foolish talking or jesting, *v.18*, he allows no excessive drinking, or tippling, which profane men account and call merry-making; yet he requires and calls for singing of psalms, and such like spiritual rejoicing in God.

Secondly, There is no more reason to exclude singing of psalms from being part of a Christian's duty, than redeeming the time, or being wise to know the will of God, or teaching and admonishing one another, since the apostle enjoins them all alike. He that says, "Walk circumspectly," saith also, "Sing, and make melody in your hearts to the Lord."

Thirdly, In the epistle to the Colossians, he cries down all legal ceremonies, and yet notwithstanding calls for singing of psalms. Whence 'tis clear and undeniable that there must be singing of psalms, there being as express and peremptory scripture commands for this, as for prayer, or any other duty. This I thought good to clear in the first place, because I fear there are some who may look upon singing as a legal ceremony, and so expired with the rest of the Jewish worship.

I proceed to prove that there must be audible singing with the voice, and that of Christians together; though I deny not, but if a man have no company, he may (being disposed as James saith, *James, 5:13*) sing as well as pray alone.

'Tis objected by some that the apostle here calls for speaking in psalms, and *Col. 3:16*, for teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and for singing in the heart, but not for singing with the voice.

This is to wrest and rack the scripture, that so it may speak what men have a mind to. And this will appear if we consider:

1. That though the apostle exhorts to speaking in psalms, &c. yet he explains himself in the following words: "singing and making melody," &c.

2. There was this reason why the apostle exhorteth them to speak to themselves in psalms, &c. He would not have them walk as other Gentiles, who in their cups, and merry meetings, talk they know not what, or else after their heathenish custom, sang songs to the praise of their idols. Now (saith the apostle) it must not be so with you Christians: But when you meet, and will be merry, speak to one another in psalms, &c.

3. Some (and those very learned and judicious) think there is no necessity of carrying these words, *viz.* "teaching and admonishing and speaking," to that which follows, and the original seems much to favour their conceit; besides, the drift and scope of the apostle, if it be considered, seems also to make much for them, for he exhorts Christians to let the word of Christ dwell richly or plentifully in them, *i.e.* to be thoroughly furnished with a sound and saving knowledge of the doctrine of the gospel; and then shews them the use and benefit of scripture so studied and understood. The first use is that Christians may thereby instruct one another in the doctrine of faith. The second is to admonish one another concerning a godly life. The third is to rejoice together, and refresh one another by singing such spiritual songs as are recorded in scripture for that end.

4. But if this satisfies not, I say further that these words (speaking to yourselves and teaching one another) cannot admit of such a sense as some put upon them, *viz.* Teaching one another out of the psalms, since teaching in psalms is one thing, and teaching out of the psalms is another. David's psalms are a part, and a choice part of scripture, and Christians may and must teach one another out of them, as well as out of other scriptures, since they are all written for our learning, *Rom. 15:4*. So *Acts 28:23* Paul persuaded the Jews that Jesus was the Christ "out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets." Had the apostle intended the same thing in these places; why had he not used the same expression, *viz.* speaking to yourselves out of the psalms, which yet we see he doth not; and therefore I conclude that he intends somewhat else than these men would have him. And that which he intends is this, that Christians in singing of psalms together, should teach and admonish one another, and speak to one another for mutual edifying as they do by joining in prayer, or the like duties. So when Paul and Silas sung together, *Acts 16:25*, they thereby spake to themselves, or amongst

themselves for their mutual encouragement and comfort, methinks it is an excellent way of speaking to themselves, or one another, when Christians sing a psalm together.

5. 'Tis clear to any that reads the texts without prejudice, that speaking in psalms must be by singing of them. If he had said only "speaking, teaching and admonishing" then those men's gloss might have had some colour of truth in it. But since the apostle adds "singing and making melody" 'tis clear he requires the singing of psalms which is the thing we contend for.

As to the latter part of the objection, *viz.* that the apostle calls for singing with the voice, I answer that though we must sing with the heart, it will never follow that therefore we must not sing with the voice, for then it would follow too that we must not pray with the voice, because we are to pray with the heart. Now what an argument is this? I must hear the word with my heart and receive it into my heart, therefore I must not hear it with my ears. I grant we must sing with the heart, and with grace in the heart, *i.e.* with a holy and gracious frame of spirit suitable to the matter that we sing, or with thankfulness, as some interpret, or sincerity, and uprightness of heart from our very souls, as David said, "With my whole heart will I praise thee," *Psa. 9:1*, and *Psa. 103:1*, "Bless the Lord O my soul," &c. For if our singing, or any other religious service, be not with and from the heart, God will have no regards to it, and therefore 'tis no marvel that the apostle calls for singing in and with the heart. Nature, arts, parts, and common gifts may enable a man to the outside form, or bodily exercise either in singing or praying, &c., but the bodily exercise profiteth little. God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit, and therefore requires us to sing and pray and perform all religious services in and with the heart, *i.e.* sincerely and from our very souls.

Besides, let it be considered that the apostle here speaks in opposition to the profane guise of heathens singing to the praise of their idols, or of drunkards in their cups singing, and saying they know not what, and only making a noise that they may be heard. Now he would have Christians sing praises to the living God after another manner, *viz.* with grace in their hearts, understanding what, and considering how they sing. Besides the apostle considered how apt men are (as Austin saith of himself) to be taken more with musical accents than the heavenly matter; and therefore give a special caution for singing with the heart, it being a matter more than ordinary for men to keep their hearts in order when they are singing of psalms, but never intended we should not sing with the voice, but only he would have men with their minds, as well as with their mouths to glorify God.

Having thus cleared it from the text that we must sing with an audible voice, I come in the second place to shew what we must sing; and this also is in the text "Speaking to yourselves in psalms," &c. We must sing nothing but spiritual songs to the Lord. But what these psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are is another question.

The greatest difference I find amongst interpreters is the difference between these, it being a matter of some difficulty to distinguish them so as to determine precisely what are psalms, what hymns, and what spiritual songs.

Many and various conceits of men I meet with, which I shall not trouble you withal, being the most of them very groundless. I know nothing more probable than this, *viz.* that psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, do answer to *mizmorim*, *tehillim*, and *shirim*, which are the Hebrew names of David's psalms. All the psalms together are called *tehillim*, *i.e.* praises, or songs of praise. *Mizmor* and *shir* are in the titles of many psalms, sometimes one, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both joined together, as they know well who can read the original. Now the apostle calling them by the same names by which the Greek translation (which the New Testament so much follows) renders the Hebrew, is an argument that he means no other than David's psalms. Besides, whenever the New Testament quotes the psalms, it means those of David, and so the apostle speaks as taking it for granted that they to whom he wrote knew what psalms he meant. Sure I am that David's psalms are spiritual songs, if ever there were any spiritual songs in the world.

Yea, but some will object that the apostle means not David's psalms, but such spiritual songs as shall be upon occasion composed by some officer or member of the church, for as in the primitive times there were some who had a gift of psalms, so now also there are that have, if not the same, yet the like gift, and such new songs they grant may be sung, but not any other.

In answer to this I say first that in the primitive churches some had a psalm or spiritual song dictated and inspired by the Holy Ghost, though I dare not determine anything peremptorily concerning their manner of singing those psalms in the church.

2. Nay, If any have the same gift now, they may do well to shew and use it for the benefit and edification of themselves and others. But I suppose no sober man will now pretend to any such extraordinary gift, which ceased in the church long since, as the gift of tongues, and other effects of the Spirit extraordinary.

If any shall pretend to such an extraordinary spirit, I desire to know of them how others shall sing with them? for if they sing only their sudden raptures, 'tis impossible others should join, because their meditations will differ, and so will their metre too, and such singing will be nothing but a sacrifice of fools, and the confusion at Babel.

If it be said, Not so, but one to sing in the spirit, and the rest to say Amen. I say (as before) no man now hath such a spirit as some had then. There are indeed some that pretend much to the Spirit in these days, who if they would be pleased to shew their raptures in singing, as they do many times in speaking, no question there would be as good rhythm in the one as there is reason in the other. If we must not sing but what's indited by an extraordinary Spirit, and no man have such a spirit, it will follow that there must be no singing at all, and then how do Christians fulfil this law of Christ, commanding them to speak to one another in psalms, &c, which I have formerly proved to be a duty as such as redeeming the time, walking circumspectly, &c. I believe that they who had a psalm in the church of Corinth, had it by an extraordinary gift. How that psalm was sung I cannot say, but this is clear and certain, that David's psalms, which were ordinarily used in the temple, though they were composed, yet they were not sung by an extraordinary spirit. For when the Levites, Christ and his disciples, Paul and Silas sung, those psalms must be such as were well known beforehand to the companies that sang them, else how would they sing together?

But here I meet with an objection that must be answered before I proceed, and 'tis this, *viz.* that Christ and his disciples did not sing, but only gave thanks, and that the original word imports no more, but as it were saying grace after meat.

We deny not but the original notes praise, but let all that understand the original speak whether it doth not signify to praise with singing. Austin on Psalm 52. *Hymni sunt landes Dei cum cantico: et si sit laus, & non est Dei, non est hymnus: si sit laus, & Dei laus, & non cantetur, non est hymnus, oportet ergo us, si sit hymnus, habeat hoc tria, & laudem, & Dei, & cantico.* Hymns are the praises of God with a song. If it be praise, and not the praise of God, 'tis not a hymn; if it be the praise of God, and not with a song, neither is it a hymn, which must have these three in it, *viz.* praise, the praising of God, and that with a song or in singing. Questionless the original signifies to praise, whether God or men in songs.

But what need we go any further than my text, the word here put in the middle between psalms and songs sufficiently shews what manner of praising God that was. Besides the constant vote of all the learned that Christ did sing after his last supper, according to the custom of the Jews, whose practice it was after the cup of salvation or thanksgiving to sing some of David's psalms, which solemn hymn they call to this day the Great Hallelujah.

That Christ prayed and praised God otherwise than in singing, we grant. But that he also sang, is clear, and if he had sung a new song composed on the sudden, probably one of the evangelists would have recorded that song, as well as John hath set down our Saviour's praise, *John 17*. So Paul and Silas, *Acts 16:25*, prayed and sung praises aloud, so as the prisoners heard them, which argues more than probably, a more than ordinary lifting up of their voices. But if we yield that neither Christ and his disciples did sing, nor Paul and Silas, yet my text with *Col. 3:16* & *James 5:13* do clearly evince that Christians must sing, which is the thing we plead for.

But I return to answer the former objection concerning singing of psalms composed by an ordinary and common gift, as God in his providence gives occasion. And to this I say that I am not so much against composing, as imposing; when men set up their own new songs, and shut out David's psalms. Suppose it lawful for men of spiritual minds to indite a psalm, and then commend it to others, and sing it; yet it will not follow that therefore we must not sing the psalms of David.

But here again 'tis objected that we conceive prayers, and therefore may as well conceive psalms too, for praising God upon occasion.

I will not say it is unlawful to conceive and compose a psalm on occasion. But I say again there is no reason that our conceived psalms should shut out David's; and I desire it may be considered, First, that a man may conceive a prayer on the sudden, and put it up to God, so as others may join with him. But a man cannot so conceive and sing a psalm, it being impossible at once to contrive the matter and metre, and be devout too.

But here it will be replied that such a conceiving of psalms is not intended, but that someone first compose, and bring a spiritual song, and then commend it to be sung by others.

But why should any man prefer his composures before David's psalms? Is it because they are more excellent?

No, it will be said, we do not compare with David. Only our composed psalms are more suitable to the present occasions of God's people; we conceive prayers as occasion is offered; and so we would have psalms conceived, and composed too.

1. God himself hath made and given us a psalm-book, but I know of no such prayer-book that he hath left us.

2. There can be no composures of men that will suit the occasions, necessities, afflictions, or affections of God's people, as the psalms of David, concerning which we may say what the Jews said of manna, they have a taste and relish according to everyone's palate. Let it once be granted that we must sing psalms, I'll warrant you David's psalms shall carry it; there being no art or spirit of man now that can come near that of David. What though they were penned upon occasion, and according to the necessities of God's people then? So were the other scriptures, and yet they concern us as much now as they did the people of God then. Besides, we read that in Hezekiah's time the Levites were to praise God with the words of David, *2 Chron. 29:30*, which shews that the psalms were for the use of God's people in after ages upon all occasions. And I would fain know what occasions God's people now, or at any time, either have, or can have, which David's psalms may not suit with as well, and better than any songs composed by an ordinary gift. What glorious things are spoken of Christ, his kingdom, and the great work of redemption by him? Who can admire and adore the infinite excellencies of God in better phrases and forms then the Spirit hath declared to us in David's psalms? If we would cheer our spirits, or compose them for hearing or other duties, what more heavenly meditations? If we would commend and magnify the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in any mercy, how can we do it better than in the words of David? It would become these that quarrel at our singing of David's psalms, to give us better in the room of them, or else to consider how they fulfil the law of Christ, when they sing neither those, nor any other.

And whereas occasional composures are so much cried up by many, I ask them what poor souls shall do that cannot compose psalms, neither have any to do it for them? Certainly it is a duty (as hath been proved) that lies upon all God's people, and to whom shall many of them go for a psalm, if not to David? They that pen psalms better, or at least fitter (as they think) do it for their particular respective congregations. In the meantime, what shall others do, unless the same men will undertake to furnish all the churches of God in the land, and the world too, with a better psalm-book than that of David? If it be said that some officer or member in every congregation may do as much upon occasion, I answer, perhaps not; nay without all peradventure the gift will not be found at all, or in any tolerable measure amongst many Christians, and then when they meet and would be merry in the Lord, poor souls, they shall have never a psalm to sing as James requires, *James 5:13*. Nor shall we upon this account have very much singing in private families, of which there are thousands in England that will not yield one who can indite to compose a psalm fit for the occasions of God's people. Therefore, if these men will not give us another psalm book instead of David's, we shall have little singing in congregations, and less in private families; but I shall argue this no further, only I add, that 'tis not enough for them to say that David's psalms must give place to their new songs, especially since the former can plead prescription for so many ages, but they must prove it, and that strongly too, that we must not sing David's psalms.

For the accommodation of David's psalms to the present particular occasions of Gods people, I shall speak more hereafter: all I shall say for present is this, that if we cannot accommodate them, or any passages in them, the fault is our own. There are many I fear, who cannot accommodate many passages in David's psalms, as when he professes his zeal for God, love to God, his word and ordinances, and ways of worship, his integrity, humility, heavenly-mindedness, &c. But that's because they have not such a heart as was in David; and it may be their consciences cannot well brook such a word of admonition and conviction as they meet withal in many places and passages of David's psalms.

But if we sing David's psalms, let us sing them in David's tunes, and not in such metre as men have devised.

This reasoning will prove as well that we shall not read David's psalms; for may not a man as well say, why should we read them in any language but that wherein they were written? And so farewell singing and reading psalms too, and if you say but as much of all the other parts of scripture, farewell all preaching of gifted men, for they will have never a text nor Bible left them. But if we think ourselves bound to read the psalms in our own tongue, why may we not as well sing them in our own tunes? If you say there is a necessity of reading, I grant it, and say, there is a necessity of singing them also; there being as express precepts in scripture for the one, as for the other. When any man shall give us good reason against reading in our own tongue, we will give

over singing psalms in our own tunes; till then, we believe there is the like necessity of the one and the other, or else we are come to a good pass indeed, that we must neither sing nor say. My answer then is in a word this, that there being a necessity of singing as well as of reading, we may do the one in our own tunes, as well as the other in our own tongue.

There is yet one objection more against singing of David's psalms, which was not thought on at the preaching of these sermons, and it is this:

As the Scripture commands us to pray, but prescribes us no set forms of prayer, which we are bound to use, and no other; so, when it commands us to sing psalms, it doth but leaves us to our liberty; for if we are not tied to a form in praying, why should we be tied up to any form in singing? I dare not say (as some do) that all forms of prayer are forbidden by the second commandment; nor yet that they wholly stint and quench the Spirit. But to let that pass, I answer:

1. The apostle hath prescribed us what to sing, *viz.* psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, which are the express titles of David's psalms, as was shewed before.

2. There is a difference in this, that the Lord did not prescribe unto his people set forms of prayer, as he prescribed set forms of psalms, 2 *Chron.* 29:30. They were to sing in the words of David and Asaph, but we read not that they were to pray in any such set form. God gave them a psalm-book, but not a prayer-book, as was said before.

3. When the psalms of David and Asaph were ordinarily sung in the temple, dare any man say that the Spirit either in the Levites or others, was stinted or quenched? And why should it be stinted now, more then it was then? Since we have the same forms which God himself appointed, why may we not expect the same enlargement of heart as the people of God had then?

4. We must sing in a form or not at all, as I shewed formerly, though we may very well pray without it. Since therefore we must have a form, why should we not prefer such as God hath appointed before any other?



## SERMON II.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing," &c.  
Ephesians 5:19.

The Apostle calls upon the people of God to edify themselves in singing of psalms. This we have proved to be the duty of Christians, and answered some objections made against it. But how can Christians do this in a mixed congregation (will some say) where there is a multitude that join in the duty, who yet (God knows) are no way able to do it in such a manner as may be either pleasing to God or profitable to their own souls? They cannot sing in their heart, nor to the Lord. And hence some complain they are much scandalized to hear profane and ungodly men, in their singing of psalms, profess their repentance, the integrity and uprightness of their hearts, when God knows there is no such thing in them. Therefore (say they), what do such men in singing, but sound out so many lies? Yea, and blaspheme the holy name and truths of God in doing of that duty? And this so troubles and distracts them that they cannot find in their hearts to join in the duty with such profane people.

This is, I conceive, the main thing that troubles the most, and therefore though there is but little strength in the argument, yet since it is that which sways with so many, I shall be the larger in clearing it.

They say that many profane wretches sing psalms and sing lies, and therefore they do not, they cannot sing.

I wish that some of these who make this objection do not say lies; for that many (who do not sing psalms, and give this for a reason) do lie, I shall make it appear thus:

They say they do not sing because of the mixed multitude, with whom they cannot join. Then how comes it to pass that psalms are forborne, not only in the congregation, but in their own houses also? Therefore there is some deceit in this argument. I do heartily wish such as these, before they charge lying upon others in singing, to forbear lying themselves; for they do not sing in their families, nor in their closets, neither alone nor with others. Therefore this is not the thing; there is somewhat else in their hearts. But I will answer the argument otherwise; though I do premise this in the first place: that if they will not sing in the congregation because of the mixed multitude, yet let them sing in their own families. If they say, there is a mixed company in their families also, I ask, whose fault is that? I should be loth to keep them in my family, with whom I cannot pray, and praise God. But if so, yet why do they not sing by themselves? for a man may as well sing alone as pray alone. If none other be good enough to sing with them, let them sing by themselves. But it seems they do not think themselves good enough to sing withal.

Firstly, to gratify them in what we can, I grant thee there are too many such, who cannot sing with grace in their hearts; and this we acknowledge to be both their sin and misery. But yet withal we think, though there be thousands that cannot sing a psalm as they ought to do, with grace in their hearts to the Lord, yet it is the duty of those men to do it, and because they cannot do it as they should, it will never follow that therefore they are not bound to do it, or that they do not sin if they do neglect it.

It is certain a profane spirit is no more able to pray than he is able to sing praises to God. But I hope you will not say that therefore a profane person ought not to pray, or that it is not his duty to pray, or that he doth not sin if he neglect to pray. To pray without faith is a great sin, and I think not to pray at all is (in some sense) a greater sin. He that prays without faith and grace is an hypocrite, and he that prays not at all is an atheist. So to sing without grace in the heart is hypocrisy, and, I think, not to sing at all, not to perform that duty and worship we owe unto the living God, is a kind of atheism. A wicked man after a sort profanes and pollutes every ordinance he takes in hand, but it will not hence follow, therefore it is not his duty to wait upon God in ordinances.

Secondly, it is true, a wicked man is not worthy to take the name of God in his mouth, and when he doth, he doth (in some sort) blaspheme God in abusing his word. But though he be not worthy, yet (as one saith) God's word is worthy to come into his mind, and into his mouth too, to convince him of his wickedness. And here is a very great mistake of these men that thus urge and argue, and they bewray a great deal of ignorance about the nature, end, and use of this duty; for one great and main end of singing psalms is instruction: "A Psalm of David for Instruction" is the title of many of the psalms, that is one end of singing of psalms. Therefore I say, though they be not worthy to take the name of God into their mouths, yet the word of God is worthy to come into their mouths and minds for their instruction and admonition. *Deut. 32.* Moses penned a psalm, and, *Deut. 31:19*, there is a command of God that it should be penned; and for what end was it? Namely, to convince the wicked Israelites of their apostasy from, and rebellion against the Lord. And certainly whenever a psalm is sung, be they never so bad that sing it, there is a word of God in it, to reprove and condemn their sin. And doth not the apostle say, *Col. 3:16*, "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms?" In every psalm of instruction (I say) there is a word to convince the ungodly of their ungodliness. As for example: Psalm 1:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." When this is said, there is a conviction, and when this is sung, there is a greater conviction, because there is more time and space to meditate on those holy truths of God. Doth not God here, as it were, judge him out of his own mouth? And he himself pronounce the sentence: that he is one of those ungodly ones of whom the psalmist speaks by the Spirit in that psalm?

So Psalm 2. There is an admonition to those that do not kiss the Son and submit to the sceptre of the Lord Jesus Christ. But they take no notice of it, they go on and sing a psalm, and so think they have done God good service.

It may be so; so it is in hearing of sermons, no question many are little affected with what is delivered, though the minister press it home upon their consciences, and deal never so plainly and powerfully; yet I hope you will not say, but the word of God preached hath this end *viz.* conviction or admonition. So it is in singing of psalms, wicked men are made judges of their own wickedness by the word of God in their own mouths.

Again, whereas it is urged by some that they are very much scandalized to hear profane men profess a lie in singing the 119th psalm and the like, touching their love to, and delight in the law of God, and other such expressions which David uses in those psalms.

We answer: true; it is a matter of scandal, but how far forth we shall consider anon. He that sings David's psalms, and not with a sanctified heart, as David did, he lies in his heart and in his throat too. But suppose such a one should say David's psalms, or pray David's psalms, or read them out of a book, or join with the minister in prayer where he is the mouth for the rest that do join with him; doth he not profess the like then? When the minister (who is the people's mouth to speak to God) declares the experiences that he and others have had, of Gods goodness, and the work of grace upon their souls; when he professeth or expresseth godly sorrow for sin, laments their infirmities, indisposedness, untowardness and frowardness of heart, and further blesseth God for spiritual graces, and the evidences of God's love, &c. When (I say) the minister doth this thus in the congregation, and profane men are there, and pretend to go along with him in this, do they not lie in prayer, since they never had experience of God's goodness, and the work of God upon their souls, they never had any evidences of God's love to them in all their lives? And why are we not as much scandalized at their praying as at their singing? For though they make not such a noise with their mouths in prayer, yet they do lie and profane the name of God as much in the one as they do in the other. Therefore if any be scandalized by them in the one, why not also in the other? Surely by this reason we must not only forbear singing, but praying with them; nay by the same reason, we may not hear the word of God with them, for a profane wretch doth even in that also take the name of God in vain, and if he be not powerfully convicted by the word of God, he shall be one day made to know what a sad thing it is to take the name of God in his mouth, when he hated to be reformed: "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee," *Psa. 50:16,17*. This argument is that which is urged for separation, and if it hold good for separating in one, it may as well hold (for ought I see) for separation in all duties whatsoever, and so in hearing the word of God also. For hearing the word is an act of spiritual communion, as well as prayer or singing. I say there is communion with God in hearing as well as in praying. In prayer we speak to God, and in hearing God speaks to us. In prayer we profess ourselves to be the Lord's people, to have all our delight in him, and all our expectations from him; and in hearing we come to sit before him as his people, to ask counsel of God, and to hear his will, and there profess whatsoever the Lord shall command us, that we will do.

Thus there is spiritual communion with God in hearing the word as well as in praying and singing of psalms. So then, if we may not sing nor pray, neither may we hear with mixed company; and if it be thus, the people of God are in a very sad condition. I say again, if the presence of wicked men shall hinder their acceptation and communion with God in those duties which they notwithstanding do in the sincerity and uprightness of their hearts, out of all question the people of God are in a very sad condition, because they can hardly assemble without great hazard of having one devil or other among them.

Nay, I would fain know with whom they shall join, for our Saviour himself had a select company, but twelve in all, and one of them was a devil. And so when you have done what you can, and made choice of company, if there be not a black devil, a profane wicked man; yet there may be a white devil, an hypocrite, which is as bad, and as abominable to God as the other. I have heard that some have forborne prayers in their families with their children and servants, because they thought them not good enough to pray withal. I desire these to consider

what Paul did in the ship before the company he sailed with. He was not so scrupulous, but gave thanks to God even before professed infidels and heathens, *Acts 27:35*, "He took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all," because he knew it was a duty which all men are bound to do, and though they did not, nor could not do it as they should, yet it was their duty, and therefore Paul praises God even in the presence of those wicked men. So may we do the like, though wicked men be by, and join in the duty, what is that to us?

Oh! But it much troubles and distracts them when they see men of profane spirits join with them, and blaspheme (as they say) the name of God.

Alas for them, that they are so tender of God's honour. But is it so indeed? Or is not this another lie? 'Tis notoriously known, there are many great and horrid blasphemies against Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, and the Scriptures, &c. and yet I hear not much of their being scandalized at these. But they are mightily scandalized to hear wicked men sing psalms. But methinks, if they be indeed scandalized at this, they should be more scandalized at those other blasphemies and truly let me tell them, their not being scandalized at those horrid blasphemies indeed before spoken of, is a very great scandal to many that are truly godly. Oh that there were no other blasphemies in England than singing of psalms by wicked men, and that one day in a week. But doth not the land mourn because of oaths? And are not many wicked ones all the week long blaspheming the living God? Yet some of these men (who make this objection) have not shewed at any time (that we have seen) so much dislike of these blasphemies. If you be troubled at blasphemies, be troubled at all blasphemies. If it be blasphemy for wicked men to sing psalms, sure there be other as great blasphemies in England as this; and I wish that some had not blasphemed the name of God in another manner, that have given over singing of psalms. We grant that wicked men cannot do this or any duty as they should, they lie, dishonour God, and take his name in vain. And it is a grief to every godly man, whose righteous soul is saddened within him when he hears or sees that God hath not that honour given him which is due unto his name. Yea it grieves all godly men that others are not as they are. They are of Moses his spirit. They would all the Lord's people were prophets. They would that all could hear, and pray, and read, and sing psalms, as they themselves can. But be it so that they cannot sing psalms as they should do it, and it is thy grief, yet why shouldst thou neglect thy duty, and not do that which God calls thee to? If he that sits next to thee lie unto God in professing his sincerity and integrity of heart when there is no such thing, yet let me tell thee, thou mayest be accepted of God in what thou dost, if thou do that in sincerity which another doth in hypocrisy. And take this from me, you that are so scandalised at the hypocrisy and profaneness of others, look well to yourselves, sweep before your own doors, and see if your own hearts be right; and if they be, I will warrant you the wickedness of another man's heart shall never hurt you or hinder your acceptance with God. Thou prayest out of sincerity, thou prayest out of experience, thou prayest from thy heart; and another man that joins with thee doth none of these things, and doth not God therefore accept thee, thinkest thou? Yes, God will hear the bleatings of one sheep, though he were in the midst of a thousand wolves. If it were not so, God's people were in a sad condition, and for ought I know, must go out of this world to find those whom they may join withal in prayer or praise; or any other duty. Therefore I say, is it thy duty to praise God in a psalm, or is it not? If it be not thy duty, then do it nowhere; but if it be, then thou mayest do it in any company that will join with thee.

But the truth is, many of those that do not sing, believe it not to be a duty, and upon that ground wholly neglect it; If it be thy duty thou art bound to do it in the best manner thou canst, and thou art never the worse, though others that join with thee do it not as they ought, and so instead of a blessing bring a curse upon themselves, for God (I tell thee) doth not accept of thee according to thy company, but according to thy integrity. If thou dost well (says God to Cain) shalt thou not be accepted? So, if thou seekest God in sincerity from thy very soul, shalt thou not be accepted? Questionless thou shalt. Can God reject a sacrifice offered to him from a poor, contrite, broken heart, because that some wicked men are present?

If Cain and Abel offered sacrifice at one and the same time and upon the same altar (as for some reasons, and by some circumstances in the text it is conjectured they might) did not God accept the sacrifice of Abel, because that Cain was present? Sure we are that Christ offered in the temple when not only many of the people, but the priests also were most ungodly wretches.

If singing of psalms be a duty, thou hast more need be troubled at thy sinful neglect, than at another's sinful doing of it. And truly it is strange to me that for fear of participating in others sins, men should commit sins of their own as bad or worse. Here I might shew how the sins of some may lie upon others. But I shall not go so far out of my way, I shall only add; when some will come to an ordinance of God to which they have no right, and thou canst not hinder them, or when they will do any duty which they ought, but cannot do as it should be done, do thou bless God that hath given thee an heart to do thy duty, and pity those poor souls who cannot do it as well as thou canst.

Singing of psalms is a duty, wherein there is a word of admonition and instruction to wicked men, and it is a moral duty which every man is bound to do, to praise the great God that made heaven and earth. That they cannot do it as they ought is their sin and misery, and will be our sin as much, or more, if we do not at all.

And now I shall entreat all godly and sober-minded Christians, that they will not be frightened from doing that which is their duty by such a scarecrow as this. If wicked men join with them, and multiply transgression by offering the sacrifice of fools; they are to be pitied and prayed for. But 'tis a senseless conceit, that therefore such as are godly shall neglect their duty.

Now I am sure, it is the duty of all men in the world to praise God. Wicked men are bound to praise God in a psalm; it is their sin and misery they cannot do it as they ought, but they are bound to do it in a psalm as much as they are bound to pray, to hear the word, or do any other duty. Nay I say more, it is some glory to God when profane persons do sing David's psalms to their own conviction. The minister glorifies God in the speaking of his word, although many in the church should laugh and scoff at it, because the word of God hath its end either to convert or to confound. So when a psalm is sung, it is the word of God although it be sung by a wicked man, and it is a word of conviction, and a word of instruction to him. It is the word of God, I say, in his mouth, and herein God is glorified, that a wicked man is made with his own mouth to condemn himself, and his own wickedness.

What scruples yet remain, I hope shall be resolved when I come to the directive part, which I promised. For the objections that are commonly made arise from ignorance of the nature, end and use of the duty. I shall now close all at this time with these considerations. The question is whether we should sing psalms. Now to confirm us a little, That this practice of singing psalms in the church of God, is not so groundless as some men imagine,

First of all consider this scripture ground, that God calls his people to spiritual rejoicing in him, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." God's people have always matter of rejoicing. Sometimes God calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, to fasting and prayer; but always God calls his people to rejoice, "Rejoice in the Lord always," "Rejoice evermore." God's people have always matter of rejoicing. Though they have matter of mourning one way, yet they have matter of rejoicing another way. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice (saith the apostle) though now for a season ye be in heaviness through manifold tribulations." Still they have matter of joy even in the midst of tribulations.

Secondly, it is clear that as God requires such a holy affection in his people, so he doth require some expressions suitable to that affection. Therefore we must not only rejoice with our hearts, but with our tongues also, with all that is within us, with all that is without us, with all that is about us. As therefore it is a truth that (in a sense) God's people should be praying always (to wit) in their hearts with ejaculatory prayers, lifting up their souls unto the Lord, wheresoever they go, and it is as true also that God requires his people should pray unto him with their mouths at some times more especially, even so it is here in the duty of praise. God requires us to rejoice always, and always, as it were, to be praising of him in our hearts. But he requires us at some times to praise him with our mouths also, when God gives occasion of so doing. As God's people of old did sing praises ordinarily on the Sabbath and other solemn times, and extraordinarily when God gave them occasion, by some deliverance, victory, or other mercy. *In Psalm 126:2*, "Their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with singing." And so *Judges 5*, "Deborah sang a song," And so *Acts 16*, Paul and Silas having joy in God, expressed it in singing of a psalm. So it is said of the people of God, *Rev. 15:3*, "They shall sing the song of Moses," that is, as Moses and the people of Israel sung that song, *Exod. 15*, for their deliverance from Pharaoh's tyranny and their slavery in Egypt, so shall the people of God sing a song for their deliverance from their slavery under Antichrist. So the Twenty four Elders fell down and worshipped and "sang a new song unto the Lord God Almighty," *Rev. 5:8, 9*, which is to be understood of all God's worship as some learned men conceive. And *Rev. 14:3*, it is said the people of God there should "sing a song that no man else could sing." A learned interpreter upon that place conceives all gospel worship to be meant.

Now if singing were such an abomination (as some would have it) in the church of Christ, I wonder why the Holy Ghost should use that expression in that place, and set forth all gospel worship under "singing a new song." When God's people's hearts were enlarged with spiritual joy within, they did open their mouths wide to shew forth the praises of the Lord. And if God give us more than ordinary joy, why should not we now make more than ordinary expression of it? There are many exhortations in the psalms to sing, and shout, and clap hands, and make a joyful noise. Now these signs of spiritual rejoicing in God were no legal ceremonies, but such as godly Christians may use now as well as they did then; so "David sang and danced before the ark with all his might," being so transported with holy joy, that he could not forbear. And why are men so much against singing of psalms? When there is good news, and matter of great joy, we ring out our bells, and shoot off the great guns, shout and make a noise otherwise, and why not as well make a joyful noise in singing of psalms? I hear no man find fault with the former *viz.* ringing, or shooting, and joyful acclamations. And is not singing of psalms as fit and proper an expression of our rejoicing in God, as any of those?

If a company of godly Christians then will go by themselves, take some choice parts of David's psalms and sing them, I would know if this would not make as good a noise in the ears of the Lord, as shooting of guns or ringing of bells. The apostle says, upon this very account, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Nay I had almost said, is not singing of psalms as good an exercise, and as becoming Christians, as playing at cards or tables? I wonder how some that quarrel so much at singing of psalms, are yet so devout at these exercises. For my part I am of the mind that singing of psalms (as much as some slight it nowadays) is as innocent, and honest, and useful an exercise as playing of cards. And why may we not sing a psalm as well as make vain and foolish pastimes, or use antic and apish toyings, which would offend any sober and grave man to behold? Surely if singing of psalms be once out of fashion, I hope none of the other will be used amongst us, for these certainly are as good as the other, if I should say no more of them. What, doth God never give us occasion to sing a psalm of praise? Or have we never any hearts to do it? If so, we are the saddest Christians that ever were, and I am confident God never had such servants in former ages, as we are. It is well known what Plinius Secundus wrote unto Trajan concerning Christians singing of psalms in those days; as also what Tertullian in his Apology saith of their frugal supper, and solacing themselves with psalms. We all know what James saith, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Therefore I pray let us sing psalms when we are merry, as well as when we are afflicted we do pray. Sing somewhere at sometimes, by yourselves, or with others; perform the duty, except you will lay aside praying also. I shall leave that text of James with you, and entreat you seriously to consider whether if we must pray, we must not sing also.

### SERMON III.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing," &c.  
Ephesians 5:19.

In these words here are two main things considerable *viz.* the lawfulness and the usefulness of singing psalms. We have done with the former, and now come to the latter *viz.* the usefulness of singing. This I call the directive part, or Directory, and in it we shall inquire into these two particulars *viz.* how we must sing, and why we must sing. The apostle shews both. We must sing with the heart, or with grace in the heart; and we must sing to the Lord. Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; that is (say some) to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to the Lord Jehovah, *i. e.* to his praise and glory; as it is said of the Israelites, *Psa. 106:12*, "They sang his praises." Now this the apostle calls for here, if we would sing a psalm as we ought, to the praise of the Lord, to the glory of his great name, we must do it in or with the heart. God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit, *John 4:24*. He calls for the heart, "My son, give me thy heart." So Chrysostom upon this text, "attending with understanding." The meaning of the apostle is clear and unquestionable, that our singing of psalms must not be a lip-labour, an outward bodily exercise, it must not be the pleasing ourselves or others with the tune of a psalm; that is not it which God looks for at our hands, but we must sing as Mary did, *Luke 1:46,47*, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." And as David in the 103rd psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." This is that which the apostle here calls for, and it implies these two particulars:

1. A sense and understanding of that which is sung, "I will sing with the understanding," saith the apostle, that is, so as I would be understood by others, therefore by himself much more, "Sing ye praises with understanding;" a blind sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord.

2. It must be with an inward feeling and affection of the heart and spirit. So David in *Psalms 57:7*, "My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed," or, my heart is prepared, or my heart is disposed. When a man's heart is filled with the Spirit, as the apostle speaks, when a man's heart is full of holy and heavenly thoughts, affections, and meditations, and so "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; when the frame of a man's heart is suitable to the holy and spiritual matter that is sung, this is singing in the heart, or with grace in the heart to the Lord, who looks at the heart, and how a man is affected within. Certainly (as one says) grace in the heart is the best tune to any psalm; and without this, sweetest best tuned voice is but howling and bawling, in the ears of the Almighty. Yet do we not exclude the voice in singing. David used it, "I will sing and give praise even with my glory; Awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early." "Awake up my glory," says David; that was his tongue, called his glory, because his tongue in singing was an excellent instrument of glorifying God. Nor do we exclude all modulation or tuning of the voice according to the laws of music, provided there be no affectation of it so as our hearts be wholly taken up with it. Provided also there be no empty tautologies or chanting over and over the same things, tossing of the word of God like a tennis-ball from one to the other, like that cathedral music intended only to please the ear, and no way ordered to the use of edifying in grace and knowledge. But for the voice in singing we plead, and also for singing with tunes. All the psalms were penned in Hebrew metre, with the exactest art that might be. They were penned (saith one) with, "exactness and variety of metre." 1. In such verses as are suitable to the poetry of the Hebrew language, and not in the style of such other books of the Old Testament as are not poetical. 2. Many verses together in several of the psalms do also run in rhymes, as those know that understand the Hebrew; and as Buxtorf shews, *Thesaur. 629*. But, though we plead for singing with the voice, yet our chiefest respect in that singing must be unto the heart and spirit, to the understanding and to the affection and inward feeling of what is sung, for this is to sing with grace in the heart.

Hence it follows that none can sing a psalm as he ought, but he that hath grace in his heart and is renewed in the spirit of his mind. None could learn that song, *Rev. 14:3*, but the hundred forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth; which was only the people of God who stood in opposition to Antichrist; and by their singing there is meant all spiritual worship performed by God's people to him. It is said there, "No man could learn that song, but those that were redeemed from the earth;" the Antichristian earthly generations had no skill on the spiritual worship and service offered to God in the true Christian church. Therefore the psalmist saith (speaking of this duty) "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright;" it is impossible for others to rejoice in the Lord. Only God's own people have an inward experimental knowledge of the glorious excellencies and attributes of God, *viz.* his power, wisdom, goodness, &c. They only have tasted how sweet the Lord is in his promises and providences. They know, and none but they, what the offices of Christ are, in the power, fruit, and benefit of them. They know what it is to be redeemed from the earth, and from death, and from the nethermost hell. They only have experience of the mercy and loving kindness of the Lord, supporting, supplying them, and ordering all for good to them. And they alone have a lively feeling of their infirmities, sigh and groan under the burden of their corruptions, are troubled for the indisposition and

untowardness of their hearts. These and such as these, who are so inspired and affected, can sing David's psalms with David's spirit. Others may sing more pleasingly to the ear, but these alone make melody in the ears of the Lord, who looks at the heart.

That's it we desire to be satisfied in: how we may sing David's psalms with David's heart.

1. It is commonly, truly, and piously said, we must sing David's psalms with David's spirit, though there is no text in the Bible, to my remembrance that hath those very words; but some speak somewhat to this effect, as *Col. 3:16*, we must sing "with grace in our hearts," that is as much as if he should have said, Sing David's psalms with David's spirit.

2. We grant it is impossible for any to sing psalms so, but one that is a new creature, renewed in the spirit of his mind, as David was.

3. We say in the general, to sing David's psalms with David's spirit, or to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, there must be not only an habitual, but an actual disposedness, as when a man sets upon any duty, he must stir up the grace that is in him; so it is not enough in singing psalms to have an habit of grace, but we must stir up, and act the gifts and graces of God within us. Here then this will be the great question: how our spirits ought to be disposed when we are to sing, that we may so do it as to give God the glory, and gain benefit to our own souls? Or, (which is all one) how we may sing David's psalms with David's spirit? Or how we may sing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord? which is the doctrine in the text.

Now here I meet with that which is a very great scruple, and I believe hath taken and kept off many from singing of psalms. They know not how to accommodate passages in them; either those passages are no way suitable to their conditions, or their affections many times are not suitable to those passages; and hence they conclude they cannot sing them so as to praise or please God in them, and therefore resolve not to sing at all.

Further, when they say we must sing David's psalms with David's spirit (if I mistake not) their meaning is, we must be in every respect like David, and in the very same case that it was when he sang these psalms to the Lord. As for instance, the sixth psalm was penned by David when he was or had been sick, therefore we cannot sing this psalm when we are well and in good health. So we cannot sing the 51st psalm, because (as we hope) many of us have not committed such foul sins as David had, *viz.* adultery and murder. So many of us have not had occasion to fly out of our country as David had, upon which occasion he penned some of his psalms, as Psalm 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 120, &c. So many of us have not a house to dedicate or purify, as David had when he penned the thirtieth psalm, and therefore we may not sing that psalm. To conclude, we must be in the same condition in every respect, as David was when he penned those psalms, or else it is impossible to sing them as David did; that is, to sing David's psalms with David's spirit.

This is that which many object and scruple much at it; and yet it is nothing but a gross mistake of the nature, use, and end of this duty of singing psalms. Therefore to rectify it, I shall not only shew you what is the nature, end, and use of singing psalms, but I shall give you some directions whereby you may see how all and every of those psalms, and the several passages in them, may be applied to us for our use, and how we may sing them so as to glorify God, and to edify our own souls; always provided that we have grace in our hearts, and that we stir up the grace of God that is in us.

The psalms of David, Asaph, &c. were written, as far as I understand, for a threefold end or use, *viz.*

1. For Instruction,
2. For Admonition.
3. For Praise and Thanksgiving.

Which you may, if you please, reduce to these two, *viz.* Glorifying God, Edifying ourselves.

First, Instruction or Teaching.

Secondly, Admonition or Reproof.

Thirdly, Thanksgiving and praising the Lord.

Look into *Col. 3:16*. "Teaching and admonishing yourselves in psalms," &c. There you have the ends of singing of psalms; and speaking to yourselves in psalms, &c. as the words are here in the text. And though

these three ends be distinct, yet it would not have you understand me so, as if they were always divided; for even those psalms that are for instruction, admonition, are also for praises and thanksgiving. Praising God, or giving thanks unto the Lord, and the glorifying of God's great name, is the end of all singing, as it is the end of all duties. And though we distinguish praising of God from petitioning, yet I hope you think that even our petitioning and begging of God those things we need, is a glorifying God, and a praising his name, because therein we acknowledge God is the God of all our mercies and comforts, with whom is the well of life, and from whom is all our expectation. So when we pray to God, we do praise him; so when we hear the word, we do praise and glorify God, because therein we acknowledge God only to be our King, our Judge, and Law-giver, profess ourselves his servants, and whatsoever he commands us we will do: And thus in all duties we praise and glorify God. For all the duties we do, are paying of our homage, or acknowledging of our fealty to God. And those that know not this, know not what they do when they go about any duty. Therefore I say, if a psalm be for instruction or admonition, yet notwithstanding it is to praise the Lord with. So we suppose there be some psalms that are psalms merely for instruction, Doctrinal psalms, yet we may sing them and others, not only for our admonition and instruction, but to praise the Lord; as in *Psalm 106:12*, Israel (it is said) "sang his praise." These things premised, we shall now resolve the case in hand.

1. First then I say, one main end of singing psalms is our instruction and admonition, when we in singing have sweet meditations upon the heavenly matter that is sung. That is (I say again) one main end of singing psalms, *viz.* "Teaching and admonishing ourselves in psalms," *Col. 3:16*. For when we are singing a psalm of instruction, we are thereby admonished of our evils, and also taught what is our duty. Besides which place, I urge the title of some of David's psalms, "Maschil of David," *Psa. 142, 60, 32, 42, 45, 53, 55, 56, 74 &c.* That is, "A Psalm of David to give instruction." So Janius and Tremellius do always (if I do not wrong them) render it, "A Song to teach." So they are psalms especially to teach, and to give instruction. But further, if there were nothing else, yet this also were an argument sufficient to shew that teaching and admonishing is one end of our singing psalms, namely, that some psalms are merely doctrinal, and you have not any formal expression of prayer or praise in them. In many of the psalms indeed there be most heavenly pathetic forms of praise and prayer; but some psalms are merely doctrinal, as the first psalm; there is no one form of prayer, nor one form of praise in it, but the whole psalm, if you mark it, is nothing else but a doctrinal description of the different and contrary estate of the godly and wicked in this life, and in the life to come; as *v.1*, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord," &c. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. But the ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff," &c. "the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, the way of the ungodly shall perish," &c. Here is no formal expression of praise or prayer, though the prophet penned and sung it to the praise of God. So the second psalm is a psalm of instruction and admonition, but there are no forms of prayer or praise, unless you reckon that for one, *viz.* "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Now the doctrine of that psalm is briefly this: the peremptory decree and purpose of God to set up the kingdom of Christ in spite of the world, the vanity of all men's devices in opposition to it, the miserable confusion of all Christ's enemies and opposers, and the blessed condition of such as submit themselves to him. Now these psalms being merely doctrinal, and having nothing but instruction and admonition in them, and being sung as well as others to the praise of God; hence (I say) one end of our singing them, is to learn the doctrine of them, that it may be imprinted upon our spirits, or a sweet meditation in our hearts upon that heavenly doctrine contained in those psalms, to imprint it upon our minds and memories, that we may be the more affected with it. Some psalms are mixed, and but in part doctrinal, as *Psa. 33 & 34*. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." "The lions shall lack and suffer hunger, but those that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," &c. These are doctrines of God's providence and care over his people; and one main work of our hearts and spirits, in singing these and such like passages, is to meditate upon those doctrines, and in so doing, we give glory to God, "teaching and admonishing ourselves in a psalm," *Col. 3:16*.

*Objection:* But we may as well read them, and so meditate on them for our instruction. Therefore there is no necessity that we should sing psalms for that reason.

1. I deny not but we ought to read the psalms as any other scriptures, and in and after our reading, to meditate upon them. In commending of singing I do not cry down reading; one good duty should not shut out another. So because we read the psalms, and meditate on them, it doth not follow that therefore we should not sing the psalms and meditate on them.

2. In singing there is a more distinct, settled, and fixed meditation of the heart, than there can be in reading; therefore David in the 104th Psalm, insisting upon the providences of God in making and governing the world, he draws to a close of it in the 33rd verse, professing his joy in the Lord, from the consideration of God's power and providence, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I shall sing praise to my God while I have my being." Why? "Unto God that made me, that made all the world, that maintains my soul in life." And then



he adds, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord." David would not only speak of the works of God's power and providence, but he would sing of them, "that his meditations might be sweet." Therefore though we read the psalms, yet we ought also to sing them sometimes, because there is more sweetness of meditation in singing than in reading, and the bare pronouncing of them. In singing there is a dilating of the sound, and a drawing out of the voice, which gives us more time for the taxing of our hearts upon that which is sung, in a more sweet meditation of the goodness or power of God, or whatsoever the matter be.

Therefore the mercies of the Lord, and the great things that God hath done in the world, have been commemorated with singing. The people of God did not think it enough to say what God had done for them, but they did sing it, that they might meditate the more upon the goodness of God, and be the more affected with it.

3. It is not enough for us to meditate, as David intimates in that place, but we must have sweet meditations of him, that we may be glad in the Lord, "I will be glad in the Lord." When we sing, there is a more than ordinary raising or lifting up of our souls, and so far more sweetness in meditation on what is sung, than what is barely said. The soul (I say) in singing is as it were elevated and raised, and so comes to be more ravished with admiration of what God hath done.

Let them who have had experience of communion with God in this duty, speak whether they have not found a great raising of their hearts in it. Whether they have not been rapt, and ravished as it were, with the consideration of God's goodness in his promises, and the works of his spiritual and gracious providences. I say not that meditation is all the end of singing psalms, but this is one chief end.

Therefore if you say, why may we not read and meditate without more ado?

I answer, we may and must read. But why not the other also? since it is more useful, and helps to more sweetness in meditation. A man may pray in his heart without moving his lips, as Hannah did; but thou shalt find it a quickening in prayer if thou use thy tongue also; the voice is a great matter to quicken us in prayer, and to keep our hearts in order. Therefore as I would have men pray in secret, so (were I to advise them) I would have them use their voice too; provided always it be not to be heard of men only. So here also, whereas men say we may read a psalm as well as sing it, I answer, singing will affect us more than reading, as praying with the voice doth affect us more when we pray and do not use our tongues; you shall find, your hearts will be more apt to wander if you do not use your voice, than they will be if you do.

Therefore as we should use our voice to help us in prayer, so why should we not lift up the voice in singing, that we may be helped also in our meditation, even with enlargement and ravishment of spirit. Questionless the lifting up of the voice is a great help to enlarge the heart when it is well affected.

Now, when people complain and say their hearts are not suitable to such and such passages in the psalms, nor those passages to their hearts:

I say that there is no passage in all David's psalms but thou mayest accommodate it, if no otherwise, yet in this way, *viz.* by a sweet meditation upon it. And I would fain know where that passage is that a gracious spirit may not have sweet meditation upon it; surely thou hast a very ungracious heart if thou canst not do this. If there be such a psalm or such a passage of a psalm as thou thinkest thou canst no way bring it to thy condition, yet (I say) thou mayest bring thy heart to that psalm, or that passage, by a sweet meditation upon it. And I would fain know where that good: Christian is, that will deny it to be his duty to have sweet meditations upon David's psalms, or any passage in them. Is there (think you) any passage in David's psalms, that a Christian may not meditate upon, and so take comfort in God, and his word.

And so you may be satisfied about the historical psalms, and those passages in them that have respect to other men and other times.

As near as I can, I shall instance in some of all kinds, some psalms are only doctrinal, some are only historical, as the 78th psalm, the 105th psalm, the 106th psalm &c. For the 105th and 106th psalms, there are these passages in them, How God fed his people with manna or bread from heaven, how he divided the sea, how he drowned Pharaoh and his host; also a relation of the several plagues which God sent upon Egypt, and the like, which I need not repeat. Beloved, is not this matter of meditation to us Christians? If thou hast a gracious frame of spirit, suppose this is the psalm that is to be sung, Psalm 105 or 106.

First, Thou mayest apply this to thy case thus, to have sweet meditations on the matter of fact, the great things that God did for the preservation of his people by the destruction of his enemies; and if thou canst sweetly meditate upon that, thou hast a word of instruction, a word of consolation, and a word of admonition.

1. A word of instruction, to teach thee the care that God hath had of his people in all ages.
2. A word of consolation, to shew how God will deliver his people and provide for them in their greatest extremities.
3. A word of admonition, to take heed how thou vex and persecute the people of God, as Pharaoh did, lest God bring destruction upon thee, as he did upon him.

Now is this nothing to thee? You read these psalms, and you think you read them with profit, and why may you not sing them with profit, by a sweet meditation upon the matter, for your admonition, consolation, instruction, according as the matter is? We read the history of the Bible for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope, not thinking that what is related concerned them only who lived in those times. But what God did then he doth now, the people of God are as they were then, have the same afflictions and temptations, are in the same conditions, hated and persecuted in the world, and have the same experience of God's goodness. Therefore it is a wicked ignorance to say that many passages in the psalms do not concern us. "All things that were written, were written for our learning, that we might have comfort and hope." God said to Joshua, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And the apostle applies it, *Heb. 13:5*, to every Christian. When God speaks to Joshua, "I will never leave thee," God speaks it to thee and me, and every Christian in the world. And when God destroyed Pharaoh, it assures the people of God that God will destroy all the Pharaohs in the world as well as he did him. There is nothing therefore in scripture but doth concern thee and me as much as it concerned the people of God in those times; and every Christian that hath wit and grace may accommodate them for the edification of their own souls. If God provided for them, and fed them with bread from heaven, God will provide also for thee, and feed thee with bread from heaven, if there be cause. So in David's time it was said, "The lions shall lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." And doth not this concern us as much as David, and others of the people of God then? It was so then, and it shall be so now; "The lions shall lack and suffer hunger, but those that fear the Lord shall lack no good thing." These things therefore were all recorded for our learning.

Suppose again you sing that 105th psalm, all along there is work for thy faith; if thou have faith in thy heart (I say) there is matter for thy faith to work upon. All the providences of God there are as so many props to keep up thy heart in assurance that God will protect and defend thee, and provide for thee, as ever he did for his people in those times. What is that scripture therefore that doth not concern any child of God? So in the 105th psalm, Joseph was put in the stocks, "and the iron entered into his soul, till the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him." Doth this concern Joseph alone? Certainly it concerns us as much as Joseph. It was penned many years after Joseph was dead and gone, and it concerns us still to think and meditate of the wonderful providences of God, how his children are brought down, as Joseph was, even into the prison, and unto the stocks; and how by abasing them, God makes way to honour and advance them; and how by unlikely means he brings about great things. Are not these things worth meditation? How God doth try and exercise his people with heavy afflictions, and yet when he hath laid them low, he raises them up again, as he did Joseph.

You have the Israelites murmuring and repining against the Lord; and what doth this concern us, will you say? I say, very much, because we have the same spirit lusting to evil as they had, the same spirit of pride, and hypocrisy, and infidelity in us as was in them. Now then we may meditate upon these passages, and reflect upon our own hypocrisy and infidelity, and distrust of God's providence; and withal take notice how the infidelity of men doth not, cannot make void the faithfulness of God, but he is gracious to his people for his promise sake, notwithstanding their daily infirmities.

For the 137th psalm, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down," &c. It yields matter of sweet meditation to this purpose, how God many times exposes his people to be persecuted, afflicted, and then also to be mocked and flouted too. It is an admonition to us that we are no more affected with the calamities and sufferings of the church of God, and that we must not rejoice and make merry at such times as the people of God are afflicted. It instructs us also that the peace and prosperity of the church of God is to be preferred above all worldly comforts whatsoever. I could instance in other psalms, but these may suffice. And now I would know what psalm, or passage in any psalm, doth not minister matter of sweet meditation for our admonition, instruction, or consolation. Therefore when some cry out, "What is this or that to them?" it doth not concern them, nor can they accommodate or apply it to themselves; I ask what's the matter they cannot? or where lies the fault? Is it not in the deadness and barrenness of their own hearts, who can let pass such precious matter, without due meditation on it?

*Objection.* That meditation you speak of, may be as well in reading as in singing the psalms.

I denied that before, and say further, that there is a great advantage to meditation in singing of a psalm, more than there is in the reading it, both to affect the heart, and raise it up, and also to make an impression of what is sung upon our souls. All scripture is equal as to the authority, and to the matter too, if it be absolutely considered, yet in respect to our consolation or direction, some parts of it may be preferred before others, so the book of Psalms is a little Bible, or (if I may so call it) the Bible of the Bible; as one star differeth from another in glory, so may we say of the scriptures, some parts of it are more excellent, in respect to our necessities, than others, and yet all are excellent, and useful, and of divine authority. So I may say of singing and reading the psalms, both are useful; yet it will not follow, but singing at some times may be more useful for some purposes. As for instance, it is more useful (as I have shewed) for sweet rejoicing in God and his word, with gladness of heart.

By this time somewhat (I hope) hath been said towards the satisfying of those that pretend they know not how to apply many passages in David's psalms. I say again, if there were no other way of applying them, they may do it this way, *viz.* by a sweet meditation on them, or by exercising their hearts with holy delight and rejoicing in meditating on God's word. I say not, this is the only way of accommodating them, but this is one, and (I think) a good one too; there being no passage in any psalm, but may be applied and made use of this way. I cannot but remember you what a reverend man now alive, saith in this case:

" 'Tis ignorance of a man's self, and the ways of God, to think any psalm is unsuitable to any man's condition, if he be a good Christian especially. Some psalms set forth the attributes, excellencies, and works of God and his Christ. These minister occasion of reverence, blessing, praising, admiring and adoring God. Some set forth the estate and ways of the church and people of God; some their miseries, calamities, sorrows and sufferings; these offer to us matter of compassion, instruction, imitation; some set forth the estate and ways of wicked men; and in these we have a word of admonition. Some are excellent to express our own affections, afflictions, sufferings, comforts, and then a man is furnished with matter and words to present his own condition before the Lord."

It is a great mistake to think, I may not sing a psalm, because it expresseth not my condition or affection; say it doth not, as for instance, thou art not sick, or sensible of God's wrath, as David was when he penned the sixth psalm; or thou hast not committed adultery and murder, as David had done when he penned the 51st psalm; or thou hast not a house to dedicate, as he had when he penned the thirtieth psalm; or thou art not put to it as he was when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, and then afterwards penned the thirty fourth psalm. What then? Wilt thou not therefore sing these psalms, or dost thou think they do not concern thee? Thou mayest as well forbear to read them upon the same grounds; yea, thou mayest as well forbear to read some parts of Paul's epistles, because thou never travelled in Asia, or had to do with Alexander the coppersmith, or fought with beasts at Ephesus, or left a cloak in Troas, as Paul did. There's no necessity when we read those scriptures, that we should be in every respect as Paul was that penned them; we read them to learn out of them what the Holy Ghost hath recorded for our learning; and so we sing the psalms, that do not set forth our conditions in particular, for our instruction, admonition, consolation; there being no psalm, or part of a psalm, that hath not somewhat for our learning.

This may serve to satisfy them who are afraid they lie in singing those passages of the psalms which do not express their condition in particular.

It is no lie in a godly man's mouth to sing this passage in the sixth psalm, "I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim," &c. If it be a lie to sing, it is as much a lie to say it, and then we must not read that psalm for fear of lying. But we sing it as we read it, for the good doctrine that may be learnt from it, *viz.* that when God rebukes and chastens in displeasure, no poor soul is able to abide it. That the sense of God's wrath is more grievous to be born than any other burden whatsoever. That in our repentance and turning to God, there ought to be very great sorrow, arising from the sense of God's wrath due to sin, and that our sorrow for sin ought to be the greatest of all other, &c. As for that place, *Psa. 6:6*, the expression is (as I take it) hyperbolic, and intended to express what heat there is in the fire of God's wrath, such and so great, as it even melted David into tears. He was exceedingly grieved, and wept abundantly, and so do many of God's servants many times, and therefore may say as David did, "We make our beds to swim," &c. Or say it was the greatness of his bodily affliction that made him to weep so abundantly and excessively, yet we may learn something from it, as I shewed even now. Sure "All scripture is written (as the apostle saith, *Rom. 15:4*) for our learning." Thou canst not in every respect say as Paul, *2 Tim. 4:6*, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand," &c. And yet thou thinkest it not a lie in thy mouth to recite those words when thou readest that chapter. Few Christians (I fear) are come so far as to say with the apostle, *Phil. 1:23*, "I am willing to depart and to be with Christ," &c. Yet any Christian may read that passage without danger of lying (as I suppose) sure I am there's matter of consolation and instruction in it to every Christian. Say thy heart falls short of that ardent love to God and his law, which David expresseth, *Psa. 119*, yet it is no more a lie to sing than to read that psalm, especially if thou have a gracious heart, although thou hast not attained that measure and degree of love to

God's law as David had. Nay, suppose thou hast no love to God's law at all, yet thou hast there a word of admonition and instruction teaching thee what thou shouldst do; and thou mayest take occasion to lament and bewail the untowardliness of thine own heart, that when David loved God's law so exceedingly, thou hast no love or liking to it.

I confess we must be in some respects as David was as when he penned those psalms; that is, in the state of grace, if we will sing them right; and as we ought. But it is no lie to sing them however; for if it be, then it is a lie to say, and a lie to read them; and so you must not read the sixth psalm, if you do not water your couch with your tears, as David did .

Now I say for a conclusion, suppose there be some psalms we cannot make our own by using them for ourselves, and in our own names, as David did, yet we may make them our own by a sweet meditation on them for our benefit and edification, and by using them also (as one saith well) for, and in the behalf of others that are of the same mystical body with ourselves, that so we may rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with those that weep, as if their cases were our own; and so (saith he) there is scarce any passage of the psalms, but it either concerns ourselves, or some other of the church of God, who at this day are, or may be in the same, or in the like case and condition as David or the church of God was then; whom we are to remember as if we were in bonds with them, or to bless God for, as if we were in like prosperity with them.

He that reads the scriptures, or sings a psalm, or doth any duty without reverence, attention, good affection, and some good use made of the same, he takes God's name in vain.

This is granted. But to say, as some do, that others lie in singing such psalms as do not express their own conditions in every particular, is (as far as I understand) a belying or slandering them; and I wish they may well consider it, for (as I have said) a wicked man lies as much in reading as in singing of a psalm, though indeed it be not lying, but reporting or reciting what God hath revealed in his word for admonition and instruction to all men. You have now seen one end and use of singing psalms; and if there were no more, I conceive it is well worth the while.

## SERMON IV.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing," &c.  
Ephesians 5:19.

I have shewed it to be a Christian's duty to sing David's psalms, answering many objections by the way, and acquainting you how a gracious spirit may apply and make use of every passage in them. I shall now proceed to shew how Christians may apply some passages in particular to their own cases. Only let me first answer a scruple or two which some have, in regard of some passages in David's psalms.

*Objection.* I cannot sing the 131st psalm, will someone say, for I find much pride and haughtiness in my heart, how then should I sing, "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty"?

1. By the same reason thou canst not read it, and say, "My heart is not haughty," &c.
2. If thou art a Christian indeed, thy heart is not haughty as the heart of a natural man is haughty.
3. Say thine heart is more haughty than becomes a Christian's heart to be (I know no man's heart but is so) there is a word of admonition and instruction to mind thee of that evil, and humble thee for the pride of thy heart.

*Objection.* But thou hast a proud heart still.

So thou hast perhaps, after much and earnest prayer to God against it, and many admonitions from the word preached. David himself shewed pride, or somewhat as bad, when upon a false suggestion, *2 Sam. 16:4*, he presently sequestered all Mephibosheth's estate, before he heard what he had to say for himself. Besides, there's a sweet close of that psalm, wherein David gives himself and others a seasonable admonition, particularly and quietly to wait upon God, "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever."

*Objection.* But how can we sing such passages of the psalms as are nothing but exhortations to singing? This is giving to God his exhortations again (say some) and leaving the duty undone. Take God's words he speaks to us, and speak them to God again.

1. By the same reason David did not praise God in singing those exhortations to praise him. The 48th & 49th & 50th psalms are almost nothing else but exhortations to praise God; shall we say that David, or whosoever was the pen-man, did not praise God in those psalms? And yet I think the argument will hold as well for the one as for the other.

2. There's somewhat in those exhortations to admonish us of our dullness, and what need we have to be stirred up to do that duty which all creatures owe, and in a sort yield unto the Lord their maker.

3. As praying is the best preparation to prayer, for then (as Luther saith) we set upon it in God's strength and not in our own; so singing these exhortations is an excellent mean to prepare and raise our hearts; and therefore David begins and concludes many psalms with such exhortations as Psalm 136. &c.

4. We may say of such exhortations, as one saith of the 136th psalm, that it is "*Solemnis celebratio nominis Dei sub exhortationes forma.*" 'Tis an excellent way of praising God, to provoke and call upon ourselves to praise him. What if a man in prayer speak to his own heart, and call upon himself to rouse and raise up his spirits, as David, *Psa. 57:8*, "Awake my glory," &c. may he not be well said to pray when he doth so? And why may he not be as well said to praise God when he stirs up himself to that duty?

But to speak as the thing is, such forms are nothing but elegancies of expression, in the use of which we do indeed praise the Lord; and this if our opposites had understood, we had never been put to the trouble of answering such an objection.

And now I shall proceed to inform weak Christians how they may more especially improve some passages in David's psalms, as they are more suitable to their particular respective conditions or affections; and this is a second use to be made of singing, *viz.* the exercise and improvement of the graces of God in us.

For instance, perhaps thou art reported to say or do that which never entered into thy heart to conceive or think of, what comfort is there to thy soul in singing the former part of the seventh psalm, and other like places, wherein David complains of the same abuse? Suppose all goes against thee, and thou hast no visible means of relief, how pertinently mayest thou sing the eleventh psalm? When there's no faith, nor truth, nor trust in men,

then I hope it is no hurt to sing the twelfth psalm, "Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth," &c. When wicked men flourish and the godly are afflicted, how proper is it to sing the 37th psalm, and meditate and apply those precious promises to confirm thy faith, and comfort thyself in a patient waiting upon God? If thy afflictions and affections are the same as David's and other holy men's were, thou mayest apply to thyself with much comfort such passages of the psalms as do particularly concern thee in thy condition; whatsoever it be, and so act the grace of God in thee.

If thou art a Christian, shouldest thou not admire and adore the attributes and excellencies of God and his Christ? And how canst thou do it better than in singing David's psalms? Wouldest thou (for instance) admire the work of God in exalting Jesus Christ to be a prince, and a Saviour? Sing the 8th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, & 99th psalms. Do the sufferings of Christ, and the fruits of them belong to thee? Then thou mayest well sing the 22nd psalm. Hast thou experience of God's support, supply, protection, direction? Then thou mayest sing the 23rd psalm, with many others. Doth it not concern us to admire the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in the works of creation and providence? If it do, why should we not sing the first part of the 19th psalm, and the 104th psalm, throughout? Hast thou any affection to the word of God, out of the experience thou hast had of the power of it on thy soul? Why should thou not sing the latter part of the 19th psalm, and any part of the 119th psalm? Hast thou any sense of sin, and wrath due to it? Why mayest thou not sing the 6th & 38th psalms? *Psalm 3*. "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me," &c. So may all God's people for the most part say. If thou art one of them, then there's thy condition. David, when he was straitened by his enemies, goes to God, and so takes courage. Go thou and do likewise, and then there's thy affection too the same as his was.

But how can we sing such passages as are imprecations against wicked men?

Even these maybe sung to good purpose if our hearts be in a good tune.

1. We may meditate on them with fear and trembling at the wrath of God that hangs over the heads of all impenitent sinners.

2. We may work our hearts to patience and contentation, notwithstanding the present prosperity of wicked men, in assured confidence that God will destroy them, and their foot shall slide in due time.

3. We may use them as prayers, not against our particular enemies, but against all the implacable and incurable enemies of Christ and his kingdom.

Now I cannot enough wonder that any Christian should be so much wanting to themselves in that heavenly exercise of singing psalms, which gives them so much advantage of acquainting themselves more and more with God, in sweet meditations on his infinite and most glorious excellencies. Indeed I do not wonder if some men care not for singing of psalms, when I consider the course of their conversations.

David's psalms were many of them penned for the use of God's people when they are persecuted, how shall they that are more like David's enemies, violent, deceitful, threatening, vexing, persecuting, and mocking, sing those psalms? They may well forbear to sing them, seeing there are such testimonies and evidences against their ungodly practices in them. We have some nowadays that will have no repentance, no humiliation, or sorrow for sin; others that slight the scriptures or written word; and 'tis no wonder these men should not care to sing David's psalms, being not able to abide the test of them, whilst their affections, actions, and opinions, are so contrary to them. David in the 84th psalm laments the want of publick ordinances. I marvel not that they who slight all ordinances, under a pretence of living above them, care not to sing that, or other psalms. Whatever some men may dream, I make no question but others have found God graciously revealing himself unto their souls in this exercise: yea, I believe that godly men (who are such indeed) have scarcely seen more of God in any exercise than in this. To my thinking, there is not a more lively resemblance of heaven upon earth than a company of godly Christians singing a psalm together.

But that which is most strange (and 'tis a hard case indeed) is this, that never a passage can be found in all the psalms which will suit with some men's affections or occasions. If some do not, yet methinks others might; and yet they that except against some (if I mistake not) refuse all; so that it seems there is nothing in them that will serve their turn, or suit with their conditions.

*Objection.* Yes, it will be said, there are some psalms, or parts of psalms, that suit well enough with our conditions, affections, and occasions, but that which fits us well enough, is nothing so fit for others.

1. There are several uses of the psalms, as there are of other scriptures; why may we not in singing as well as in hearing, apply to ourselves that which is most pertinent to our proper cases? And so those that are not in the same condition, may yet profitably sing the same psalm, even as they may hear the same sermon. Besides, all

the psalms, and every part of them, are fitted to the occasions of all God's people, so as there is nothing but ministers matter of sweet meditation, and praising God by a holy rejoicing in him.

I know not how well some psalms will suit with some men's affections or conditions. Once I am sure that God's people from the beginning of the world to this day, have had cause as to complain and pray, so to bless and praise the Lord in the very same manner, and upon the same grounds as David did. Wherefore I beseech all those that fear God, to do what becomes them, *viz.* now and then to comfort, and cheer, and encourage themselves and one another in psalms, "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually:" seek him in prayer, and seek him too in singing of psalms; say as Luther was wont upon occasion, "Come, Sirs, lets sing the 46th psalm, and fear nothing."

There are that would deal by us, as he that first made his enemy blaspheme God, and then presently stabbed him at the heart, that so he might kill both body and soul at once, and so take a brave revenge (as he called it.) So do these in a sort; they vex us sufficiently with seeing and hearing their ungodly and atheistical opinions and practices, and they would deprive us of our comfort in God, by singing psalms to his praise. Let's sing the 119th psalm however, and say, "It is time for thee Lord to work, for men have destroyed thy law." And so let's sing the twelfth psalm, and others, that thereby our hearts may be cheered, and we may be confirmed in faith to wait with patience upon our God, saying as is Psa. 48:14, "This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death."

I shall conclude this with what Perkins saith on the eleventh of the Hebrews; he asks the question, why we sing those psalms now, which were appointed for the use of the church in former times? and answers thus: "That the church in all ages consisted of a number of believers, and their faith is always one and the same; and this makes all that apprehend God's promises, to be like to one another in graces, meditations, dispositions, affections, desires, spiritual wants in the feeling and use of afflictions, in course of life and conversation, and in performance of duties to God and man, and therefore the same psalms, prayers, and meditations, are now as fit for the church in these days, and are said and sung with the same use and profit to the church in these days, as when they were made." Sure if it be a sufficient ground to reject singing of David's psalms, that they were penned for the use of God's people in former ages, I know no reason but that we may for the same reason take no notice of the other scriptures, and say, What do they concern us? But I rather think that there is no estate or condition wherein the people of God either are, or can be, by the Holy Ghost foreseeing the same, hath prepared and recorded some scripture-psalms suitable thereunto. And those psalms being chosen out according to the new occasions of God's people, and sung by them with new hearts, will ever be found new songs. Words of eternal truth (as one saith) are ever new, and ever old. Daily and hourly mercies are new mercies to renewed hearts, (*Lam. 3:23*, "His mercies are new every morning") and when they praise the Lord for those mercies, there's a new song of praise put into their mouths. And when God hath furnished us with psalms and songs framed by his own Spirit, to the purpose; nothing (for ought I know) but wretched ignorance and profaneness will neglect to use them.

The objection of singing psalms composed by ourselves and others I have already answered, and shewed the absurdity of such a practice, unless we had any of an extraordinary spirit; which if there be, let us once see it, and I make no question but we shall willingly acknowledge the gift of God in them.

A third use of singing David's psalms is a joyful praising of God, or expressing our joy in the Lord: when a man is merry, naturally, and of course (as we say) he will laugh, leap, sing and dance; as when a man is sorry, contrariwise he is sullen, sits still, hangs the head and saith nothing, *Psa. 126:2*, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." *Exod. 15:1*, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel." So Mary, and Zachary, and Simon, *Luke 1 & 2*, brake forth into songs upon the apprehension of God's wonderful goodness.

*Objection.* That was because the Spirit of God came upon them in an extraordinary manner.

We deny not but the Spirit of God was upon some of them in a more extraordinary manner; but yet it was not so upon them all, all the children of Israel that sang with Moses had not an extraordinary spirit, only they were for the time much affected with the work of God in their deliverance, and the destruction of the Egyptians. *2 Chron. 20:27,28*, so Jehoshaphat and the men of Judah came to Jerusalem with psalms and harps, and trumpets unto the house of the Lord (no question but there was singing also) when the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies; and yet no more extraordinary spirit on them than on God's people now upon the like occasion. Their practice was a precedent for God's people in all ages to do the like, whenever their hearts are enlarged in the apprehension of God's goodness, to break forth into singing, and an holy rejoicing before the Lord. How do we answer the goodness of God unto us, if there be not affections and expressions suitable to his dispensations? We all allow shooting off great guns, ringing of bells, &c. and why not as well singing of psalms?

When we come to the congregation, one end of our singing is to express our joy in the Lord for such mercies as his word and sacraments and means of graces, and that God hath given us his Sabbath and such solemn times; and therefore we come before him with singing, that so we may praise the Lord with gladness of heart. The 100th psalm is called a psalm of praise, and the 95th psalm begins thus: "O come let us sing unto the Lord," &c. If you read the 96th, 97th, & 98th you will find many expressions to the same purpose. Whatever were the occasion of penning those psalms, it is clear that the Holy Ghost in them had respect to the gospel-times, when all the ends of the earth should "see the salvation of God." *Heb. 4*, the apostle shews it plainly of the 95th psalm, that the Holy Ghost in it speaks of the times after Christ was come in the flesh. Now if the promise, and their expectation of those glorious gospel days, did so rejoice their hearts, how much more should we be affected, so as to sing and rejoice at a higher rate than they did? How comely and pleasant a thing is it to sing a psalm (as Christ and his disciples did) after our receiving the sacrament, when God hath honoured us so much, as to admit us unto his table, and given in the tokens and pledges of his love to our souls? And after sermon too, why should we not sing and rejoice when we have understood the good word of God declared to us by his messengers? *Neh. 8:12*, Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites willed the people to rejoice upon such an occasion; and good reason, since the word of God is sweet to every soul that savours it; and so our Sabbaths are special times of rejoicing in God, because the opportunities of publick ordinances are renewed upon us.

*Objection.* But you sing all days alike, fasting and feasting days, without any difference.

For answer to this question (which some think unanswerable) I acknowledge that singing is a most proper expression of joy, *James 5:13*, "Is any merry, let him sing." But it will never follow from that place, that we must not sing when we are sorry; for then it will as well follow that when we are not afflicted we must not pray. That place (I say) will infer the one as well as the other.

I do not say that all psalms are fit for all occasions, but there must be a choice made; and to make that choice, there is some understanding more than ordinary required in him that appoints the psalms to be sung.

3. As singing is proper in times of mirth, so it is not altogether improper in times of mourning; and though this may seem strange, yet it is most true, and I prove it thus. Because God's people were wont to lament themselves and others in songs; so Jeremiah lamented the sad estate of Judah. David's psalms were penned in times of great distress and danger, as appears by the many doleful complaints in them. The 102nd psalm is entitled, "A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed," &c. and 130th psalm begins, "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord." To clear it yet further, give me leave a little to discourse the nature of musick, which is somewhat strange in this respect, that it will suit with different, yea contrary affections. Some philosophers conceived the soul to be an harmony, once the soul of the world is a symmetry of all the parts made in number, weight, and measure. Certainly of all sensible things, there is none so much affects the soul as melodious sounds; I say, nothing affects the soul so much, be a man merry or sorry. If he be merry, it will provoke him to more mirth, raise and rouse his spirits more than they were before. Therefore singing is very proper when we are joyed, and would praise the Lord with gladness of heart. If a man be sad, musick will set it on, and make him more melancholy then he was before, so some understand *Prov. 25:20*, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart." I conceive the meaning to be this: If when a man is in heaviness, one should come to him in a lightsome, gamesome manner, (as if Job's friends had brought minstrels and musick with them) he would vex and distemper, and increase his grief the more. Certainly musick, as it may be ordered, will provoke mourning; hence the custom grew of solemnising funerals with musick. So when the ruler's daughter was dead, there were minstrels among others; and if any say that was to allay, and not to increase their grief, I desire them to look, *Jer. 9:17,18*, and there they may see that there were cunning women, who professed an art of mourning, and were hired of purpose, by their mournful ditties to enhance affections of that kind in others. So *2 Chron. 35:25*, The singing-men and women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations. For certain, a doleful sad ditty sadly sung, will never make any laugh, unless it be an errant fool. So a fit psalm (a penitential psalm you may call it if you please) sung to a sad tune, is as apt to melt and move our hearts upon a day of humiliation, as any exercise we can use, and an apt expression also of such affections as should be in us upon such an occasion. Some have sung for sorrow, as David penned and sang many psalms when his heart was as full of grief and anguish as it could hold, and so he eased and breathed his heart by pouring it out before the Lord in a doleful song, lamenting his sad condition. And why may not we as well lament our own and others sad conditions, in singing of David's psalms? Some of which you know are sad complaints of his miseries and sufferings, mixed with earnest prayers for deliverance. Sure David was not very merry when he sang many of his psalms; whence I gather we may sing even when we are sorry, and so lament and bemoan ourselves before the Lord.

Besides, if our hearts be very sad indeed, singing may revive them, since all utterance is an ease to any grief. So some conceive that Christ chose to sing a psalm after supper, thereby to cheer up his own heart, and his disciples also. Musick certainly will allay passions, *1 Sam. 16:14*, "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul,"



v. 23, and when David played on his harp, "the evil spirit departed from him." Not that there is any efficacy in musick to drive away devils, but because in a natural way it disposed and settled Saul for ease, by raising up his heart and spirit out of his melancholy dumps, tempering his rage, and moderating his griefs and discontents by which the devil took advantage to drive him into frenzied fits and furies. If by "spirit" in that place, we understand (as some) only that which is called *Motus animorum*, as a spirit of fear, a spirit of jealousy, &c. then questionless the musick had a natural efficacy to recover Saul out of his melancholy moods. *2 Kings 3:15*, The prophet Elisha finding some distemper in his spirit, occasioned by the presence of an idolatrous king, and the present distress of God's people, called for a musician to cheer and compose his spirits, that he might be the better fitted for prophecy. Some have conceived and said that the spirit of prophesy never came upon a sad soul. How true that is, I leave others to judge. Nor shall I contend if any say there was somewhat extraordinary and supernatural in those cases. However, this I think may be gathered from them, that musick hath a virtue in it to compose, and quiet, and refresh, and cheer the spirit of a man when he is overgone with melancholy. So God's people in times of distress and danger, when they feel themselves too much dejected and sadded, may cheer themselves up by singing a psalm together. As for our singing on fasting days (which some are offended at) we say as before, 'tis not so much to make ourselves merry, as to move and melt our hearts. 'Tis no absurdity; nor impossibility neither, for Christians to sing with tears in their eyes.

When a day of thanksgiving comes, we sing to another tune, in way of rejoicing, exalting and triumphing in God our Saviour. On Sabbath and lecture days we sing partly to express our joy in God for giving us such opportunities and seasons of spiritual edification, by the use of his ordinances; and partly to compose our spirits, and so fit them for hearing the word preached. And this I conceive to be the reason why commonly we sing a psalm before sermon.

## SERMON V.

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing," &c.  
Ephesians 5:19.

One end (amongst others) of our singing of psalms is (as I shewed formerly) a joyful praising of God; or expressing of our joy in the Lord, as God's servants were wont to do when God in his providence gave them occasion and matter of rejoicing, by deliverances, victories, or any other mercies. I shall now add to what hath been said, that it becomes God's people when they come before him in publick, to serve the Lord with joy and an holy rejoicing; and for this end they must sing psalms; there being no exercise more proper to express our joy in the Lord. God calls his people to rejoice evermore, *1 Thess. 5:16*, and *Phil. 4:4*, to rejoice alway; but more especially when they come before him in the use of his ordinances, *Psa. 105:3*, "Glory ye in his holy name, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." *Deut. 12:12*, "Ye shall rejoice before the Lord," &c. *Deut. 14:26*, "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice," *Deut. 16:10,11*, "Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks, [i.e. Pentecost,] with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hands, and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God," &c. And *Deut. 28:47*, there is a threatening of judgement for this, that they served not the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart, &c. Not a filthy or fleshly rejoicing according to the course of this world, but an holy and heavenly, such as when the very heart and soul is ravished with a sense of God's goodness. And this, as it doth very much help us in the duties we have to do, so it is expressly required, *Psa. 100:2*, "Serve the Lord with gladness, come before his presence with singing." *Psalm 92*, which is (as the title shews) a psalm for the Sabbath, the prophet gives this as a reason of the joyful solemnity, *v.4*, "For thou Lord hast made me glad through thy work, I will triumph in the works of thy hands." The great work and business of the Sabbath, is to magnify God in regard of his great works, *viz.* Creation and Providence, but especially the great work of reconciling the world, and redeeming sinners from death and hell by Jesus Christ. This great work was completed on the day of Christ's resurrection, which was the beginning of his exaltation, and then it becomes us to rejoice in the kingdom, power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, singing to the Lord, "because he hath done marvellous things;" and saying, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

I say, 'tis suitable and seasonable to rejoice and be merry on the Lord's day, and therefore to sing, and so express our joy in the Lord, who hath made us to rejoice in his salvation. God loves not to see us humpish and melancholy, but cheerful and joyful in his service. Let us therefore sing and say, "The Lord reigneth." One gives this as one end and use of our singing of psalms, *viz.* that the Spirit dwelling in us, may be as it were excited and stirred up to put forth his power more effectually and plentifully; and grounds it upon my text, which (saith he) imports two things: first, that singing is an effect of the Spirit., and secondly, that the Spirit is stirred up in us by singing. That which he saith, to my thinking, hath much reason in it; for why may not singing excite and stir up the spirit and the graces of it in Christians, as well as the performance of other duties? They that have grace therefore do duty, that by exercising their graces they may improve them. Now let such as have any grace of God in them, consider how in doing this duty as it ought to be done, the graces of God (especially faith and hope) may be set on work, whilst we seriously meditate on the promises, and other passages of David's psalms.

Once more, a psalm is good sometimes to comfort our hearts when we are under affliction, as I hinted before, how Paul and Silas sang when they were under extreme sufferings; and Luther would encourage himself and others when he heard any bad news of any attempts against the gospel and such as professed it, saying, "Let us sing the 46th psalm, and let them do their worst." Indeed that's a psalm will cheer a man's spirits if he can sing it with understanding and grace in his heart. So did the primitive Christians comfort themselves in prison by singing of psalms.

Lastly, singing of psalms is an excellent way to praise God, and, speak good of his name. Many psalms (you know) are full of God's praises, and set forth the wondrous works that he hath done, so as he may have the glory of them. To praise God, and bless his name, is the highest and most excellent service we can do on earth; it comes nearest to the exercise of the saints in heaven, who are always praising God in the admiration of his infinite and incomprehensible glory. Now singing of psalms is an excellent way of praising God. One saith that in singing there is a more copious and ample profession of piety. Not as if God who is a Spirit, were delighted with any sensible thing, as musick or melodious tunes. But yet God is (as I may say) more delighted when we are more ample and pathetical in pouring out our souls to him in praise. *2 Sam. 6*, David (it is said) danced before the Lord with all his might, and then Michel scorned and flouted him, a some do us nowadays for our singing of psalms, which yet is but a praising the Lord with all our might. And indeed, to speak as the thing is, the glory of God is held forth more illustriously in singing of psalms (as one observes) because the praises of God are celebrated with greater attention and affection than if they were barely received with a lower voice. Wherefore the Levites upon all occasions sung the praises of the Lord, and so did all God's people also. No prince (as he saith) or great commander but thinks himself more honoured if the great things they have

done be commemorated and set forth in song, *1 Sam. 18:6, 7*. So the women went out to meet Saul with singing and with instruments of musick. Now our great champion and captain general hath conquered sin and Satan, and all our spiritual enemies, we give him not the glory due unto his name, unless we celebrate the victory with songs of deliverance.

That none of old sung, but such as had an extraordinary spirit, is false, as I shewed formerly, *Exod. 15*. All the children of Israel had not such a spirit, though Moses and Miriam had. In Hezekiah's time, the Levites sung praises to the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer; and so no question they did in Jehoshaphat's time also. As for the gift of psalms in the primitive churches, it went with the gift of tongues, and both are long since ceased; so as we may argue as well that we must not say, because we have not the gift of tongues, as that we must not sing because we have not the gift of psalms. Besides, we find no mention in scripture of any church officer for compiling of psalms, as for the ministry of the word and prayer. Nor hath God inspired any with a gift of psalmistry to suit the occasions of the churches from Sabbath to Sabbath. We find neither ordinance appointing, nor providence granting it, nor any reason to silence David's psalms that others may be attended. We know who audited them, and we know too (which I wish may be duly considered) that some of them are proper to gospel times. If any question it, let them read the 89th psalm, and see whether it be not more proper for God's people now than in the times of the Old Testament.

But how may we sing David's, psalms so as to attain those ends?

First, we must have grace in our hearts, or a gracious frame of spirit, such as David had. Singing praise to God is an exercise becoming saints, who alone can do it so as to please God, and profit themselves in it, as was shewed before.

2. Secondly, Sing none but spiritual songs, such as David's psalms are, and others composed by holy men of God, who spake as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. These are altogether spiritual for the author, for the matter, and for the end and use of them.

May we not sing any other song composed by a common gift, so long as it is spiritual for the matter?

It may be of ill consequence many ways, to shut out David's psalms and take in our own, as:

First, we may mistake even in the matter; whereas we are sure there is no such mistake in David's psalms.

Secondly, some perhaps may not like so well of other composures, whereas none but an atheist will find fault with the psalms that were penned by the spirit of God; that I say not, (what was said formerly), no man's composures can be answerable to those of God's Spirit. I rather think that such psalms (if any have them) should be fitter for their own private use than for the churches of God; though for my part, I do not encourage any to the private use of them, with a neglect of David's psalms, but rather dissuade them from it. For other songs (always supposed that there be no vanity, nor filthiness, nor scurrility, nor reflectings upon other men's good name, which all Christians must be far from) they may be for honest delight and recreation, for ought I know, even as a man may play a lesson on a lute or other instrument to refresh his spirits.

Thirdly, Christians had need to watch their hearts exceedingly, more than ordinarily when they are singing a psalm. It requires a good measure of the word and Spirit to pray in the spirit, but more to sing in the Spirit, because (as one saith) our senses being delighted with the melody, are apt to steal away our hearts from spiritual fervency. For certainly we are exceeding apt to be taken with the melody, and in the interim neglect our hearts, so as our spirits shall not work and be doing when our tongues are a singing. To remember this, lets sing with understanding and attention of mind, in order to which it were a great happiness and help to devotion, if we knew the mind and meaning of the holy Ghost in all that we sing.

What if a man understand not the meaning of what he sings?

He cannot then sing in every respect as he should do. But yet I shall offer this to your consideration, not peremptorily; asserting it to the prejudice of any that may be otherwise minded. We all grant reading of the scriptures, and hearing them read, to be an holy exercise, and that which God hath enjoined us. Yet when we read the scriptures, I suppose we many times meet with that which we do not so well understand, shall we not therefore read them at all? Or may we not for all this read them with profit, whilst we understand many things which we read, and by reading them again and again come to more understanding of the mind of God in them? And why may we not sing psalms for instruction and admonition that we may understand them? If thou meditate seriously, God may enlighten thee in the very singing.

We read and hear to get more understanding, though sometimes we read and hear what for the present we understand not, and so (for ought I know) we may sing also. Some, I am confident, have found by experience, that in singing of psalms they have come to more understanding of some passages than ever they had before. But what psalm is there that any understanding Christian knows not the main scope and sense of it, though he understand not every particular passage and expression in it? Certainly he that hath a gracious heart cannot be ignorant of the main drift and scope of any of David's psalms. As we must sing with understanding, so must we sing with affection also, acting and exercising the grace of God that is in us, according as the matter that is sung gives us occasion. Sometimes we are to act faith and hope in God, sometimes holy desires after God, sometimes holy rejoicing in God, and sometimes holy fear and trembling before God. 'Tis not enough that we have grace, but we must act it. As for instance, when we sing that passage in *Psalms 119:5*, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." The desires of our souls should be such as David's were, to obey God in everything to the utmost, when we sing, "O how I love thy law," &c. Our souls should be even ravished with holy affections towards the word, and if we find not such ardent motions in our spirits, there's a word of admonition to mind us what we should be, *Psa. 73:1*, "Yet God is good to Israel," &c. In singing this we learn to act faith as the psalmist did, and stir up ourselves to lay hold on God, especially when we have any temptation to distrust. As in prayer and praise we act faith and other graces, express and shew forth good desires, and other holy affections, so let us in singing of psalms. For questionless in this duty we have occasions enough of so doing, whilst such heavenly matter is suggested to us for sweet meditation, and solacing ourselves in God and his word.

Some may ask, whether it be not good when we are at our work to sing a psalm, and so to exercise our hearts in meditation on heavenly things.

Though I had rather men should sing a psalm, than do worse, yet I dare not commend such a practice, nor advise to it, for this reason, *viz.* to sing a psalm as it ought to be done, is work enough, so as a man need to do nothing else; and if it be said that this will help us to meditate on something that is good, I answer that if meditation on some good matter were all the end of singing, this were somewhat, but there is more in the matter; and to say truth, singing a psalm is such duty as will require the whole man, there being no good exercise where in our hearts are more apt to miscarry than in this.

Again, thou must observe and watch in this duty, as in prayer, what answers God gives in to thee, and how thy spirit closes with the heavenly matter that is sung, so as thou art raised, comforted, cheered, confirmed, or humbled. As there is a return of prayers, so of praises too, and in every duty and ordinance there is marrow and fatness, if our souls are well disposed to relish and receive it.

In one word, this is an excellent service, and therefore the more difficult, so as thou hast need to keep thy heart with a bridle, as David resolved to keep his mouth, *Psa. 39:1*, or otherwise thou wilt hardly rule it when thou art in this duty.

In order to singing with understanding and good affection, I advise all you that can, to look on when you sing. Our practice is (you know) for one to read a line, and then all to sing it, which some quarrel at, and I for my part wish we had no need so to do, for questionless it were far better if all had books, and could read, or else had learned the psalms by heart. But if singing be a duty, and we cannot do it without this help, I know no reason we have to reject it. They that cannot read themselves, may, and ought to hear others read. Nor is this reading the psalm an unwarrantable invention of men brought into the worship of God, as some have said, but only a necessary help to it, as pulpits are necessary helps unto the minister in speaking, and so are galleries and scaffolds to the people in hearing. We must distinguish the immediate spiritual means of worship from such helps as serve only more remotely to the sense of hearing. Now our reading the psalm that is sung, is but only a remote help to the sense of hearing, which we use only for necessities sake, because many cannot read the psalm themselves. Though I advise and entreat all that can read to use their books, and so help their understandings; for when a line only is read, the sense remains imperfect, whereupon some have thought it better (and I am not against it) that two lines be read together.

2. Again, I do heartily wish there were some amendment of our English metre in two or three particulars. First, that all the psalms might run in such metre as all our people are able to sing. And secondly, that some uncouth expressions and obsolete words were altered; as for other faults in the translation, they would be chiefly looked after; though I must profess, I think the faults are not so many or so great as some men would make them. There are, no doubt, but too many things which I stand not to justify, but wish with all my heart they were well amended; yet this must be considered, that nothing can be done by men, but it will be imperfect. Their arguing therefore is not so good to my thinking, who will not sing David's psalms because of some flaws in the translation. For my part, I know no translation of the Bible but hath its mistakes, and I suppose we all look upon translations as imperfect, and yet we do not upon that ground refuse to read the scriptures, That there are faults I grant, but that they are such as should cause us to forbear singing till they be amended, I deny.

Some have not stuck to say there are lies in our singing psalms, but their word is no slander. Though there be mistakes, it will not follow there are lies. I believe there is no translation of the Bible but there are some mistakes in it, and yet 'tis foul language to say there are lies. For the mistakes, I heartily wish them amended; and though I do much approve of their excellent pains who have altogether changed and altered our English metre, yet considering our people have been used to these, I conceive it far better for the present necessity to let them alone with some alteration in some things, such as I spake of even now.

3. Again, there ought to be a choice of psalms according as occasion requires, for as they were penned upon occasion, and are some of them intended more especially for one use, and some for another, so there should be a wise choice made of psalms to be sung, according as our necessities and occasions respectively call for. The 92nd psalm is entitled a psalm for the Sabbath; and if you consider the subject matter of it, and many others that set forth the works of God, they will appear very fit to be sung on the Sabbath-day. As the second, and eighth and other psalms that speak of the kingdom of Christ; the 32nd, 34th, & 37th &c., that treat of the work of creation and providence; so the 119th psalm, that shews what is the excellent use of God's word, and what affection we should bear towards it. At times of humiliation such psalms are to be sung, as may seem to express our sense of sin, our trembling at the wrath of God, or that set forth the calamities and sufferings of God's people. At times of rejoicing choose such psalms as mention the marvellous works of God in victories, deliverances, and other mercies shewed unto his people.

If thus there be a wise choice made, I know not any occasion the people of God have at any time, but there may be a psalm found to answer it; and then if God's people can with one mind and one mouth glorify God, what a pleasant and comely thing is it? Such a resemblance of heaven, as hardly a better can be found upon earth. Only let our care be that our hearts be well tuned, for that's it that makes melody in the ears of the Lord. You know it is not so comely, when in the congregation some sing out of tune, but the greatest absurdity of all is when our hearts are not in tune. Though (as I have shewed) the impiety and profaneness of some doth not hinder the acceptance of others, yet 'tis more desirable, and that which we should heartily wish, that all could so do this duty, as therein to please God and profit our soul's. Surely if we sing as we ought, somewhat will stick by us. Many sing and make a noise, and that's all, so they hear and pray to as little purpose, yet others do these duties to their great advantage and edification in grace and gracious practice. If admiring God, speaking good of his name, rejoicing in his goodness, and other his glorious infinite excellencies, sweet meditation on the promises, fervent expression of our good desires, humbling, comforting and cheering our hearts, be good exercises, let us not give over singing, since there is no one psalm, or part of a psalm, but will minister occasion of doing one of these. I do the rather persuade to it, because I observe many will not open their mouths to sing in the congregation, and most neglect this duty in their families, are not so frequent in it as Christians were wont to be. And I observe withal, that few thrive well after they once neglect or scruple singing of psalms. They begin at this commonly, but seldom end here, but proceed from evil to worse, till they come at last to live above ordinances and duties (as they call it) but indeed live without them, and so live like beasts in the shape of men. Let others think as they please, I never knew Christians thrive better in grace and knowledge, than when repeating of sermons, singing of psalms and such like exercises were more in fashion then they have been of late. And let it be considered in what juncture of time singing of psalms hath been so much denied and spoken against, even when all the ordinances of God, and all the duties of his worship have been as much slighted by too many amongst us. Here (as I said even now) men begin, but seldom or never stay, but go further to question and decry all ordinances. They begin here (as I conceive) for this reason, because wrangling wits have some more specious and fair pretences whereby they can more easily entangle simple and unstable souls, and so make them to scruple at this duty sooner than at any other. And to say as the thing is, the ignorance of most concerning the nature, end, and use of this duty, hath given the greatest advantage unto others to seduce and draw them away from it. If that which hath been spoken upon this occasion may convince or confirm or direct any, I have my end, and let God have the glory. Only hear what a reverend man saith in this case, "It is (saith he) the misery of this present age, that those ordinances which men have used either without the knowledge of their true grounds, or without any sense of comfort in and by them, or without love to them, in the hour of temptation they have cast them aside, and so forsaken the holy institutions of God, to please themselves in their own imaginations."

Consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

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