# Preface to Volume IV (Psalms 88 - 110)

THE labour of compiling the notes of this volume may be judged of from the fact that upon my writing to one of the most scholarly men of this age for a little assistance in my researches upon that well-known Psalm, the 103rd I received a note commencing, "I have hunted through my books, and have been surprised to find that, with the exception of what is universally known, there is so little about Psalm 103." This most generous-hearted brother had the warmest zeal and love to stimulate his investigations, yet this was the result, and had I repeated the experiment upon other Biblical students, and changed the Psalm, I should in very few instances have received any other reply. Hence, gentle reader, your patience has been exercised in waiting for Vol. IV of the Treasury, and my toil has been correspondingly increased. Here, however, is the volume, as portly as its fellows, and I hope not inferior to any of them; at least, I can honestly say, if it be so, it is not the fault of my endeavours, for I have bated no jot of energy, spared no cost, and withheld no time, though this last has been a very precious commodity with me, and has frequently been snatched from rest which fatigue demanded, and which prudence might have wisely yielded.

Nor is this the only reason for the time which this volume has occupied, though we judge it to be quite sufficient, but we have desired to complete this work at our best, and not to allow the close of it to exhibit signs of fatigue and decline. We have often sat down to write our comment upon a Psalm, and have risen from the task because we did not feel at home at it. It is of no use compelling the mind, its productions in such a case are like forced fruits, disappointing and devoid of flavour. We like to write after the manner of JOHN BUNYAN, who said, "As I pulled, it came," and we prefer that the pulling should be as gentle as possible. So it has happened that we have lingered for months over a Psalm, feeling quite unfit to enter upon it. Especially was this the case over the hundred and ninth Psalm, which we sometimes think we never should have been able to handle at all if it had not been for the Bulgarian massacres, which threw us into such a state of righteous indignation that while we were musing the fire burned, and we melted the sentences, and wished that we could pour them boiling hot upon the monsters. Later tidings make us feel that the other side might well be favoured with similar visitations. Other Psalms have had their difficulties, though none to be compared with CIX. The grand Cosmos of Psalm CIV was not to be dismissed in a few days; even now, after laying our best efforts at its feet, we feel dissatisfied with the poor result. However, we have done our best, and have grappled honestly with all hard places. We are so far through our labour, and look for a full deliverance. If some of our friends have had to wait, we hope they will be gainers by obtaining fruit all the riper and better from coming in due season. The book is finished, however, and with it two-thirds of my allotted task, for which may God be praised.

I am the more surprised at the general paucity of sermons and comments upon this portion of the book of Psalms, because it contains some of the more notable compositions, such as Psalms 84, 90, 91, 92, and 103. These and some of the others are so rich that, had several volumes existed illustrating any one of them, it would not have been a matter of wonder. When I have found one sermon upon a passage, it has generally been easy to collect a score upon the same; preachers evidently run so much in ruts that they leave a large portion of the Scriptures without exposition. This suggests many thoughts, which, as they will naturally occur to every thoughtful reader, I need not enlarge upon in a mere preface, but this much may be said, we trust, without giving offence--if the habit of expounding the passages of Scripture which are read in public worship should ever become more common, the preparation for doing this in an interesting and instructive manner would greatly tend to enlarge the range of texts discussed from the pulpit, and would almost inevitably lead to the people's receiving from their teachers more of God's word and less of man's, and this would be no small benefit.

In this volume, as in all the rest, we have had the indefatigable assistance of Mr. J. L. KEYS, who, in addition to a vast amount of copying, has visited various libraries and museums to select from rare works which could not be found in any other places. Our venerable friend, the Rev. GEORGE ROGERS, has all along contributed his invaluable sermon-outlines, for which we are deeply grateful. Mr. GRACEY, the classical tutor of the Pastors College, assisted us through the earlier Psalms of this volume in making selections from the Latin authors, and when he was obliged to decline, owing to the pressure of his engagements, his place was ably filled by the Rev. E. T. GIBSON, late of Crayford, to whom we also owe certain notes from German authors. I think it right to repeat the intimation that I am not to be understood as endorsing all the passages quoted from other authors. The names are given, and each writer bears his own responsibility.

Only one word of self-defence shall further delay the courteous reader. A critic has so greatly mistaken my meaning as to find in the title to the Sermon Notes a specimen of human vanity. I am amazed at his discovery. I do not pretend to be entirely free from that vice, but no trace of it is discoverable there by my keenest and most conscientious inspection; on the contrary, I called those outlines "Hints to the Village Preacher," because I did not think those of them which are my own to be good enough to offer to my brethren in the regular ministry, but hoped that they might aid those good men, engaged all the week in business, who are generally, but I think incorrectly, called lay-preachers, and are not supposed to have the facilities of time and books which fall to the lot of the regular ministry. I thought this somewhat modest on my part, and did not see how it could be misunder stood. Our village ministers are among the most thoughtful and usefu of our brotherhood, and I never dreamed of casting a slur upon them; as, however, I have been misunderstood, I will now, without altering the title, take higher ground, and say that I trust the hints may be useful to any preachers in city or country; for the other day I met one of the most eminent metropolitan divines, and he most kindly thanked me for having suggested to him by a hint in the Treasury a sermon which he hoped had been most acceptable to his congregation, and he remarked that there was no need to be so bashful about the aforesaid "hints." I have followed his advice, and may now, perhaps, be misunderstood again. It is a small matter to be unjustly censured, but still I would not even seem to despise brethren in more obscure spheres, for it is the last thing in my heart.

For the generous reviews which the former volumes have received on all hands I am deeply grateful. I commit this fourth volume to the press, praying that it may, according to the Lord's will, tend to the upbuilding of his church and his own glory.

-C. H. Spurgeon