
For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.

PSALM 31: 1 In you, LORD, I take refuge. Let me never be disappointed. Deliver me in your righteousness.

The psalmist, with strong confidence in God, in a time of distress prays earnestly for deliverance, Psa 31:1-5. He expresses his abhorrence of evil, Psa 31:6; gratefully mentions former interpositions of God, Psa 31:7, Psa 31:8; continues to detail the miseries of his case, Psa 31:9-18; points out the privileges of them that fear God, Psa 31:19, Psa 31:20; shows that God had heard his prayers, notwithstanding he had given himself over for lost, Psa 31:21, Psa 31:22; calls on the saints to love God, and to have confidence in him, because he preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer, Psa 31:23, Psa 31:24.

This Psalm contains no notes of time or place, to help us to ascertain when, where, or on what account it was written. Nor have we any certain evidence relative to the author: it might have been written by David during his persecution by Saul. Some think Jeremiah to have been the author: the thirteenth verse begins exactly with the same words as Jer 20:10. There are several other apparent references to passages in the book of Jeremiah, which shall be produced in the notes.

Verse 1

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust - I confide in thee for every good I need: let me not be confounded by not receiving the end of my faith, the supply of my wants, and the salvation of my soul.

PSALM 31: 2 Bow down your ear to me. Deliver me speedily. Be to me a strong rock, a house of defence to save me.

Verse 2

Bow down thine ear - Listen to my complaint. Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my feebleness is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying, that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude.

Strong rock - Rocks, rocky places, or caves in the rocks, were often strong places in the land of Judea. To such natural fortifications allusions are repeatedly made by the Hebrew poetic writers.

PSALM 31: 3 For you are my rock and my fortress, therefore for your name's sake lead me and guide me.

PSALM 31: 4 Pluck me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, for you are my stronghold.

Verse 4

Pull me out of the net - They have hemmed me in on every side, and I cannot escape but by miracle.

PSALM 31: 5 Into your hand I commend my spirit. You redeem me, LORD, God of truth.

Verse 5

Into thine hand I commit my spirit - These words, as they stand in the Vulgate, were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used in all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf. In forms of prayer for sick and dying persons, these words were frequently inserted in Latin, though all the rest of the prayer was English; for it was supposed there was something sovereign in the language itself. But let not the abuse of such words hinder their usefulness. For an ejaculation nothing can be better; and when the pious or the tempted with confidence use them, nothing can exceed their effect. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." I give my soul to thee, for it is thine: thou hast redeemed it by thy blood; it is safe nowhere but in thy hand. Thou hast promised to save them that trust in thee; thou art the God of truth, and canst not deny thyself. But these words are particularly sanctified, or set apart for this purpose, by the use made of them by our blessed Lord just before he expired on the cross. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Πατερ, εις χειρας σου παρατιθεμαι το πνευμα μου· 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,'" Luk 23:46. The rest of the verse was not suitable to the Savior of the world, and therefore he omits it; but it is suitable to us who have been redeemed by that sacrificial death. St. Stephen uses nearly the same words, and they were the last that he uttered. Act 7:59.

PSALM 31: 6 I hate those who regard lying vanities, but I trust in the LORD.

Verse 6

I have hated them - That is, I have abominated their ways. Idolaters are the persons of whom David speaks.

I trust in the Lord - While they trust in vanities vain things; (for an idol is nothing in the world); and in lying vanities; (for much is promised and nothing given); I trust in Jehovah, who is God all-sufficient, and is my Shepherd, and therefore I shall lack no good thing.

PSALM 31: 7 I will be glad and rejoice in your loving kindness, for you have seen my affliction. You have known my soul in adversities.

Verse 7

Thou hast known my soul in adversities - When all forsook me; when none could help me; when I could not save my own life; when my enemies were sure that I could not escape; then I found thee to be my Friend and Supporter. When friend, so called, finds it convenient not to know his friend in affliction and poverty, then thou didst acknowledge me as thine own, all worthless as I was. Human

friendships may fail; but the Friend of sinners never fails. Cicero defines a real friend, Amicus certus in re incerta cernitor: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Reader, such a Friend is the Lord.

PSALM 31: 8 You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy. You have set my feet in a large place.

Verse 8

Thou hast set my foot in a large room - Many hair-breadth escapes David had for his life; at that time especially when, playing before Saul, the furious king took a spear and endeavored to pierce him through the body, but he escaped and got to the deserts. Here God, who had saved his life, set his feet in a large room. The seventh and eighth verses speak of what God had done previously for him.

PSALM 31: 9 Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am in distress. My eye, my soul, and my body waste away with grief.

Verse 9

Mine eye is consumed - He now returns, and speaks of his present situation. Grief had brought many tears from his eyes, many agonies into his soul, and many distressful feelings into his whole frame.

My soul and my belly - The belly is often taken for the whole body. But the term belly or bowels, in such a case as this, may be the most proper; for in distress and misery, the bowels being the most tender part, and in fact the very seat of compassion, they are often most affected. In Greek the word σπλαγχνον signifies a bowel, and σπλαγχνιζομαι signifies to be moved with compassion; to feel misery in the bowels at the sight of a person in pain and distress.

PSALM 31: 10 For my life is spent with sorrow, my years with sighing. My strength fails because of my iniquity. My bones are wasted away.

Verse 10

My life is spent with grief - My life is a life of suffering and distress, and by grief my days are shortened. Grief disturbs the functions of life, prevents the due concoction of food, injures the digestive organs, destroys appetite, impairs the nervous system, relaxes the muscles, induces morbid action in the animal economy, and hastens death. These effects are well expressed in the verse itself.

My years with sighing - אָנַח anachah. This is a mere natural expression of grief; the very sounds which proceed from a distressed mind; an-ach-ah! common, with little variation, to all nations, and

nearly the same in all languages. The och-och-on of the Irish is precisely the same sound, and the same sense. Thousands of beauties of this kind are to be found in the sacred language.

PSALM 31: 11 Because of all my adversaries I have become utterly contemptible to my neighbours, A fear to my acquaintances. Those who saw me on the street fled from me.

Verse 11

I was a reproach - When proscribed at the court of Saul, my enemies triumphed, and loaded me with execrations; my neighbors considered me as a dangerous man, now deservedly driven from society; my acquaintance, who knew me best, were afraid to hold any communication with me; and they who saw me in my exile avoided me as if affected with a contagious disorder,

PSALM 31: 12 I am forgotten from their hearts like a dead man. I am like broken pottery.

Verse 12

I am forgotten as a dead man - I am considered as a person adjudged to death. I am like a broken vessel-like a thing totally useless.

PSALM 31: 13 For I have heard the slander of many, terror on every side, while they conspire together against me, they plot to take away my life.

Verse 13

I have heard the slander of many - To this and the two foregoing verses the reader may find several parallels; Jer 18:18 to the end of Jer 19:1-15., and ten first verses of chapter 20: This has caused several to suppose that Jeremiah was the author of this Psalm.

PSALM 31: 14 But I trust in you, LORD. I said, "You are my God."

Verse 14

But I trusted in thee - Hitherto thou hast been my Helper, and thou art my God; I have taken thee for my eternal portion.

PSALM 31: 15 My times are in your hand. Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

Verse 15

My times are in thy hand - The events of my life are under thy control. No danger can happen to me without thy foresight; thou seest what is prepared for or meditated against me; thou canst therefore deliver me from mine enemies.

PSALM 31: 16 Make your face to shine on your servant. Save me in your loving kindness.

Verse 16

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant - Only let me know that thou art reconciled to and pleased with me, and then, come what will, all must be well.

Save me for thy mercies' sake - Literally, Save me in thy mercy.

PSALM 31: 17 Let me not be disappointed, LORD, for I have called on you. Let the wicked be disappointed. Let them be silent in Sheol.

Verse 17

Let the wicked be ashamed - Those who traduce my character and lay snares for my life; let them be confounded.

PSALM 31: 18 Let the lying lips be mute, which speak against the righteous insolently, with pride and contempt.

Verse 18

Let the lying lips be put to silence - As to my enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices. See Jer 18:18.

PSALM 31: 19 Oh how great is your goodness, which you have laid up for those who fear you, which you have worked for those who take refuge in you, before the sons of men!

Verse 19

O how great is thy goodness - God's goodness is infinite; there is enough for all. enough for each, enough for evermore. It is laid up where neither devils nor men can reach it, and it is laid up for them that fear the Lord; therefore every one who trembles at his word, may expect all he needs from this Fountain that can never be dried up.

Which thou hast wrought - Thou hast already prepared it; it is the work of thy own hands; thou hast provided it and proportioned it to the necessities of men, and all who trust in thee shall have it. And for them especially it is prepared who trust in thee before men - who boldly confess thee amidst a crooked and perverse generation.

PSALM 31: 20 In the shelter of your presence you will hide them from the plotting of man. You will keep them secretly in a dwelling away from the strife of tongues.

Verse 20

Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence - בִּסְתֵר פְּנֵיךָ besether paneycha, "With the covering of thy countenance." Their life shall be so hidden with Christ in God, that their enemies shall not be able to find them out. To such a hiding-place Satan himself dare not approach. There the pride of man cannot come.

Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion - Thou shalt put them in the innermost part of thy tent. This implies that they shall have much communion and union with God; that they shall be transformed into his likeness, and have his highest approbation.

PSALM 31: 21 Praise be to the LORD, for he has shown me his marvellous loving kindness in a strong city.

Verse 21

In a strong city - If this Psalm was written by David, this must refer to his taking refuge with Achish, king of Gath, who gave him Ziklag, a fortified city, to secure himself and followers in. See 1Sam 27:6. This is more likely than that it was Keilah, where he only had intimation of the traitorous design of the inhabitants to deliver him up to Saul; so that the place was no refuge to him, howsoever fortified. Perhaps the passage may mean that, under the protection of God, he was as safe as if he had been in a fortified city.

PSALM 31: 22 As for me, I said in my haste, "I am cut off from before your eyes." Nevertheless you heard the voice of my petitions when I cried to you.

Verse 22

I said in my haste - Not duly adverting to the promise of God, I was led to conclude that my enemies were so strong, so numerous, and had so many advantages against me, that I must necessarily fall into and by their hands; however, I continued to pray, and thou didst hear the voice of my supplication.

PSALM 31: 23 Oh love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, and fully recompenses him who behaves arrogantly.

Verse 23

O love the Lord, all ye his saints - It is only the saints that can love God, as they only are made partakers of the Divine nature. Holy spirits can love God, who is the fountain of their holiness; and the saints should love him.

Preserveth the faithful - Those who, being filled with the love of God, bring forth the fruits of that love - universal obedience to the will of God; for to such persons his commands are not grievous, their duty is their delight; while a man is faithful to the grace he has received, that is, uses and improves the talents with which God has intrusted him, God's service is perfect freedom.

The proud doer - The man of the proud heart, haughty and supercilious carriage, and insulting and outrageous conduct. A proud man is peculiarly odious in the sight of God; and in the sight of reason how absurd! A sinner, a fallen spirit, an heir of wretchedness and corruption-proud!

Proud of what? Of an indwelling devil! Well; such persons shall be plentifully rewarded. They shall get their due, their whole due, and nothing but their due.

PSALM 31: 24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD.

Verse 24

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart - In 1Cor 16:13, St. Paul says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong:" Γρηγορευετε, στηκετε εν τη πιστει, ανδριζεσθε, κραταιουσθε. The latter words he seems to have borrowed from the Septuagint, who translate, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart," by Ανδριζεσθε και κραταιουσθω η καρδια υμων "Act like men, and your hearts shall be strengthened." They that hope in God, and are endeavoring to walk carefully before him, may take courage at all times, and expect the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace.