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A Psalm by David.

PSALM 141: 1 LORD, I have called on you. Come to me quickly! Listen to my voice when I call to you.

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The psalmist prays that his devotions may be accepted, Psa 141:1, Psa 141:2. That he may be enabled so to watch that he do not offend with his tongue; and that he may be preserved from wickedness, Psa 141:3, Psa 141:4. His willingness to receive reproof, Psa 141:5. He complains of disasters, Psa 141:6, Psa 141:7. His trust in God, and prayer against his enemies, Psa 141:8-10.

This Psalm is generally attributed to David, and considered to have been composed during his persecution by Saul. Some suppose that he made it at the time that he formed the resolution to go to Achish, king of Gath; see 1 Samuel 26: It is generally thought to be an evening prayer, and has long been used as such in the service of the Greek Church. It is in several places very obscure.

Verse 1

Lord, I cry unto thee - Many of David's Psalms begin with complaints; but they are not those of habitual plaint and peevishness. He was in frequent troubles and difficulties, and he always sought help in God. He ever appears in earnest; at no time is there any evidence that the devotion of David was formal. He prayed, meditated, supplicated, groaned, cried, and even roared, as he tells us, for the disquietude of his soul. He had speedy answers; for he had much faith, and was always in earnest.

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PSALM 141: 2 Let my prayer be set before you like incense; the lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice.

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Verse 2

As incense - Incense was offered every morning and evening before the Lord, on the golden altar, before the veil of the sanctuary. Exo 29:39, and Num 28:4.

As the evening sacrifice - This was a burnt-offering, accompanied with flour and salt. But it does not appear that David refers to any sacrifice, for he uses not זבח zebach, which is almost universally used for a slaughtered animal; but מנחה minchah, which is generally taken for a gratitude-offering or unbloody sacrifice. The literal translation of the passage is, "Let my prayer be established for incense before thy faces; and the lifting up of my hands for the evening oblation." The psalmist appears to have been at this time at a distance from the sanctuary, and therefore could not perform the Divine worship in the way prescribed by the law. What could he do? Why, as he could not worship according to the letter of the law, he will worship God according to the spirit; then prayer is accepted in the place of incense; and the lifting up of his hands, in gratitude and self-dedication to God, is accepted in the place of the evening minchah or oblation. Who can deplore the necessity that obliged the psalmist to worship God in this way?

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PSALM 141: 3 Set a watch, LORD, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips.

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 Verse 3

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth - While there are so many spies on my actions and words, I have need to be doubly guarded, that my enemies may have no advantage against me. Some think the prayer is against impatience; but if he were now going to Gath, it is more natural to suppose that he was praying to be preserved from dishonoring the truth, and from making sinful concessions in a heathen land; and at a court where, from his circumstances, it was natural to suppose he might be tempted to apostasy by the heathen party. The following verse seems to support this opinion.

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PSALM 141: 4 Don't incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who work iniquity. Don't let me eat of their delicacies.

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 Verse 4

Let me eat not of their dainties - This may refer either to eating things forbidden by the law; or to the partaking in banquets or feasts in honor of idols.

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PSALM 141: 5 Let the righteous strike me, it is kindness; let him reprove me, it is like oil on the head; don't let my head refuse it; Yet my prayer is always against evil deeds.

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 Verse 5

Let the righteous smite me - This verse is extremely difficult in the original. The following translation, in which the Syriac, Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, and Arabic nearly agree, appears to me to be the best: "Let the righteous chastise me in mercy, and instruct me: but let not the oil of the wicked anoint my head. It shall not adorn (יני יני, from נוה navah) my head; for still my prayer shall be against their wicked works."

The oil of the wicked may here mean his smooth flattering speeches; and the psalmist intimates that he would rather suffer the cutting reproof of the righteous than the oily talk of the flatterer. If this were the case, how few are there now-a-days of his mind! On referring to Bishop Horsley, I find his translation is something similar to my own: -

Let the just one smite me, let the pious remove me.

Let not the ointment of the impious anoint my head.

But still I will intrude in their calamities.

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PSALM 141: 6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock. They will hear my words, for they are well spoken.

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 Verse 6

When their judges are overthrown in stony places - בִּידֵי סֶלֶע biyedey sela, "In the hands of the rock." Does this rock signify a strong or fortified place; and its hands the garrison which have occupied it, by whom these judges were overthrown? If we knew the occasion on which this Psalm was made, we might be the better able to understand the allusions in the text.

They shall hear my words; for they are sweet - Some think there is here an allusion to David's generous treatment of Saul in the cave of En-gedi, and afterwards at the hill of Hachilah, in this verse, which might be translated: "Their judges have been dismissed in the rocky places; and have heard my words, that they were sweet." Or perhaps there may be a reference to the death of Saul and his sons, and the very disastrous defeat of the Israelites at Gilboa. If so, the seventh verse will lose its chief difficulty, Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth; but if we take them as referring to the slaughter of the priests at Nob, then, in stead of translating לפי שאול lephi sheol, at the grave's mouth, we may translate at the command of Saul; and then the verse will point out the manner in which those servants of the Lord were massacred; Doeg cut them in pieces; hewed them down as one cleaveth wood. Some understand all this of the cruel usage of the captives in Babylon. I could add other conjectures, and contend for my own; but they are all too vague to form a just ground for decided opinion.

PSALM 141: 7 "As when one ploughs and breaks up the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol."

PSALM 141: 8 For my eyes are on you, LORD, the Lord. In you, I take refuge. Don't leave my soul destitute.

#### Verse 8

But mine eyes are unto thee - In all times, in all places, on all occasions, I will cleave unto the Lord, and put my whole confidence in him.

PSALM 141: 9 Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, from the traps of the workers of iniquity.

PSALM 141: 10 Let the wicked fall together into their own nets, while I pass by.

#### Verse 10

Let the wicked fall into their own nets - This is generally the case; those who lay snares for others fall into them themselves. Harm watch, harm catch, says the old adage. How many cases have occurred where the spring guns that have been set for thieves have shot some of the family! I have known some dismal cases of this kind, where some of the most amiable lives have been sacrificed to this accursed machine.

Whilst - I withal escape - They alone are guilty; they alone spread the nets and gins; I am innocent, and God will cause me to escape.