

PSALM 33

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 33

Though this psalm has no title to it, it seems to be a psalm of David, from the style and matter of it; and indeed begins with the same words with which the preceding psalm is ended. Theodoret is of opinion it was written by David as a prophecy concerning Hezekiah, as a song to be sung by the people after the destruction of the Assyrian army.

Ver. 1. *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<4821>}Psalm 32:11”);

[for] praise is comely for the upright; it becomes them; it is their duty; they are bound unto it by the mercies and favours they have received; should they not give praise to God, the stones of the wall would cry out, and rebuke them for their ingratitude: it is beautiful, and looks lovely in them; it is an ornament to them, and is, in the sight of God, of great esteem: it is very acceptable to him, and when grace is in exercise, and their hearts in tune, being sensibly touched and impressed with the goodness of God, it is desirable by them, and is pleasant and delightful to them.

Ver. 2. *Praise the Lord with harp*, etc.] An instrument David was well skilled in the use of, the inventor of which was Jubal, (^{<1021>}Genesis 4:21);

sing unto, him with the psaltery; the name of this instrument is in the Hebrew language “nebel”: the account which Josephus ^{f479} gives of this, and of the former, is,

“the harp is extended with ten strings, and is plucked with a quill; the “nabla”, or psaltery, has twelve sounds, and is played upon with the fingers;”

some make this and the next to be the same:

[and] an instrument of ten strings; and read them together thus, “with the psaltery of ten strings”: and so the Targum, Septuagint, and other versions ^{f480}: but it seems from Josephus that it was not a stringed instrument, but

had holes, and those twelve; and besides it is distinguished from the instrument of ten strings, (^{<492B>}Psalm 92:3); it was in the form of a bottle, from whence it had its name.

Ver. 3. *Sing unto him a new song*, etc.] One newly composed on account of recent mercies received; and as the mercies of God are new every morning, there ought to be a daily song of praise to him; and so a new song is a continual song, as Christ is called the “new and living way”, (^{<380D>}Hebrews 10:20); because he is the everliving way; or the constant and only one, which always was, is, and will be. Or it may denote some famous and excellent song, as a new name is an excellent name, an unknown and unspeakable one; (see ^{<607>}Revelation 2:17); compared with (^{<64D>}Revelation 14:2,3); or respect may be had to the New Testament dispensation, in which old things are passed away, and all things become new; a new covenant is exhibited, a new and living way opened, and new ordinances instituted, and at the end of it there will be new heavens and a new earth; and so here is a new song made mention of, as suited to it;

play skilfully with a loud voice: either with the quill upon the harp, and the instrument of ten strings; or with the fingers upon the psaltery, at the same time, vocally, and aloud, expressing the new song.

Ver. 4. *For the word of the Lord [is] right*, etc.] The revealed word of God: the law of God is right; its precepts are holy, just, and good; its sanction or penalty is righteous; it is impartial unto all; it is just in condemning the wicked, and in acquitting believers on the account of Christ’s perfect righteousness, by which it is magnified and made honourable: the Gospel part of the word is right; it publishes right and good things; it directs to the right way, to heaven and happiness; it makes men right when it works effectually in them; it engages them to walk in right ways; and its doctrines are right or plain to them that have a spiritual understanding given them; and all this is matter of joy and praise;

and all his works [are done] in truth; his works of creation are done in the truth of things, with the utmost exactness and accuracy, and are a wonderful display of his power, wisdom, and goodness: his works of providence are according to the counsel of his own will, and are done in the wisest and best manner; and his work of redemption is a proof of his veracity and faithfulness to his covenant oath and promise; and his work of grace upon the hearts of his people is truth in the inward parts; and which, as he has promised to carry on and finish, he is faithful and will do it; in

short, his way of acting both towards the godly and ungodly agrees with his promises to the one and his threatenings to the other, and so is in truth; and the whole of this is a reason why the saints should praise the Lord.

Ver. 5. *He loveth righteousness and judgment*, etc.] Or “righteous judgment”^{f481}; he delights in the administration of it himself, (~~2402~~ Jeremiah 9:24); and he is well pleased with acts of righteousness done by others, when done according to his word, from love to him, by faith in him, and with a view to his glory; especially he loves the righteousness of his son, being satisfactory to his law and justice, and his people, as clothed with it; and he delights in the condemnation of sin in the flesh of Christ, and in the righteous judgment of the world, and the prince of it, by Christ;

the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord; of the providential goodness of God, of which all creatures partake; and of the special goodness or grace of God manifested in Christ Jesus; it was full of it particularly when Christ was here on earth, who is full of grace and truth; and when the Gospel of the grace of God was preached everywhere by his apostles, according to his order, and appeared to all men; and so it will be especially in the latter day, when multitudes will be called by grace and converted, and when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord; and still more when it will become a new earth, wherein only righteous men will dwell.

Ver. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made*, etc.] The aerial and starry heavens, and the heaven of heavens, the third heaven, the seat of the divine Majesty, and the habitation of angels and glorified saints; these were “made” even out of nothing, not out of any pre-existent matter, nor were they eternal; and being made are creatures, and so not to be worshipped, neither they nor their hosts after mentioned; angels, sun, moon, and stars; these were made by the Word of God, the essential Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who often goes by this name, (~~2403~~ John 1:1,14 ~~3042~~ Hebrews 4:12 ~~2417~~ 1 John 5:7 ~~24913~~ Revelation 19:13); and very fitly agrees with him, who spoke for all his people in the council and covenant of grace, and undertook to be their surety; is the Word spoken of by all the holy prophets since the beginning of the world; is the interpreter of his Father’s mind and will, of which he must be capable, since he lay in his bosom; and now he speaks for his saints in heaven, whose advocate he is; and especially he may be so called because he so often spake on the six days of creation, and said, let this and the other thing be, and it was so; and to him, as the Word of God, is the creation of all things frequently

ascribed, (<B001>John 1:1-3) (<S110>Hebrews 11:3 <G035>2 Peter 3:5), and particularly the heavens, (<S010>Hebrews 1:10). This is a proof of the deity of Christ, and of the dignity of his person; and shows how fit he is to be the Saviour of men; how safe the saints are in his hands; and that he ought to be trusted in, adored, and worshipped;

and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth: by “the host” of the heavens are meant the angels of heaven, who dwell in the third heaven, and are the militia of it; they are called the heavenly host, (<L013>Luke 2:13); these are under Jehovah, as their Lord and King, and are the army among whom he does according to his will, (<1229>1 Kings 22:19 <2065>Daniel 4:35); these attended him whenever he has made any remarkable appearance; and they have been employed by him against his enemies, and in defence of his people, about whom they encamp, (<1295>2 Kings 19:35 <1053>Matthew 26:53 <1031>Genesis 32:1,2) (<0917>Psalm 34:7). The sun, moon, and stars, are the host of the next heaven, these are ranged in their proper order by the Lord, and he keeps the muster roll of them, (<2406>Isaiah 40:26 <1074>Psalm 147:4); and these are used by him as his militia; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, (<0051>Judges 5:20); and the winged tribe are the host of the lower heaven; and even the lower class of these, as the locusts and grasshoppers, go forth in bands and troops, and encamp in the hedges, and at the command of God pass through and devour whole countries, (<1002>Proverbs 30:27 Na 3:17) (<0953>Psalm 105:34,35); and all these are made by “the breath” or “spirit ^{f482} of [Jehovah’s] mouth”; that is, by the Spirit of God, the third Person in the Trinity; a name which is suitable to him who is breathed forth, and proceeds from the Father and the Son, and to whom creation is ascribed, (<0002>Genesis 1:2 <18504>Job 33:4 26:13); and which is no inconsiderable proof of his deity; and shows that he must be equal to the work of sanctification, which he begins and carries on. Now though the creation of the heavens is attributed to the Word, and the host of them to the Spirit, yet we are not to suppose that one Person took one part, and another Person another part of the creation; but they were all, Father, Word, and Spirit, jointly concerned in the whole.

Ver. 7. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap,* etc.]

Which was done on the third day of the creation, by means of which the dry land appeared, (<0002>Genesis 1:9,10); when the waters of the sea were piled up as an heap, and stood higher than the earth, as they now do; and which is a wonderful instance of the power and providence of God, to

bound them, and preserve the earth from being overflowed by them, (^{<1881>}Job 38:9-11);

he layeth up the depth in storehouses; that is, large quantities of water, for which he has his treasure houses, as for the wind, hail and snow, (^{<1437>}Psalm 135:7 ^{<1831>}Job 38:16,22); and these are the clouds of heaven above, and the fountains of the great deep below, which the Lord opens and stops at his pleasure; (see ^{<10071>}Genesis 7:11 8:2).

Ver. 8. *Let all the earth fear the Lord*, etc.] That is, all the men that dwell upon the face of the earth. As it follows,

let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him; which fear and awe design a reverence of the divine Majesty, whose divine perfections are so manifest in the works of creation; and a carefulness not to offend him, into whose hands it must be a fearful thing to fall; and the whole worship of him, which is often in Scripture expressed by the fear of him: and this is to be understood either as what is the duty of all men; for to “fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man”, (^{<2123>}Ecclesiastes 12:13); and which is incumbent on all men, in consideration of his being the Creator of them; and the obligation to it is yet more increased through his providential care of them and goodness to them; and still more should be found in them, seeing he will be the Judge of them, and has a despotic and uncontrollable power over them; and what is it that he cannot do, who has done all this before related? though none can fear him aright but such who have the grace of fear put into their hearts by the Spirit of God: or else this may be prophetically said, as what will be in the latter day, when not only the Jews shall fear the Lord and his goodness, (^{<2085>}Hosea 3:5), but when the fulness of the Gentiles being brought into the church, it shall fear and be enlarged; yea, all nations shall fear the Lord and glorify his name, and come and worship before him, (^{<2085>}Isaiah 60:5-8 ^{<6654>}Revelation 15:4).

Ver. 9. *For he spake, and it was [done]*, etc.] Or “it was” ^{f483}, it came into being by a word speaking, almighty power going along with it; (see ^{<10008>}Genesis 1:3,6,7,9,11,14,15,20,24);

he commanded, and it stood fast; every created thing continued in its being; not only all things were produced into being by his all commanding word and power, “nutu Jovis”, as Maximus Tyrius speaks ^{f484}; but by the same all things are upheld and consist, (^{<3008>}Hebrews 1:3) (^{<5017>}Colossians 1:17). The poet ^{f485} uses the same word of God in the creation of things;

and is the phrase in (~~4000B~~ Genesis 1:3) admired by Longinus^{f486}: or this may refer to the implantation of the grace of fear in the hearts of his people; for as he speaks life into them in regeneration, commands light to shine in their dark heart, and says to them, when in their blood, Live; so by the mighty power of his word he commands the fear of him in them, and it continues.

Ver. 10. *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the Heathen to nought*, etc.]

The psalmist having taken notice of the works of creation, in order to excite the saints to praise, proceeds to observe the providence of God, and particularly that branch of it which lies in disappointing the designs of wicked men; it is wickedness which they consult and devise, and thin is against the Lord's people, his cause and interest, and so against himself; and though their schemes are formed and contrived with a great deal of subtlety, yet they are commonly blasted; whether laid by particular persons, as by Ahithophel against David; or by nations, whole bodies of men, as of the Egyptians and Assyrians against Israel; and of Jews and Gentiles against Christ and his cause;

he maketh the devices of the people of none effect; the same thing is expressed here as before, in different words, for the further confirmation of it, and that it might be attended to. This is the Lord's doing, he is omniscient, and knows all the secret plots and designs of men; and he is omnipotent, and counteracts them, and confounds them in all their measures; and is faithful to his people, cause, and interest.

Ver. 11. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*, etc.] By which are meant, not the doctrines of the Gospel, nor the ordinances of it; though these will stand firm, and remain to the end of the world; but the purposes and decrees of God, which are wisely formed in himself, are eternal and unfrustrable, and relate to all things in providence and grace. The Lord does all things according to the counsel of his will in the government of the world, and in the salvation of men: the choice of persons to everlasting life is according to it; and so are their redemption, effectual calling, and glorification;

the thoughts of his heart to all generations; which, with respect to his own people, are thoughts of peace, grace, and mercy; these are many, and within himself, were very early, even from all eternity, and have their sure and certain effect, (~~2314B~~ Isaiah 14:24); (see ~~4092B~~ Proverbs 19:21) (~~2360B~~ Isaiah 46:10).

Ver. 12. *Blessed [is] the nation whose God [is] the Lord,* etc.] Who have an interest in such a wonder working God, both in creation and in providence, and especially in grace: which, though it may have a principal regard to the nation of Israel, whose God he was in a very distinguishing manner, yet must not be limited to them; for he is the God of the Gentiles also: this nation is the chosen generation, the holy nation and peculiar people, both among Jews and Gentiles; and the Lord is the God of these; not only as the God of nature and providence, but as the God of all grace; who must be happy, since he is their portion and exceeding great reward; nor shall they want any good thing, nor need they fear any evil; they are on the heart of God, and cannot be separated from his love; they are engraven on the palms of his hands, and shall be helped, strengthened, and upheld with the right hand of his righteousness; all things work together for their good; and this God of theirs will be their God and guide unto death; they may expect every needful good thing now, and all glory and happiness hereafter;

[and] the people [whom] he hath chosen for his own inheritance; not Israel only, but the Gentiles also; not all mankind, but a peculiar people, whom the Lord has chosen out of the world to be his possession, and who are his jewels and peculiar treasure; these are happy, being the Lord's portion, and the lot of his inheritance; and he chooses an inheritance for them, adopts and begets them unto it, and makes them meet to be partakers of it.

Ver. 13. *The Lord looketh from heaven,* etc.] Where his throne and temple are, upon the earth and men, and things in it, as follows;

he beholdeth all the sons of men; the evil and the good; which is contrary to the sense of many wicked men, who imagine he takes no notice of what is done here below; but his eye is upon all, upon all the workers of iniquity, how secret soever they may be; and not only his eye of Providence is upon good men, but his eye of love, grace, and mercy; and he has a special and distinct knowledge of them: agreeably to this are some expressions of Heathen writers; says one ^{f487},

“the eye of God sees all things;”

says another ^{f488},

“there is a great God in heaven who sees all things, and governs.”

Ver. 14. *From the place of his habitation*, etc.] Which is heaven, that is, the habitation of his holiness, and of his glory, (^{<2615>}Isaiah 63:15);

he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; good and bad; and not the nation of Israel only, but the Gentile world, whom in former times he overlooked, but under the Gospel dispensation visits in a way of mercy; by sending his son to die for them, by spreading his Gospel among them, by calling them by his grace, by planting churches in the midst of them, and by continuing his word and ordinances with them.

Ver. 15. *He fashioneth their hearts alike*, etc.] The Lord is the former and fashioner of the heart, spirit, or soul of man, even of all hearts and spirits; whence he is called the Father of spirits, (^{<3819>}Hebrews 12:9); (see ^{<3821>}Zechariah 12:1); and he is the former of them alike; which seems to intimate as if all seals were alike, as they are made by the Lord; and it may be the difference there appears to be between them afterwards, may be owing to the make and constitution of their bodies, to their education, and different situation, circumstances, and advantages in life, whereby the hearts of some may be more opened and enlarged than others. Some render it “together”, or “altogether”^{f489}; which must not be understood of time, as if they were all made at once, but of equality; the one was made by him as well as the other; he is the fashioner of one and all of them, every whit of them; they are wholly fashioned by him, and all that is in them, all the powers and faculties of the soul; and by him only, and not by the instrumentality of another; for souls are created, not generated; they are produced out of nothing, and not out of pre-existent matter, as bodies; parents contribute somewhat to the bodies of their children, but not anything to their souls. God only “is the God of the spirits of all flesh”, (^{<0462>}Numbers 16:22); some translate the word “singly”^{f490}; one by one, one after another in the several ages of time; for he continues to fashion them, and is always doing it; (see ^{<3821>}Zechariah 12:1). And he forms the hearts of his own people anew for himself, for his own glory; he forms Christ in them, and every grace of his Spirit; he forms them into one, and knits and unites them together in love, and makes them like to one another; for as face answers to face in water, so do the hearts and experiences of the saints one to another, (^{<3179>}Proverbs 27:19); all which he does wholly and alone; and since he fashions the hearts of all men in every sense, he must know them, which is the design of this expression; he knows the hearts of wicked men, and all the wickedness that is in them; he knows the hearts of good

men, the worst that is in them, and also the best, which he himself has put there;

he considereth all their works; the works of evil men, not only their more open ones, but their more secret ones, and will bring them into judgment; and the works of good men, even their good works, which he will remember and reward in a way of grace.

Ver. 16. *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host*, etc.] He may be at the head of a numerous army, and yet not get the victory over a lesser one, nor escape safe, but be taken by it: there have been such instances; and if he is saved, or gets the victory, it is not owing to the multitude with him, but to the Lord, that gives salvation to kings, (^{<3E340>}Psalm 144:10). Hence it appears that even such men need salvation themselves, and cannot save themselves, though they have ever so many at command, and therefore are not to be trusted in; salvation is only of the Lord;

a mighty man is not delivered by much strength; as Goliath, with his great strength, could not deliver himself out of the hands of David, a stripling; wherefore the mighty man should not glory in his might.

Ver. 17. *A horse [is] a vain thing for safety*, etc.] Though it is prepared for the day of battle, and is a very warlike creature, and of great service in war, yet safety only is of the Lord, (^{<3213E>}Proverbs 21:31); this is put for all kinds of military preparations which men are apt to trust in, but should not, for they are “a lie”^{f491}, as the horse is here said to be; that is, deceives and disappoints when trusted to; in like manner the olive is said “to lie”, (^{<33B7>}Habakkuk 3:17); when hope of fruit from it is disappointed; so “fundus mendax” in Horace^{f492};

neither shall he deliver [any] by his great strength; in the time of battle; either by fighting for him, or fleeing with him.

Ver. 18. *Behold, the eye of the Lord [is] upon them that fear him*, etc.] Not with dread of his wrath, or distrust of his grace, or for sinister ends and selfish views, but with a godly fear; by which men hate evil, depart from it, are careful not to offend God by it, but to serve and worship him; on such is not only his eye of Providence to protect from danger, to supply with the necessaries of life, but of love and grace; he looks upon them with delight and pleasure; his eye is upon them to watch over them for good, to guard them from every enemy, and from all evil, and to communicate to them every needful measure of grace;

upon them that hope in his mercy; not his absolute mercy, but his special mercy in Christ; which appears in the provision of him as a Saviour, in the mission of him into this world, and redemption by him; and is displayed in regeneration, the pardon of sin, and eternal life: and such that hope in it are they that see themselves miserable creatures, and in need of it; and who are encouraged to hope in it from the plenty and abundance of it in the heart of God; and from the many instances of it among men, and even some the chief of sinners; and they do hope in it for the forgiveness of their sins, and for salvation and eternal glory; and on these the eye of the Lord is, as before,

Ver. 19. *To deliver their soul from death*, etc.] Not a corporeal death, for the soul dies not, and is never in any danger of death; and should life, or the whole man, be intended here, yet those that fear the Lord, and hope in his mercy, are not exempted and secured from a corporeal death, but die as other men; though sometimes indeed they are remarkably preserved from death, and even in a time of general calamity; but a spiritual death is meant, which, while in a state of nature, they are under; but, being quickened at conversion, they live spiritually, and are preserved from dying any more in this sense; and also from an eternal death, which shall never harm them, nor have any power over them;

and to keep them alive in famine; not corporeal, though the Lord does give meat to them that fear him, and sometimes in a miraculous way provides for them; as by sending ravens to feed them, and by increasing the cruse of oil; (see ^{<24117>}Isaiah 41:17,18); but spiritual, a famine of hearing the word of the Lord; the Lord prepares a place for his church and people in the wilderness, where they are privately nourished with the word and ordinances, and their souls kept alive, (^{<6126>}Revelation 12:6,14).

Ver. 20. *Our soul waiteth for the Lord*, etc.] This, and what follows, are the words of the church, expressing her expectation, faith, and joy, by reason of what is suggested in the preceding verses. She signifies her expectation of good by waiting for the Lord; either for his coming in the flesh, and salvation by him; for which the patriarchs, prophets, and all the Old Testament saints, waited, (^{<04918>}Genesis 49:18 ^{<23219>}Isaiah 25:9); and so the Targum paraphrases it, “our soul waiteth for the redemption of the Lord”; or for his spiritual coming, his appearance to them, and gracious presence with them, he having been for some time absent; and it is right and good so to do, and in the issue proves advantageous, (^{<23817>}Isaiah 8:17

^{<1916>}Lamentations 3:26); and this being soul waiting, it denotes the heartiness, sincerity, and earnestness of it;

he [is] our help and our shield; the Lord is the help of his people in time of trouble, when none else is or can be; and he is a present one, and helps right early, and at the best season: and he is their shield, who encompasses them about with his love and favour, and keeps them by his power in the greatest safety; all which encourages their waiting upon him, and expectation of good things from him.

Ver. 21. *For our heart shall rejoice in him*, etc.] Not in sin, nor in themselves and in their boastings, all such rejoicing is evil; but in the Lord, “in his Word”; as the Targum is, in the essential Word of God, Christ Jesus; in his person, righteousness, and salvation; and this joy is heart joy, inward joy, real joy, joy in the Holy Ghost; and is unspeakable and full of glory. This is what the psalmist calls upon the saints to do, in the beginning of the psalm; and so his end in composing it is answered;

because we have trusted in his holy name; that is, in himself, who is holy, just, and good; and so faithful to every word of promise, to every engagement of his, and therefore to be trusted in: and hence it appears that the joy before spoken of is the joy of faith.

Ver. 22. *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us*, etc.] That is, an application of it in its effects: it is a prayer for a communication of grace and mercy to help in a time of need; and for a discovery of pardoning grace and mercy; and it is a prayer of faith; for the mercy of the Lord is upon his people in great plenty, and it continues; and they have reason to believe it ever will, (^{<1937>}Psalm 103:17);

according as we hope in thee; not according to any merits of theirs, but according to the measure of grace, of the grace of hope which God had bestowed on them, and encouraged them to exercise on him, in expectation of finding grace and mercy with him.