

PSALM 101

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 101

A Psalm of David.

The title of this psalm, in the Syriac version, is,

“for Asaph, an exhortation of David, concerning those things which are required in the ministry of the house of the Lord; and a prophecy of the praise of the conqueror, and of the perfect man in God.”

Theodoret thinks it was written by David concerning good Josiah, whom he foresaw, by a spirit of prophecy, would rise up a great reformer of the people, and whom he proposes as a pattern of perfection to others; but it was, no doubt, written by him of himself; very likely, after he was delivered out of his troubles by the death of Saul, and was come to the kingdom, since he resolves to “sing of mercy and judgment”: though by the interrogation, “when wilt thou come unto me?” it looks as if he had not arrived to the height of his honour: wherefore, perhaps, this psalm was penned between his being made king over Judah, and his being made king over all the tribes; but, be it as it may, the design of it is to show his resolutions, how he would behave as a king in his court, and as a master in his family; so that it is very instructive to kings and civil magistrates, and to parents and masters of families: and as David was a type of Christ, he seems, throughout the whole, to represent him; and, indeed, there are some things in it which agree with none so well as with him; such as behaving wisely, in a perfect way, and walking in his house with a perfect heart; not suffering any evil thing to cleave unto him, and knowing none, and the like.

Ver. 1. *I will sing of mercy and judgment*, etc.] Either of mercy and justice, exercised by him towards his people, which he resolved to do, and did, (⁴⁰⁸⁵2 Samuel 8:15) which are two very principal points in government, are the glory of a reign, the support of the throne, and the happiness of a people, (⁴⁰⁸⁵Proverbs 20:28), or rather of the mercy of God to himself, in delivering him from his enemies, and raising him to the throne; and of the judgment of God in maintaining his cause, and avenging him on those that

hated him: every good man has reason to sing of the “mercy” of God; not only of his providential mercy, but of his special mercy, prepared in council and covenant for him, displayed in regeneration, in the pardon of sin, and in his everlasting salvation: or of “grace” and goodness, as the word ^{f1388} signifies; of the grace and goodness of God laid up in Christ, shown forth through him, and to which the whole of salvation is owing; singing of this shows a sense of it, thankfulness for it, and a cheerful disposition of soul, in a view of interest in it: and he may also sing of “judgment”: of righteous punishment inflicted upon his enemies, and the enemies of God, and Christ, and true religion; not as taking delight in the misery of fellow creatures, but as rejoicing in the glory of divine justice displayed therein, and in a deliverance from them; as Israel did at the Red sea; and as the church will, when Babylon is destroyed: moreover, a good man may sing of mercy and judgment together, with respect to himself; there being, in the course of his life, a mixture of prosperity and adversity, of merciful and afflictive dispensations, which work together for his good; and he has reason to be thankful for the one as for the other, as Job was, (^{<302>}Job 1:21), so the Targum,

“if thou renderest mercy to me; if thou exercisest judgment on me; for all I will praise thee:”

judgment sometimes signifies chastisement, (^{<2402>}Jeremiah 10:24 ^{<613>}1 Corinthians 11:32), it may be understood of Christ, who sung of the mercy of God, as shown in the mission of him into the world to save men, and which was glorified in their redemption by him; and of the justice of God exercised on him, as their surety, on whom judgment came unto condemnation for their sins; and when the sword of justice was awaked against him, the hand of mercy was turned on the little ones, (^{<307>}Zechariah 13:7),

unto thee, O Lord, will I sing; on the above subjects.

Ver. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way,* &c.] So David did before he came to the throne, which made Saul fear him, and the people love him, (^{<0814>}1 Samuel 18:14-16) and so he resolved to do, and did afterwards; and thus it becomes all good men, in every station of life, to do: and then do they behave wisely, when they walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time; when they make the perfect law of liberty, the word of God, the rule of their faith; take Christ for their pattern and example, and the Spirit for their guide; when they walk as becomes the

Gospel of Christ; seek the glory of God, and the good of others; behave inoffensively to all, and live as pilgrims and strangers here; attending closely to their duty, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless: and yet it is certain that no man lives without sin, or does or can behave himself wisely in so “perfect a way” and manner as to have no fault in him; wherefore this seems most applicable to Christ, who, as it was prophesied he should, so he did “deal prudently”, or behave wisely, (²⁵²³Isaiah 52:13), where the same word is used as here; and this is true of Christ throughout the whole of his life; in his infancy, when but twelve years of age; in his public ministry, in his conduct towards all men; in his answers to the ensnaring questions of his enemies; in his behaviour at his apprehension, arraignment, condemnation and crucifixion; and this to perfection, so as that the least fault could not be found in him:

O when wilt thou come unto me? and perform thy promise in bringing me to rule over all the tribes of Israel: or it may be read without an interrogation, “when thou wilt come unto me”^{f1389}; that is, when thou wilt grant me thy gracious presence, and divine assistance, then I will behave myself wisely, in a perfect way; or “in the way of perfect”^{f1390} and upright men, and will walk with them, and do as they do; without the grace of God, and strength of Christ, and the assistance of the Spirit, nothing is to be done that is wise and good: if it is applied to Christ, it respects the time of his sufferings and death, when he was without the divine Presence and help:

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart; or “in the integrity of my heart”^{f1391}; in a sincere and upright manner, ruling my own house well, and setting a good example to all in the family; and so should all good men do, performing all duties of religion in the family; be a pattern of good works, bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and neglect nothing that may contribute to their real good and the glory of God: the house of Christ is his church and people: here he walks and manifests himself, giving proofs of his sincere love and affection to them: the Targum paraphrases it,

“the house of my doctrine;”

such is the church of Christ, (²⁰⁰⁸Isaiah 2:3).

Ver. 3. *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes,* Either the eyes of the body, which are the inlets of lust and are easily caught with objects that

inflame the heart, and should be turned aside from beholding vanity; or the eyes of the mind; so the Targum,

“I will not propose to my heart;”

or, as Kimchi, “in my thought”,

that is, I will not set up an evil thing in my imagination, to dwell upon in my thoughts, and take delight and pleasure in meditating upon it; or set it before me, to imitate as a pattern, to work by, and copy after: Christ did not so; he set the Lord always before him, (^{<3968>}Psalm 16:8), not anything of Belial^{f1392} or Satan, as the phrase here may be rendered; no, he always bid Satan, or anything of his, be gone, and get behind him, (^{<4040>}Matthew 4:10 16:23).

I hate the work of them that turn aside; from God, and from his law; from the paths of religion, truth, and virtue; and from the Gospel, and a profession of it; such are not fit for the kingdom of God, and in these God and Christ have no pleasure, (^{<5038>}Hebrews 10:38),

it shall not cleave to me; neither the wicked thing, or thing of Belial, nor the work of apostasy; that is, he would have no familiarity nor fellowship with it; not come near it, nor connive at it, but hate and abhor it: the Jews said, an evil disease, or a thing of Belial, “cleaveth fast unto him”, (^{<4948>}Psalm 41:8), but they were mistaken.

Ver. 4. *A froward heart shall depart from me*, etc.] A man of a froward heart, that devises frowardness in his heart, and speaks it out with his mouth; that which is perverse, and contrary to the law of God and Gospel of Christ, to the light of nature and the word of God; contrary to the sentiments of all good men, and repugnant to truth and good manners: such sort of persons are disagreeable companions, and good men would not choose to have anything to do with them; they are hateful to Christ, and shall be bid to depart from him; (see ^{<3083>}Proverbs 8:13 6:14).

I will not know a wicked person: so as to be familiar with him, or show him any respect; have any affection for him, or take any notice of him; such Christ will not know at the great day, (^{<4073>}Matthew 7:23), or “I will not know wickedness”^{f1393}, or any wicked work and action, approve of it, love it, delight in it, and do it: the Targum interprets it of the evil concupiscence, corruption of nature, or indwelling sin, which is hated by the believer, (^{<4175>}Romans 7:15) and is utterly unknown to Christ; he was

not conscious of it; he knew no sin, (^{<442>}2 Corinthians 5:21) original or actual; he had no sin in him, nor was any done by him, or, it may be, mention is made of the morning, because that was the usual time of hearing and judging causes, (^{<212>}Jeremiah 21:12), or this may have respect to the spiritual reign of Christ, whose coming will be as the morning; when the Heathens shall perish out of his land, when sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked shall be no more, and he will destroy them that destroy the earth, (^{<906>}Psalm 10:16 104:35 ^{<618>}Revelation 11:18). The Targum agrees with this,

“in the world to come, which is like to the light of the morning, I will destroy all the wicked of the earth:”

that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord; from the city of Jerusalem, as the Targum and Kimchi interpret it; and it may be understood of the church of God, in the spiritual reign of Christ, into which shall enter no more the uncircumcised and the unclean; and all that offend and do iniquity shall be gathered out of it, (^{<251>}Isaiah 52:1 ^{<134>}Matthew 13:41) or of the New Jerusalem church state, in the personal reign of Christ, into which no wicked doers will be admitted, but will remain for ever without, (^{<617>}Revelation 21:27 22:15).

Ver. 5. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off,* etc.] That raises and spreads a false report of him; that insinuates evil things of him; that brings false charges and accusations against him, in a private manner, when he has no opportunity to defend himself: such an one David threatens to cut off from his presence, as Kimchi interprets it; from all communion and conversation with him; and yet he listened to the slanders of Ziba against Mephibosheth: but Christ, who knows the hearts and the secret actions of men, will reject and cut off all persons of such a character: the Targum is,

“he that speaketh with a triple tongue against his neighbour, him will I destroy, and he shall be smitten with the leprosy:”

a slandering tongue is called a triple tongue with the Jews ^{f1394}, because, as they say, it kills three persons; him that carries the slander, him that receives it, and him of whom it is related; see the Apocrypha:

“Whoso hearkeneth unto it shall never find rest, and never dwell quietly.” (Sirach 28:16)

him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer; or, “I cannot”^{f1395}; that is, cannot bear him in my presence and company; cannot look upon him with any pleasure and delight: the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions, render it, “with him I will not eat”: have no familiarity or acquaintance with him; (see ^{<4651>}1 Corinthians 5:11), such who looked above others, and with contempt upon them, whose hearts were large, as the word^{f1396} signifies, were ambitious and insatiable, and never had enough of riches and honour; such were very contrary to David’s character, and could never be agreeable to him, (^{<8001>}Psalm 121:1,2), as the proud and haughty Pharisees were not to Christ, (^{<2800>}Luke 18:9-14), and the man of sin that exalts himself above all that is called God, that little horn, whose look is more stout than his fellows, (^{<5004>}2 Thessalonians 2:4,8 ^{<2003>}Daniel 7:20).

Ver. 6. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land*, etc.] To look them out, bring them to court, and promote them to places of honour and trust; such an one was David himself, and such there were in the land of Israel, though but few, and of which he complains, (^{<9101>}Psalm 12:1). Christ’s eyes are upon faithful persons, on faithful ministers of the word, who preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the ordinances truly, are faithful to the souls of men in watching over them, reprovng and exhorting them; his eyes are upon them to keep and preserve them, and to honour and reward them with a crown of life that fadeth not away; and his eyes are also on faithful members of churches, such who truly believe in him, who hold fast the faithful word, and keep close to his worship and ordinances; his eyes are upon them, to show favour to them, to bestow blessings upon them, and to protect and defend them, and preserve them from perishing:

that they may dwell with me; or, “sit with me”^{f1397}; at his table, or at the council board, or in judgment, and assist him in the affairs of government: so such as are faithful shall dwell with Christ both here and hereafter; they dwell in him and with him by faith, and have communion with him; they dwell in his house below, and shall dwell with him above for evermore:

he that walketh in a perfect way; in God’s way, in the way he has prescribed and directed, to what is perfect; in a way agreeable to his word, in all his commandments and ordinances, in Christ, the way, the truth, and the life:

and in the way of perfect men^{f1398}, as it may be rendered; in the way that such walk; and though he does not walk perfectly, or without sin, yet sincerely and uprightly:

he shall serve me; be taken into my service, be employed by me, as a prime minister, a counsellor, a secretary of state, or in other lesser places under David. But, as it refers to Christ, it signifies that such an one shall be a servant of his, which is no small honour; for, where he is, there shall his servant be, (~~f126~~John 12:26). The Targum is,

“he shall stand with my servants;”

in his house here, and at his right hand hereafter.

Ver. 7. *He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house*, etc.] Flatterers, sycophants, tricking and fraudulent persons, who seek to supplant others, and get into their places; these should lose the favour they had, when detected. So hypocritical persons, that have only a form of godliness, a mask of religion, and false teachers that lie in wait to deceive; and antichrist, whose coming was with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; who has seduced men by his miracles, doctrines, and sorceries; these shall have no place, neither in Christ’s house below nor above. The Targum is,

“he that works deceit shall not dwell in the midst of the house of my sanctuary:”

he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight; or, “he shall not be established” before mine eyes^{f1399}; he shall not continue in his post and place, in his office and station; he shall soon be dismissed from it; lying is very abominable to God, very prejudicial to men, and hated by Christ, who is truth itself. All sorts of lies, and liars are so, religious and doctrinal ones; such who speak lies in hypocrisy, as the emissaries of Rome; all that make an abomination, or a lie, will have no place with Christ in the New Jerusalem, (~~f127~~Revelation 21:27).

Ver. 8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land*, &c.] Of the land of Israel, signifying that he would make a general reformation throughout the kingdom; that as soon as wicked men were discovered in any part of the land, he would cut them off, would take the first opportunity of punishing them as the law directs: or he would do it “in morning”^{f1400}, as in the Hebrew text; that is, every morning, constantly and continually; or it may

be, mention is made of the morning because that was the usual time of hearing and judging causes, ^{<3012>}Jeremiah 21:12; or this may have respect to the spiritual reign of Christ, whose coming will be as the morning; when the heathens shall perish out of his land, when the sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, ^{<19016>}Psalm 10:16 and ^{<19A45>}Psalm 104:35, ^{<6118>}Revelation 11:18. The Targum agrees with this,

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