

PSALM 125

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 125

A Song of degrees. Who was the penman of this psalm, and on what occasion written, is not certain. It describes the safety and security of the church and people of God; foretells the deliverance of them from the oppressions of their enemies; the blessings of goodness that should be bestowed upon them, and the vengeance that will be taken on the wicked. According to Aben Ezra, it belongs to the times of the Messiah, whom the Jews yet expect; when Israel, as they suppose, will be in safe and prosperous circumstances, and the wicked will be consumed; as Kimchi on it also observes: and, indeed, it may be very well thought to belong to the latter days of the kingdom of our Messiah; when the church will be in great safety and prosperity, and freed from the persecution and afflictions of wicked men.

Ver. 1. *They that trust in the Lord [shall be] as Mount Zion,* etc.] Who trust not in themselves, and in their own hearts; nor in anything of theirs, their strength or wisdom, riches or righteousness; nor in any creature whatever, in the mightiest or best of men; but in the Lord; in God, as the God of nature and providence, for all temporal mercies; and in him, as the God of grace, for all spiritual and eternal ones; who should be trusted in at all times, whether of affliction, temptation, or darkness; for which there is abundant reason. The Targum is,

“the righteous that trust in the Word of the Lord;”

in Christ the essential Word, who is trusted in by all that know him, and that know there is salvation in him, and in no other: these trust in him for acceptance with God, for a justifying righteousness, for remission of sin, for all supplies of grace, and for eternal life; and such are like Mount Zion for many things, being beloved and chosen of God, enjoying his presence, and the blessings of his grace; and being the joy of the whole earth, and a perfection of beauty; but here for their firmness and stability, as follows. Arama observes, that Mount Zion is made mention of, because here the

prophecy was given; to which may be added, the psalmist was upon it, and had it in view, when he compared those that trust in the Lord unto it;

[which] cannot be removed, [but] abideth for ever: either, which Mount Zion is immovable, and continually abides, for which reason the church and people of God are compared unto it; or everyone of those that trust in the Lord, like that, can never be removed, but always abide: they can never be removed from the Lord, though they may be removed from his house and ordinances, as sometimes David was; and from his gracious presence, and sensible communion with him, and out of the world by death; yet never from his heart's love, nor out of the covenant of his grace, which is sure and everlasting; nor out of his family, into which they are taken; nor from the Lord Jesus Christ, nor out of his hands and arms, nor from off his heart; nor from off him, the foundation on which they are laid; nor out of a state of grace, either regeneration or justification; but such abide in the love of God, in the covenant of his grace, in the hands of his Son, in the grace wherein they stand, and in the house of God for evermore.

Ver. 2. *As the mountains [are] round about Jerusalem,* etc.] There was Mount Zion on the side of the north, and the mount of Olives on the east, and other mountains on the other sides of it; so that it was encompassed with them, and was naturally as well as artificially fortified. Tacitus^{f1758} describes Jerusalem as inaccessible, walls and mountains, rocks and towers, surrounding it: and the poet Coerilus^{f1759} makes mention of a people that spoke the Phoenician language, by whom he plainly means the Jews, *οικουν δ εν σολυμοις ορεσι*, "that inhabited the mountains of Solyma"; which are spoken of by Homer^{f1760}, from whence, according to Tacitus^{f1761}, Jerusalem had its name: yet, as Kimchi observes, this did not hinder the enemy from taking it; wherefore the Lord is a greater security to his people;

so the Lord [is] round about his people, from henceforth even for ever; he encompasses them with his favour and lovingkindness as a shield; he encircles them in the arms of everlasting love; he guards them by his providence all around, and keeps a wakeful and watchful eye over them, that nothing hurts them: he keeps them, as in a garrison, by his almighty power: these are the walls that are around them, yea, he himself is a wall of fire about them, and the glory in the midst of them, (~~3015~~ Zechariah 2:5); and so he continues; he never leaves his people, nor forsakes them, but is their God and guide even unto death. The Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord is round about his people;”

Christ, the essential Word of God.

Ver. 3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous,* etc.] Which, according to Kimchi, is Jerusalem; but Aben Ezra interprets it of the Israelites that inherit the land. And, the people of God are no doubt designed; the Lord’s justified and chosen ones, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; and all that belong unto them, their persons, families, estates, and good name: in all which they are sometimes oppressed and afflicted by wicked men; who are a rod of correction in the hand of the Lord, the rod of men with which he chastises them; but this shall not always continue: so the word is used for a rod of correction, (^{<3725>}Proverbs 22:15). It sometimes signifies a sceptre; an ensign of power and government, (^{<1490>}Genesis 49:10); and here may intend the nations of the world, as Aben Ezra interprets it; or the antichristian states, prevailing and ruling over the people of God in a tyrannical manner, which shall not always last; the reign of antichrist will come to an end, and the Lord will destroy him with the rod of his mouth. It sometimes signifies a tribe; and the Syriac version seems so to take it here,

“the tribe of the wicked shall not rest in the part of the righteous;”

they shall no more dwell among them, lest, being led by their example, they should learn their works, and do as they do; so Aben Ezra and Kimchi. But rather, with Gussetius^{f1762}, this is to be understood of a measuring rod; laid not on persons, but on lands and estates; and best agrees with the lot, inheritance, and estate of the righteous; and may signify, that though wicked men unjustly seize upon and retain the farms, possessions, and estates of good men, as if they were assigned to them by the measuring line; yet should not hold them long, or always;

lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity; for the righteous are not perfect in this life: they are not without sin, nor do they live without the commission of it; and may be under temptation, by long afflictions and oppressions, and seeing the wicked prosper, to desert their profession of religion, and forsake the ways of God, and join with the wicked, and commit iniquity as they do; and therefore, to prevent this, the Lord will not suffer them always to be under affliction and oppression; (see ^{<3578>}Psalm 37:8 73:2,3,13,14 ^{<2576>}Isaiah 57:16 ^{<2070>}Hosea 7:9), or them and theirs to be always in the hand of the enemy.

Ver. 4. *Do good, O Lord, unto [those that be] good,* etc.] That are made so by the Spirit and grace of God; for none are naturally good, but evil; only such who are regenerated and made new creatures, who have a good work of grace begun in them; who have the good Spirit of God, and his good graces, and the good word of God in them, and are filled with all goodness; and which is known by the good fruits which they bear, or the good works done by them. For these the psalmist prays the Lord would do good to them, not only in a providential way, as he does to all; but in a way of special grace, bestowing the blessings of his goodness on them, and causing all things to work for their good: and as saints should pray for one another, or supplication should be made for all saints, such a prayer as this may be the prayer of faith; for it is not to be doubted but God will do good to those he makes good. Aben Ezra says this may be considered either as a prayer or a prophecy; it may have respect unto the church in the latter day, and to the good things spoken of concerning it; which God will accomplish in due time, and should be prayed for; (see ^{<5118>}Psalm 51:18);

and to [them that are] upright in their hearts; which is a further description of good men, from the integrity and sincerity of their hearts; who do all they do before God and men, in the uprightness of their souls, cordially and sincerely, from right principles, and with right views.

Ver. 5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,* etc.] The ways of sin, immorality, or error; which are crooked ways, not agreeing with the word of God, the rule of faith and practice. This seems to design not openly profane sinners, who have always lived in a course of sin and wickedness; but carnal professors, who, through affliction and persecution because of the word, are offended, and desert the good ways of God; and turn from the holy commandment, word, and ordinances, they have professionally embraced;

the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; the Targum adds,

“to hell.”

These hypocrites shall be led forth by the Lord with abandoned sinners, like malefactors to the place of execution; when he shall bid them depart from him, and they shall go into everlasting fire; and if there is any place in hell hotter than another, those shall have it; see (^{<4023>}Matthew 7:23 25:41 24:51);

[but] peace [shall be] upon Israel; upon every true Israelite, upon the whole Israel of God; the apostle seems to have respect to this passage in (~~416~~ Galatians 6:16); such shall have spiritual peace in their hearts now, and eternal peace hereafter. The words may be read either as a prayer that it might be, or as a prophecy that it should be; and may have regard unto the latter day, when all the enemies of Christ and his church shall be destroyed, and there shall be abundance of peace, so long as the moon endures, (~~477~~ Psalm 72:7). Aben Ezra observes, that the psalmist prays that God would remove the wicked far off, and then there would be peace in Israel; and to the same purpose Arama and Kimchi interpret it.