

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

David prays to be heard, Psalm 4:1; expostulates with the ungodly, Psalm 4:2; exhorts them to turn to God, and make their peace with him, Psalm 4:3-5; shows the vain pursuits of men in search of happiness, which he asserts exists only in the approbation of God, Psalm 4:6, Psalm 4:7; commends himself to the Lord, and then quietly takes his repose, Psalm 4:8.

This Psalm seems to have been composed on the same occasion with the preceding, viz., Absalom's rebellion. It appears to have been an evening hymn, sung by David and his company previously to their going to rest. It is inscribed to the chief Musician upon Neginoth, $\text{x}\text{œ}\text{x}\text{z}\text{x}\text{ x}\text{i}\text{x}$ — $\text{x}'\text{x}\text{ x}'\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}\text{ x}\text{œ}\text{x}^{\text{a}}$ (lamnatstseach binginoth). Probably the first word comes from $\text{x}\text{ x}\text{i}\text{x}$ — (natsach), to be over, or preside; and may refer to the precentor in the choir. Some suppose that it refers to the Lord Jesus, who is the Supreme Governor, or victorious Person; the Giver of victory. Neginoth seems to come from $\text{x}\text{ x}'\text{x}\text{Y}$ (nagan), to strike; and probably may signify some such instruments as the cymbal, drum, etc., and stringed instruments in general. But there is no certainty in these things. What they mean, or what they were, is known to no man.

Verse 1

Hear me when I call - No man has a right to expect God to hear him if he do not call. Indeed, how shall he be heard if he speak not? There are multitudes who expect the blessings of God as confidently as if they had prayed for them most fervently; and yet such people pray not at all!

God of my righteousness - Whatever pardon, peace, holiness, or truth I possess, has come entirely from thyself. Thou art the God of my salvation, as thou art the God of my life.

Thou hast enlarged me - I was in prison; and thou hast brought me forth abroad. Have mercy on me - continue to act in the same way. I shall always need thy help; I shall never deserve to have it; let me have it in the way of mere mercy, as thou hast hitherto done.

Verse 2

O ye sons of men - x'x xTM x•xTMx© (beney ish), ye powerful men - ye who are now at the head of affairs, or who are leaders of the multitude.

Love vanity - The poor, empty, shallow-brained, pretty-faced Absalom; whose prospects are all vain, and whose promises are all empty!

Seek after leasing? - This is a Saxon word, from falsehood, from to lie. Cardmarden has adopted this word in his translation, Rouen, 1566. It is in none of the Bibles previously to that time, nor in any after, as far as my own collection affords me evidence; and appears to have been borrowed by King James's translators from the above.

Selah - Mark this! See what the end will be!

Verse 3

The Lord hath set apart him that is godly - x—xjx™x“ (chasid), the pious, benevolent man. He has marked such, and put them aside as his own property. â€œThis merciful man, this feeling, tender-hearted man, is my own property; touch not a hair of his head!â€•

Verse 4

[illegible]

And be still - x*x“xžx• (vedommu), âœand be dumb.âœ Hold your peace; fear lest ye be found fighting against God. Selah. Mark this!

Verse 5

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness - Do not attempt to offer a sacrifice to God for prosperity in your present rebellious conduct. Such a sacrifice would be a sin. Turn to God from whom you have revolted; and offer to him a righteous sacrifice, such as the law prescribes, and such as he can receive. Let all hear and consider this saying. No sacrifice - no performance of religious duty, will avail any man, if his heart be not right with God. And let all know, that under the Gospel dispensation no sacrifice of any kind will be received but through the all-atoning sacrifice made by Christ.

Because of sin, justice has stopped every man's mouth; so that none can have access to God, but through the Mediator. By him only can the mouth of a sinner be opened to plead with God. Hear this, ye who trust in yourselves, and hope for heaven without either faith or dependence on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

Verse 6

Who will show us any good? - This is not a fair translation. The word any is not in the text, nor any thing equivalent to it; and not a few have quoted it, and preached upon the text, placing the principal emphasis on this illegitimate word.

The place is sufficiently emphatic without this. There are multitudes who say, Who will show us good? Man wants good; he hates evil as evil, because he has pain, suffering, and death through it; and he wishes to find that supreme good which will content his heart, and save him from evil. But men mistake this good. They look for a good that is to gratify their passions; they have no notion of any happiness that does not come to them through the medium of their senses. Therefore they reject spiritual good, and they reject the Supreme God, by whom alone all the powers of the soul of man can be gratified.

Lift thou up the light of thy countenance - This alone, the light of thy countenance - thy peace and approbation, constitute the supreme good. This is what we want, wish, and pray for. The first is the wish of the worldling, the latter the wish of the godly.

Verse 7

Thou hast put gladness in my heart - Thou hast given my soul what it wanted and wished for. I find now a happiness which earthly things could not produce. I have peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; such inward happiness as they cannot boast who have got the highest increase of corn and wine; those Two Things in the abundance of which many suppose happiness to be found.

To corn and wine all the versions, except the Chaldee, add oil; for corn, wine, and oil, were considered the highest blessings of a temporal kind that man could possess.

Verse 8

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep - Most men lie down, and most sleep, daily, for without rest and steep life could not be preserved; but alas! how few lie down in peace! peace with their own consciences, and peace with God! David had then two great blessings, rest by sleep, and peace in his soul. He had a happy soul; and when he lay down on his bed, his body soon enjoyed its repose, as the conscience was in peace. And he had a third blessing, a confidence that he should sleep in safety. And it was so. No fearful dreams disturbed his repose, for he had a mind tranquillized by the peace of God. As to his body, that enjoyed its due rest, for he had not overloaded nature either with dainties or superfluities. Reader, are not many of thy sleepless hours to be attributed to thy disordered soul - to a sense of guilt on thy conscience, or to a fear of death and hell?

Pray incessantly till thou get the light of God's countenance, till his Spirit bear witness with thine that thou art a child of God. Then thy repose will do thee good: and even in thy sleep thy happy soul will be getting forward to heaven.