

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The psalmist returns thanks to God for deliverance from great danger, Psalm 30:1-3. He calls upon the saints to give thanks to God at the remembrance of his holiness, because of his readiness to save, Psalm 30:4, Psalm 30:5. He relates how his mind stood affected before this great trial and how soon an unexpected change took place, Psalm 30:6, Psalm 30:7; mentions how, and in what terms, he prayed for mercy, Psalm 30:8-10; shows how God heard and delivered him and the effect it had upon his mind, Psalm 30:11, Psalm 30:12.

This Psalm or song is said to have been made or used at the dedication of the house of David, or rather the dedication of a house or temple; for the word David refers not to מִבְּיַת דָּוִד (habbayith), the house, but to מִזְמוֹר (mizmor), a Psalm. But what temple or house could this be? Some say, the temple built by Solomon; others refer it to the dedication of the second temple under Zerubbabel, and some think it intended for the dedication of a third temple, which is to be built in the days of the Messiah. There are others who confine it to the dedication of the house which David built for himself on Mount Sion, after he had taken Jerusalem from the Jebusites; or to the purgation and re-dedication of his own house, that had been defiled by the wicked conduct of his own son Absalom. Calmet supposes it to have been made by David on the dedication of the place which he built on the threshing floor of Araunah, after the grievous plague which had so nearly desolated the kingdom, 2 Samuel 24:25; 1 Chronicles 21:26. All the parts of the Psalm agree to this: and they agree to this so well, and to no other hypothesis, that I feel myself justified in modelling the comment on this principle alone.

Verse 1

I will extol thee - for thou hast lifted me up - I will lift thee up, for thou hast lifted me up. Thou hast made me blessed, and I will make thee glorious. Thou hast magnified me in thy mercy; and I will show forth thy praise, and speak good of thy name.

I have made some remarks on this Psalm in the Introduction.

In this Psalm we find seven different states of mind distinctly marked: -

1. It is implied, in the first verse, that David had been in great distress, and nearly overwhelmed by his enemies.
2. He extols God for having lifted him up, and having preserved him from the cruelty of his adversaries, Psalm 30:1-3.
3. He is brought into great prosperity, trusts in what he had received, and forgets to depend wholly on the Lord, Psalm 30:4-6.
4. The Lord hides his face from him, and he is brought into great distress, Psalm 30:7.
5. He feels his loss, and makes earnest prayer and supplication, Psalm 30:8-10.
6. He is restored to the Divine favor, and filled with joy, Psalm 30:11.
7. He purposes to glory in God alone, and to trust in him for ever, Psalm 30:12.

As it is impossible for any man to have passed through all these states at the same time; it is supposed that the Psalm, like many others of the same complexion, has been formed out of the memoranda of a diary. See this point illustrated in the Introduction.

Thou hast lifted me up - Out of the pit into which I had fallen: the vain curiosity, and want of trust in God, that induced me to number the people. Bishop Horsley translates, Because thou hast depressed me. I thank God for my humiliation and afflictions, because they have been the means of teaching me lessons of great profit and importance.

Verse 2

Thou hast healed me - Thou hast removed the plague from my people by which they were perishing in thousands before my eyes.

Verse 3

Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave - I and my people were both about to be cut off, but thou hast spared us in mercy, and given us a most glorious respite.

Verse 4

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his - Ye priests, who wait upon him in his sanctuary, and whose business it is to offer prayers and sacrifices for the people, magnify him for the mercy he has now showed in staying this

most destructive plague.

Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness - "Be ye holy," saith the Lord, "for I am holy." He who can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, is one who loves holiness; who hates sin; who longs to be saved from it; and takes encouragement at the recollection of God's holiness, as he sees in this the holy nature which he is to share, and the perfection which he is here to attain. But most who call themselves Christians hate the doctrine of holiness; never hear it inculcated without pain; and the principal part of their studies, and those of their pastors, is to find out with how little holiness they can rationally expect to enter into the kingdom of God. O fatal and soul-destroying delusion! How long will a holy God suffer such abominable doctrines to pollute his Church, and destroy the souls of men?

Verse 5

For his anger endureth but a moment - There is an elegant abruptness in these words in the Hebrew text. This is the literal translation: "For a moment in his anger. Lives in his favor. In the evening weeping may lodge: but in the morning exultation." So good is God, that he cannot delight in either the depression or ruin of his creatures. When he afflicts, it is for our advantage, that we may be partakers of his holiness, and be not condemned with the world. If he be angry with us, it is but for a moment; but when we have recourse to him, and seek his face, his favor is soon obtained, and there are lives in that favor - the life that now is, and the life that is to come. When weeping comes, it is only to lodge for the evening; but singing will surely come in the morning. This description of God's slowness to anger, and readiness to save, is given by a man long and deeply acquainted with God as his Judge and as his Father.

Verse 6

In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved - Peace and prosperity had seduced the heart of David, and led him to suppose that his mountain - his dominion, stood so strong, that adversity could never affect him. He wished to know the physical and political strength of his kingdom; and, forgetting to depend upon God, he desired Joab to make a census of the people; which God punished in the manner related in 2 Samuel 24, and which he in this place appears to acknowledge.

Verse 7

Thou didst hide thy face - Thou didst show thyself displeased with me for my pride and forgetfulness of thee: and then I found how vainly I had trusted in an arm of flesh.

Verse 8

I cried to thee, O Lord - I found no help but in him against whom I had sinned. See his confession and prayer, 2 Samuel 24:17 (note).

Made supplication - Continued to urge my suit; was instant in prayer.

Verse 9

What profit is there in my blood - My being cut off will not magnify thy mercy. Let not the sword, therefore, come against me. If spared and pardoned, I will declare thy truth; I will tell to all men what a merciful and gracious Lord I have found. Hear, therefore, O Lord; Psalm 30:10.

Verse 11

Thou hast turned - my mourning into dancing - Rather into piping. I have not prayed in vain. Though I deserved to be cut off from the land of the living, yet thou hast spared me, and the remnant of my people. Thou hast taken away my sackcloth, the emblem of my distress and misery, and girded me with gladness, when thou didst say to the destroying angel, when he stood over Jerusalem ready to destroy it: "It is enough, stay now thy hand;" 2 Samuel 24:16.

Verse 12

To the end that my glory may sing - The word "cabod," which we here translate glory, is sometimes taken to signify the liver. Here it is supposed to mean the tongue; why not the heart? But does not David mean, by his glory, the state of exaltation and honor to which God had raised him, and in which he had before too much trusted; forgetting that he held it in a state of dependence on God? Now he was disciplined into a better sentiment. My glory before had sung praise to myself; in it I had rested; on it I had presumed; and intoxicated with my success, I sent Joab to number the people. Now my glory shall be employed for another purpose; it shall give thanks to God, and never be silent. I shall confess to all the world that all the good, the greatness, the honor, the wealth, prosperity, and excellence I possess, came from God alone, and that I hold them on his mere good pleasure. It is so; therefore, "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."

The old Psalter translates and paraphrases the last verse thus: - That my joy syng til the, and I be noght stanged: Lord my God withouten ende I sal schryf til the. The dede and the sorrow of oure syn God turnes in til joy of remission; and scheres oway oure sekk-(drives away our distress) and umgyfs (surrounds) qwen we dye, with gladness. That oure joy syng til hym, that has gyfen us that joy; for we be æno more stanged (stung) with conscience of syn: na drede of dede or of dome; bot withouten ende we sal loue (praise) him. Na tunge may telle na herte may thynk the mykelnes of joy that es in louing (praising) of hym in gast, and in sothfastnes, i.e., spirit and truth.