

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The psalmist, with strong confidence in God, in a time of distress prays earnestly for deliverance, Psalm 31:1-5. He expresses his abhorrence of evil, Psalm 31:6; gratefully mentions former interpositions of God, Psalm 31:7, Psalm 31:8; continues to detail the miseries of his case, Psalm 31:9-18; points out the privileges of them that fear God, Psalm 31:19, Psalm 31:20; shows that God had heard his prayers, notwithstanding he had given himself over for lost, Psalm 31:21, Psalm 31:22; calls on the saints to love God, and to have confidence in him, because he preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer, Psalm 31:23, Psalm 31:24.

This Psalm contains no notes of time or place, to help us to ascertain when, where, or on what account it was written. Nor have we any certain evidence relative to the author: it might have been written by David during his persecution by Saul. Some think Jeremiah to have been the author: the thirteenth verse begins exactly with the same words as Jeremiah 20:10. There are several other apparent references to passages in the book of Jeremiah, which shall be produced in the notes.

Verse 1

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust - I confide in thee for every good I need: let me not be confounded by not receiving the end of my faith, the supply of my wants, and the salvation of my soul.

Verse 2

Bow down thine ear - Listen to my complaint. Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my feebleness is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying, that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude.

Strong rock - Rocks, rocky places, or caves in the rocks, were often strong places in the land of Judea. To such natural fortifications allusions are repeatedly made by the Hebrew poetic writers.

Verse 4

Pull me out of the net - They have hemmed me in on every side, and I cannot escape but by miracle.

Verse 5

Into thine hand I commit my spirit - These words, as they stand in the Vulgate, were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used in all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf. In forms of prayer for sick and dying persons, these words were frequently inserted in Latin, though all the rest of the prayer was English; for it was supposed there was something sovereign in the language itself. But let not the abuse of such words hinder their usefulness. For an ejaculation nothing can be better; and when the pious or the tempted with confidence use them, nothing can exceed their effect. Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I give my soul to thee, for it is thine: thou hast redeemed it by thy blood; it is safe nowhere but in thy hand. Thou hast promised to save them that trust in thee; thou art the God of truth, and canst not deny thyself. But these words are particularly sanctified, or set apart for this purpose, by the use made of them by our blessed Lord just before he expired on the cross. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, I commend my spirit to thee, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, Luke 23:46. The rest of the verse was not suitable to the Savior of the world, and therefore he omits it; but it is suitable to us who have been redeemed by that sacrificial death. St. Stephen uses nearly the same words, and they were the last that he uttered. Acts 7:59.

Verse 6

I have hated them - That is, I have abominated their ways. Idolaters are the persons of whom David speaks.

I trust in the Lord - While they trust in vanities vain things; (for an idol is nothing in the world); and in lying vanities; (for much is promised and nothing given); I trust in Jehovah, who is God all-sufficient, and is my Shepherd, and therefore I shall lack no good thing.

Verse 7

Thou hast known my soul in adversities - When all forsook me; when none could help me; when I could not save my own life; when my enemies were sure that I could not escape; then I found thee to be my Friend and Supporter. When friend, so called, finds it convenient not to know his friend in affliction and poverty, then thou

didst acknowledge me as thine own, all worthless as I was. Human friendships may fail; but the Friend of sinners never fails. Cicero defines a real friend, Amicus certus in re incerta cernitor: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Reader, such a Friend is the Lord.

#### Verse 8

Thou hast set my foot in a large room - Many hair-breadth escapes David had for his life; at that time especially when, playing before Saul, the furious king took a spear and endeavored to pierce him through the body, but he escaped and got to the deserts. Here God, who had saved his life, set his feet in a large room. The seventh and eighth verses speak of what God had done previously for him.

#### Verse 9

Mine eye is consumed - He now returns, and speaks of his present situation. Grief had brought many tears from his eyes, many agonies into his soul, and many distressful feelings into his whole frame.

My soul and my belly - The belly is often taken for the whole body. But the term belly or bowels, in such a case as this, may be the most proper; for in distress and misery, the bowels being the most tender part, and in fact the very seat of compassion, they are often most affected. In Greek the word *ἰσχυρὸν* signifies a bowel, and *ἰσχυρὸν* signifies to be moved with compassion; to feel misery in the bowels at the sight of a person in pain and distress.

#### Verse 10

My life is spent with grief - My life is a life of suffering and distress, and by grief my days are shortened. Grief disturbs the functions of life, prevents the due concoction of food, injures the digestive organs, destroys appetite, impairs the nervous system, relaxes the muscles, induces morbid action in the animal economy, and hastens death. These effects are well expressed in the verse itself.

My years with sighing - "an-ach-ah" (anachah). This is a mere natural expression of grief; the very sounds which proceed from a distressed mind; an-ach-ah! common, with little variation, to all nations, and nearly the same in all languages. The och-och-on of the Irish is precisely the same sound, and the same sense. Thousands of beauties of this kind are to be found in the sacred language.

#### Verse 11

I was a reproach - When proscribed at the court of Saul, my enemies triumphed, and loaded me with execrations; my neighbors considered me as a dangerous man, now deservedly driven from society; my acquaintance, who knew me best, were afraid to hold any communication with me; and they who saw me in my exile avoided me as if affected with a contagious disorder,

#### Verse 12

I am forgotten as a dead man - I am considered as a person adjudged to death. I am like a broken vessel-like a thing totally useless.

#### Verse 13

I have heard the slander of many - To this and the two foregoing verses the reader may find several parallels; Jeremiah 18:18 to the end of Jeremiah 19:1-15., and ten first verses of chapter 20: This has caused several to suppose that Jeremiah was the author of this Psalm.

#### Verse 14

But I trusted in thee - Hitherto thou hast been my Helper, and thou art my God; I have taken thee for my eternal portion.

#### Verse 15

My times are in thy hand - The events of my life are under thy control. No danger can happen to me without thy foresight; thou seest what is prepared for or meditated against me; thou canst therefore deliver me from mine enemies.

#### Verse 16

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant - Only let me know that thou art reconciled to and pleased with me, and then, come what will, all must be well.

Save me for thy mercies' sake - Literally, Save me in thy mercy.



**Adam Clarke Commentary Psalms 31**

**that hope in God, and are endeavoring to walk carefully before him, may take courage at all times, and expect the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace.**