

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This Psalm contains a deprecation of eternal vengeance, Psalm 6:1; a petition to God for mercy, Psalm 6:2. This is enforced from a consideration of the psalmist's sufferings, Psalm 6:3; from that of the Divine mercy, Psalm 6:4; from that of the praise and glory which God would fail to receive if man were destroyed, Psalm 6:5; from that of his humiliation and contrition, Psalm 6:6, Psalm 6:7. Being successful in his supplication, he exults in God, Psalm 6:8, Psalm 6:9; and predicts the downfall of all his enemies, Psalm 6:10.

This Psalm has the following inscription: To the chief Musician on Neginoth, upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David; which the Chaldee translates, "To be sung on neginoth, a harp of eight strings." The various interpretations given to this inscription, both by ancients and moderns, show us that nothing is known concerning it. We have already seen that neginoth probably signifies all instruments which emitted sounds by strokes, or stringed instruments in general. This Psalm was to be accompanied with such instruments; but one of a particular kind is specified, viz., sheminith; so called from its having eight strings. The chief musician is directed to accompany the recital of this Psalm with the above instrument.

Verse 1

O Lord, rebuke me not - This Psalm, Which is one of the seven Penitential Psalms, is supposed to have been written during some grievous disease with which David was afflicted after his transgression with Bath-sheba. It argues a deep consciousness of sin, and apprehension of the just displeasure of God. It is the very language of a true penitent who is looking around for help, and who sees, as Bishop Horne well expresses it, "above, an angry God, ready to take vengeance; beneath, the fiery gulf, ready to receive him; without, a world in flames; within, the gnawing worm." Of all these, none so dreadful as an angry God; his wrath he particularly deprecates. God rebukes and chastens him, and he submits; but he prays not to be rebuked in anger, nor chastened in hot displeasure. because he knows that these must bring him down to total and final destruction.

Verse 2

Have mercy - I have no merit. I deserve all I feel and all I fear.

O Lord, heal me - No earthly physician can cure my malady. Body and soul are both diseased, and only God can help me.

I am weak - *אני חלש* (umlal). I am exceedingly weak; I cannot take nourishment, and my strength is exhausted.

My bones are vexed - The disease hath entered into my bones.

Verse 3

How long? - How long shall I continue under this malady? How long will it be before thou speak peace to my troubled heart?

Verse 4

Return, O Lord - Once I had the light of thy countenance, by sin I have forfeited this; I have provoked thee to depart: O Lord, return! It is an awful thing to be obliged to say, Return, O Lord, for this supposes backsliding; and yet what a mercy it is that a backslider may Return to God, with the expectation that God will return to him!

Verse 5

In death there is no remembrance of thee - Man is to glorify thee on earth. The end for which he was born cannot be accomplished in the grave; heal my body, and heal my soul, that I may be rendered capable of loving and serving thee here below. A dead body in the grave can do no good to men, nor bring any glory to thy name!

Verse 7

Mine eye is consumed - *אשח* (asheshah), is blasted, withered, sunk in my head.

Verse 8

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity - It seems that while he was suffering grievously through the disease, his enemies had insulted and mocked him; - upbraided him with his transgressions, not to increase his penitence, but to cast him into despair.

The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping - The Lord pitifully beheld the sorrows of his heart, and mercifully forgave his sins.

Verse 10

Ashamed and sore vexed - May they as deeply deplore their transgressions as I have done mine! May they return; may they be suddenly converted! The original will bear this meaning, and it is the most congenial to Christian principles.