

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

The blessedness of the man who is merciful to the poor, Psalm 41:1-3. The psalmist complains of his enemies, and prays for support, Psalm 41:4-10; and blesses God for having heard his prayer, and preserved him from his adversaries, Psalm 41:11, Psalm 41:12. A fine doxology closes the Psalm, Psalm 41:13.

The title as before. The Syriac says it was a Psalm of David, when he appointed overseers to take care of the poor. The Arabic says, it is a prophecy concerning the incarnation; and also of the salutation of Judas. It appears to me to have been written on the same occasion as the three former, and to relate to David's malady and cure, and the evil treatment he had from his enemies during his affliction. Our Lord, by accommodation, applies the ninth verse to the treachery of Judas, John 13:18; but as to any other direct reference to Christ, or his history, I believe the Psalm has none.

## Verse 1

Blessed is he that considereth - God is merciful; he will have man to resemble him: as far as he is merciful, feels a compassionate heart, and uses a benevolent hand, he resembles his Maker; and the mercy he shows to others God will show to him. But it is not a sudden impression at the sight of a person in distress, which obliges a man to give something for the relief of the sufferer, that constitutes the merciful character. It is he who considers the poor; who endeavors to find them out; who looks into their circumstances; who is in the habit of doing so; and actually, according to his power and means, goes about to do good; that is the merciful man, of whom God speaks with such high approbation, and to whom he promises a rich reward.

## Verse 2

The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive - It is worthy of remark, that benevolent persons, who consider the poor, and especially the sick poor; who search cellars, garrets, back lanes, and such abodes of misery, to find them out, (even in the places where contagion keeps its seat), very seldom fall a prey to their own benevolence. The Lord, in an especial manner, keeps them alive, and preserves them; while many, who endeavor to keep far from the contagion, are assailed by it, and fall victims to it. God loves the merciful man.

## Verse 3

The Lord will strengthen him - Good, benevolent, and merciful as he is, he must also die: but he shall not die as other men; he shall have peculiar consolations, refreshment, and support, while passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

Thou wilt make all his bed - ח"חאחאחא (haphachta), thou hast turned up, tossed, and shaken it; and thou wilt do so to all his bed - thou wilt not leave one uneasy place in it - not one lump, or any unevenness, to prevent him from sleeping. Thou wilt do every thing, consistently with the accomplishment of the great decree, "Unto dust thou shalt return," to give him ease, refreshment, and rest. We may sum up the privileges of the merciful man:

1. He is generally blessed, Psalm 41:1.
2. He will be delivered in the time of trouble, Psalm 41:1.
3. He will be preserved by a particular providence, Psalm 41:2.
4. He shall be kept alive amidst infection and danger, Psalm 41:2.
5. He shall be blessed on the earth in his temporal concerns, Psalm 41:2.
6. His enemies shall not be able to spoil or destroy him, Psalm 41:2.
7. He shall be strengthened on a bed of languishing, to enable him to bear his afflictions, Psalm 41:3.
8. He shall have ease, comfort, and support in his last hours, Psalm 41:3.

## Verse 4

I said, Lord, be merciful unto me - I need thy mercy especially, because I have sinned against thee, and my sin is a deadly wound to my soul; therefore heal my soul, for it has sinned against thee.

## Verse 5

Mine enemies speak evil - It is often a good man's lot to be evil spoken of; to have his motives, and even his most benevolent acts, misconstrued.

**Verse 6**

And if he come to see me - This may relate to Ahithophel; but it is more likely that it was to some other person who was his secret enemy, who pretended to come and inquire after his health, but with the secret design to see whether death was despatching his work.

When he goeth abroad, he telleth it - He makes several observations on my dying state; intimates that I am suffering deep remorse for secret crimes; that God is showing his displeasure against me, and that I am full of sorrow at the approach of death.

**Verse 7**

All that hate me whisper together against me - This is in consequence of the information given by the hypocritical friend, who came to him with the lying tongue, and whose heart gathereth iniquity to itself, which, when he went abroad, he told to others as illminded as himself, and they also drew their wicked inferences.

**Verse 8**

An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him - אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים אֵלָיו אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים אֵלָיו (debar beliyaal yatsuk bo), a thing, word, or pestilence of Belial, is poured out upon him. His disease is of no common sort; it is a diabolical malady.

He shall rise up no more - His disease is incurable without a miracle; and he is too much hated of God to have one wrought for him. Some apply this to the death and resurrection of Christ; he lieth - he is dead and buried; he shall never rise again from the dead.

**Verse 9**

Mine own familiar friend - This is either a direct prophecy of the treachery of Judas, or it is a fact in David's distresses which our Lord found so similar to the falsity of his treacherous disciple, that he applies it to him, John 13:18. What we translate mine own familiar friend, אִישׁ שְׁלוֹמִי (ish shelomi), is the man of my peace. The man who, with the שְׁלוֹמֵךָ (shalom lecha), peace be to thee! kissed me; and thus gave the agreed-on signal to my murderers that I was the person whom they should seize, hold fast, and carry away.

Did eat of my bread - Was an inmate in my house. Applied by our Lord to Judas, when eating with him out of the same dish. See John 13:18, John 13:26. Possibly it may refer to Ahithophel, his counsellor, the man of his peace, his prime minister; who, we know, was the strength of Absalom's conspiracy.

**Verse 10**

Raise me up - Restore me from this sickness, that I may requite them. This has also been applied to our Lord; who, knowing that he must die, prays that he may rise again, and thus disappoint the malice of his enemies.

**Verse 11**

By this I know that thou favorest me - If thou hadst not been on my side, I had perished by this disease; and then my enemies would have had cause to triumph. This also has been applied to our Lord; and Calmet says it is the greatest proof we have of the divinity of Christ, that he did not permit the malice of the Jews, nor the rage of the devil, to prevail against him. They might persecute, blaspheme, mock, insult, crucify, and slay him; but his resurrection confounded them; and by it he gained the victory over sin, death, and hell.

**Verse 12**

Thou upholdest me - I am still enabled to show that my heart was upright before God.

Settest me before thy face for ever - Thou showest that thou dost approve of me: that I stand in thy presence, under the smiles of thy approbation.

This also has been applied to our Lord, and considered as pointing out his mediatorial office at the right hand of God.

**Verse 13**

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel - By all these circumstances and events glory shall redound to the name of God for ever; for the record of these things shall never perish, but be published from one generation to another; and it has been so.

From everlasting, and to everlasting - מֵעוֹלָם וָעוֹלָם (mehaolam vead haolam); From the hidden time to the hidden time; from that which had no beginning to that which has no end.

To which he subscribes, Amen and Amen. Fiat, fiat - Vulgate.  $\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\mu}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}$ ,  $\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\mu}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}$  - Septuagint. The Chaldee says,  $\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\mu}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}$  -  $\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\mu}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}\hat{\imath}^{\hat{\imath}}$  - Be blessed, Lord God of Israel, from world, and in world. Be it! So be it! - Anglo-Saxon. To which the Old Psalter approaches very nearly: Blyssed Lord God of Isrel, fra werld, and in werld: Be it done! be it done. Thus illustrated by the same, Fra werld in werld; that es, fra the bygynnyng of this wereld, in til wereld that lastes ay. Be it done, be it done. This dubblyng schews that it es at do of al men. In Latyn, it es, fiat, fiat! in Ebru, Amen Amen es writyn: tharfore that Aquila translated vere, vel fideliter, that es, sothfastly or trew.

Thus ends what the Hebrews call the first book of Psalms; for the reader will recollect that this book is divided by the Jews into five books, the first of which ends with this Psalm.

This doxology, Dr. Kennicott supposes, may have been added by the collector of this book; and he thinks that the division into books is not arbitrary, and that the Psalms were collected at different times by different persons. See the Introduction. There is certainly a considerable variety in the style of the several books; in the examination of which the Hebrew critic will not lose his labor.