

PSALM 3
ARISE, O LORD, SAVE ME

BY BROTHER ROBERTS

“LORD how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.”

“Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God. Selah.”

“But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.”

“I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.”

“I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.”

“I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me, round about.”

“Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.”

“Salvation unto the Lord; thy blessing upon thy people. Selah.”

THIS Psalm was no doubt written at a troublous crisis in David's life. The head note, (which though by no means an infallible guide, being supplied by Jewish compilers, and not by the Psalmist, is entitled to more respect than the italic analysis of the “divines,”) ascribes it to the flight of David from Jerusalem, during Absalom's rebellion. This may have been the occasion of its utterance, and would account for the peculiar sentiment it breathes as a lamentation of present calamity, and exultation in God in view of deliverance; but remembering that the Spirit made use of David's individual emotions to portray things concerning the Christ of which he was but the type, we must seek for a more extended application of the words than we find in David's history.

Jesus, with greater reason than David, could lament the increase of those who troubled him, rising up against him, and denying his refuge in the Almighty. David was but a man, exalted by favour to a position of distinction and privilege to which he had no claim, and therefore could not murmur with much grace at any reversal of circumstances which might occur in God's providential developments. This is precisely the view that he expresses on the very occasion when this psalm is supposed to have been written. When Shimei, the Benjamite cursed and threw stones at him as he walked barefooted and weeping from Jerusalem, he said in answer to Abishai's request to be allowed to slay him---

“Let him alone; let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be the Lord will look upon mine affliction &c.” (2 Sam. 16:11.)

Again, on his return to Jerusalem in triumph to a restored kingdom, he refused to sanction the death of any who had aided the rebellion. David, though exalted, knew his equality with fellowmen, and appreciated the humility becoming such an one. In this, he presented a contrast to “the mighty” of this and other ages, who swell to large dimensions in the conceit of their own importance, foolishly forgetting the vanity of their existence as they strut superciliously upon the brief stage of a dependent and inferior (even an earthly) life.

Jesus was no mere earth-born invested with a temporary and adventitious importance. He was the Son of God, the manifestation of God by Spirit in or through flesh, one whose essential connection with

Deity gave him a standing and an authority and a value of existence which no son of Adamic mortality could ever lay claim to. For such an one therefore, who temporarily surrendered the privileges pertaining to his derivation (for our sakes becoming poor) and condescended to offer life-giving mercy to a worthless race, actually humbling himself to provide by death the means of carrying his offer into effect,—for such an one under these circumstances to be treated with slight and traducement, and malicious opposition, might well warrant the lament of the Psalm.

At first, Christ was unopposed. The people were in general expectancy of the Messiah: “*All men mused in their hearts whether John were the Messiah;*” and when Jesus appeared, the fame of his miracles rapidly procured for him general consideration. This was a natural result, and we should have expected that in due time it would have progressed till the whole heart of the nation had been captivated by the unparalleled and unmistakable manifestation of divine power, allied as it was to the choicest goodness and sternest purity ever exhibited to mortals. But collision with jealous and self-righteous rulers called influences into play which speedily checked and turned the current of popular feeling; repudiated by Christ on account of their unrighteousness, the Chief Priests, Scribes and Pharisees, who no doubt in the first instance would have gladly patronised him if he had been a little more courtly and polite in his deportment, became his bitter enemies, and circulated slanders about him. They called him an impostor: they attributed his miracles, which they could not deny, to the power of the heathen deity, Baal-zebub, (Lord of the fly); they represented him as the antagonist of Moses, and the reviler of the God of Israel; and the Scribes and Pharisees having great influence among the people, just as their modern representatives, the clergy, have now, the people believed the slanders and turned against him.

In the words of the psalm, they who troubled him increased, and many rose up against him saying “There was no help for him in God.” They denied his connection with the Almighty, and rejected him as a mere pretender, ascribing his wonders to necromancy. This was a sore trial to one who could say, “*Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*”—a sorer trial than we with our blunt apprehensions of Deity, can realize.

Jesus was inhabited by a constant, all-pervading sense of the Father. Originally begotten of the Holy Spirit, the fulness of the Spirit coming upon him at the Jordan, and resting upon him without measure, made him the incarnated manifestation of the Highest, with whom his individuality was completely blended. We can therefore to some extent understand the keenness of the wound inflicted upon him by the popular repudiation of his divine sonship. To know that he was of the Father and had come to carry out the most beneficent of the Father’s purposes, must have made it especially grievous to endure the slight and contumely to which he was daily subject at the hands of a self-righteous, hypocritical flesh-proud generation. We, the “dust and ashes” of the earth, find it hard to put up with disparagement, even when justly due. How, then, must the Son of God have suffered, to know his own greatness and importance, and receive the contemptuous jibes of worthless and mortal contemporaries.

But he fell back upon the facts of the case for his consolation. Away from the fevered life and contentious rancor of the city, alone upon the mountain top, in the calmness of the night, withdrawn from the irritating contact of prosperous wickedness, he could forget “the contradiction of sinners,” and “in prayer all night to God,” draw deep comforts from the realization that despite the unbelief and repudiation of men, God was really his strength, his shield, his glory, his defence, the lifter up of his head. This was the exercise of his faith. He was driven upon the resources of faith as much as we. He fellowshiped the infirmities of our nature and would therefore be similarly affected to sadness by the outward and apparently stable triumph of his enemies.

The possession of place, power, riches, and repute, by the selfish, and the arrogant, and the ungodly, would equally tax his patience with ours, and necessitate an equal exercise of trust in God for the promised development of his glory.

“*He was in all points tempted like as we are.*”

But he endured unto the end—

“Enduring the cross, and despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him.”

In this he left us an example that we should tread in his steps. We require the strength of such an example. We are weak and faltering; we are apt to be overwhelmed by the pressure of present circumstances, and to give way under the influence of present events; but let us take courage. We, who wait wearily for the morning, lamenting the exaltation of ungodliness in all the walks of life and the present prosperity of wickedness, individual and collective, social and political, and wounded in spirit by a universal disregard to God and his truth, let us think of the Son of Man in the days of his flesh, tried by the same endurance, overborne by the same pressure.

Our patient submission to the defame of the world, composed of many bitter ingredients—the jeers of the unbeliever, the contempt of the charitable, the pity of the learned, will not be in vain. Our devout conformity to God’s institutions and God’s precepts of life, though yielding no profit now, though bearing no promise to the eye of sense of the life to come, though esteemed foolishness by those who walk by the wisdom of this world, will bear pleasant fruit, when amid the glories of a dawning immortality at the appearing of Christ, the difference will be discerned between them that serve God and those that serve him not. (Mal. 3:18.)

Christ’s faith and patience were rewarded. He cried at the great crisis of his trouble and God heard him. He laid him down and slept a short sweet sleep in the grave. On the third day, he awoke, for God sustained him. But for this, his body would have gone to corruption. Even three days in that eastern climate were sufficient for decomposition to reach an advanced stage, but it had been written *“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.”* Therefore, the process of corruption was arrested; and enswathed in a divine embalming, he awaited the glad morning of liberation when angels descended from heaven, rolled away the great stone from the door, and set the captive free.

“Having tasted death for every man,” he then tasted of the glorious liberty awaiting all the sons of God and rejoiced. His task was over. Awaking in the strength of a resurrected body, and recovered from the griefs and fatigues of his toilsome sojourn in the flesh, he had an immediate and uninterrupted prospect of the glory to which, at the end of forty days, he was to be “highly exalted,” and could sing in the triumphant emphasis of the psalm—

“I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.”

Taking a wider range in the sweep of his vision, and looking beyond to his consummated mission in the salvation of all his people and the suppression of *“all enemies under his feet,”*—contemplating the unlimited prospect of glory stretched before his clearer and stronger vision—he could call upon God to complete the work of his hand —

“Arise, O Lord, save me O my God, for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone.”

This smiting is not yet accomplished, though guaranteed in Christ’s resurrection; when it is, the appointed sequel introduced in the last verse of the psalm will be developed gloriously, even at the time when God’s glory will cover the earth like the spreading of the sea; namely—

“Salvation unto the Lord; THY BLESSING UPON THY PEOPLE.”

There is a parallel to all these things in the experience of *“those that are Christ’s.”* If they are faithful in the profession of their faith and in the exhibition of the true christian character, they will have to lament the increase of those that trouble them and the rising up of many against them, denying that they have any refuge in God. They will feel constrained in spirit, and cry in the oppression of their hearts—

“Arise O Lord and save me, O my God.”

In due time their cry will be heard. They may have to lay their heads in the dust, but their lives will be in God’s keeping. The memory of them will not fade from his eternal mind: and at the appointed time, he will again call them forth upon the stage of existence, not this time to fret out a brief mortality, but to join the forerunner in the endless glories of the rest *“prepared for the people of God.”*

But the future depends upon the present; faith and patience and steadfastness, are the essential conditions of ultimate exaltation. — *Ambassador 1864*