

PSALM ELEVEN AND TWELVE

4. Discuss David's areas of life in which this psalm might have application.
5. When we see Him "face to face" the dark things will be made plain—the inexplicable circumstances of life will have the easiest of explanations. Discuss a child-parent-teacher-student-relationship in which this is presently true—you might add scientist-layman.

PSALM 12

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

General Corruption, Evidenced by Sin of the Tongue,
Impels to Prayer and Calls Forth a Divine Answer.

ANALYSIS

In Stanzas I. and II. (vers. 1-4), the Petitioner Describes the Prevalent Sins of the Tongue, and Prays for the Excision of the Offenders. In Stanzas III. and IV. (vers. 5-8), Jehovah's Answer is Announced and Amplified.

(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1¹ Oh save Jehovah! for the man of kindness is no more,
for the faithful have ceased from among the sons of men:¹
- 2 Unreality speak they every one with² his neighbour,
with a flattering lip and a double mind do they speak.
- 3 May Jehovah cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that speaketh great things:
- 4 Them who have said "To our tongues we give strength,
our lips are with us, who is our master?"
- 5 "Because of the spoiling of humbled ones because of the
sighing of needy ones
now will I arise" saith Jehovah:
"I will place him in safety who panteth for it."³—
- 6 The promises of Jehovah are promises that are pure,
silver smelted down in a furnace to the ground⁴—
refined seven times.

1. Cp. Isa. 57:1, 2, Mi. 7:2.

2. Some cod. (w. L ear. pr. ed., Sep., Vul.): "unto"—Gn.

3. "I will shine forth for him"—Br.

4. So Del. and similarly Dr. But Br. reads and renders the verse:
"When thrust down to the earth he shall be purified seven times."

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- 7 Thou Jehovah wilt keep them,¹
wilt guard him² from this generation to the ages.
8 On every side lawless ones march about,
when worthlessness is exalted among the sons of men.³

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

PARAPHRASE

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Lord! Help! Godly men are fast disappearing. Where in all the world can dependable men be found?

2 Everyone deceives and flatters and lies. There is no sincerity left.

3, 4 But the Lord will not deal gently with people who act like that; He will destroy those proud liars who say, "We will lie to our hearts' content. Our lips are our own; who can stop us?"

5 The Lord replies, "I will arise and defend the oppressed, the poor, the needy. I will rescue them as they have longed for Me to do."

6 The Lord's promise is sure. He speaks no careless word; all He says is purest truth, like silver seven times refined.

7 O Lord, we know that You will forever preserve Your own from the reach of evil men,

8 Although they prowl on every side and vileness is praised throughout the land.

EXPOSITION

It is difficult to reduce to writing the successive impressions made by the study of this psalm. Who wrote it? Again that becomes an absorbing question; simply because a candid and sympathetic investigation of the psalm itself insists upon a reconsideration of the *prima-facie* conclusion. It is inscribed to David; and we cannot lightly dismiss the presumption thence arising that he wrote it. Nevertheless the situation as a whole suggests another set of circumstances than any in which we know David to have been placed; and, inasmuch as we are learn-

1. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.): "us"—Gn.

2. Br. renders this verse:—

3. Though round about the wicked walk
When thou risest up thou dost lightly
esteem the sons of mankind.

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ing to perceive an element of adaptation in psalms which are still reverently attributed to David as original author, we may feel perfectly free to look those circumstances full in the face.

Now there is no denying that David at the court of Saul had ample occasion to lament the mischief made by tongues that were at once *flattering* and *false*; and so it is easy to conceive that the original draft and for a time the permanent form of this psalm as it came from David's pen began nearly as does the present recension of it.

All the same, the outlook, as it now stands in the very opening couplet, appears too broad to have come within David's early survey of *the sons of men*. It is not in the least likely that, in those early expectant days, such a pessimistic conclusion would have forced itself on David's mind.

Moreover, the desire that Jehovah would *cut off* all flattering lips seems premature while as yet the son of Jesse had not come to the throne; and when he could scarcely yet have felt such a sense of responsibility for the moral condition of the nation as would suggest such a prayer. Even when he had come to the throne the royal resolve to banish evil tongues from his court, and so discredit them to the nation, which we find in Psalm 101, much more commends itself than a sweeping prayer like this.

Still more conclusively in favour of a wholly different time is the underlying assumption which is seen in verse 5, which presupposes a whole class of *humbled* and *needy ones* for whose vindication Jehovah's interposition has been long delayed.

If these considerations were not forcible enough to carry our point,—who can imagine David, at any time of his reign, admitting not only that *lawless men* were *strutting about* in the land, but that worthlessness itself was exalted, not only amongst a rapidly growing faction, as in Absalom's days, but generally *amongst the sons of men*?

It is remarkable how thoroughly the hypothesis of a revision of the original psalm by King Hezekiah, more particularly in the early days of his reign, meets the difficulties above suggested, and provides a situation which responds to all the leading features of the psalm.

From the known infidelities and weaknesses of Hezekiah's father Ahaz, we might safely have inferred the consequent corruption of the morals of the people; which, in any case, is independently attested by the early chapters of Isaiah's prophecies. As if to make surety sure, the opening lament of this psalm is

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almost verbally repeated by the two parallel passages referred to under the text above; namely Isa. 57:1 and Micah 7:2. That Micah was an early enough witness, will be universally conceded; and if the so-called Isaiah II. was no other than the familiar friend of our youth, Isaiah of Jerusalem, then we have a combination of evidence which no gainsaying can overthrow, that in or about the time of Hezekiah's early reign there was quite sufficient ground for the sweeping opening lament of this psalm.

Nor is it from these parallels alone that confirmation of a Hezekian adaptation comes. For the words *Now will I arise, saith Jehovah*, of verse 5, are a literal quotation from Isa. 33:10; and, once we are in that remarkable chapter, another coincidence meets us. The singular descent from the *humbled and needy ones* in general to one particular suppliant in peril of verse 5 of our psalm—*I will place him in safety*—is alone suggestive of Hezekiah; how much more so when, after Isaiah's beautiful description of the ideal King—so strikingly realised in Hezekiah,—he proceeds to say, "He the heights shall inhabit, a stronghold of crags shall be his refuge (his lofty retreat)" (Isa. 33:16)—that is indeed being *placed in safety!*

Even the variations in the reading and rendering of verse 6 of our psalm, rather embarrass with a wealth of allusions than cause us any perplexity. We may confess to a strong liking to the longer form of that verse presented by the Massoretic text, for several reasons: as, first, for the occurrence of the poetic word *'imrah*, which we render "promise" in Psalm 119, and of which Delitzsch here says: "The poetical *'imrah* serves especially as the designation of the divine words of promise which are so full of power," and, second, for the intrinsic beauty of the comparison of Jehovah's promises with *smelted silver*. And yet, after all, there is even a surpassing aptness of reference to Hezekiah himself in the shorter form preferred by Dr. Briggs, *When thrust down to the earth he shall be purified seven times*. Delitzsch rejoices in the longer form, and lovingly speaks of the "hexastich" as the gem of the psalm, whose brightness relieves the gloom of the psalm's Massoretic ending, which he cannot deny. Briggs delights himself with the shorter form, as bringing the whole psalm within four stanzas of four lines each!

Even yet our easily borne embarrassments are not at an end. The gloomy finish to the psalm is mildly defended by Delitzsch, as above intimated; Perowne regretfully admits it, remarking, "this return to gloom and doubt is, I believe, without

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parallel at the conclusion of a psalm"; the which frank admission may prepare us for the drastic treatment of Briggs, who, by a new decipherment of the consonants, and in part leaning on the Septuagint and on verse 5, sets forth as the concluding couplet

Though round about the wicked walk,
When thou risest up, thou dost lightly esteem the sons of
mankind.

"This," says he, "gives an appropriate climax to the psalm."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Upon what adequate basis are we to conclude that Hezekiah edited the psalms of David? Discuss.
2. If we conclude that there is a definite possibility that such editing took place—are we to believe that Hezekiah was divinely directed in his editing?—why did he edit?
3. Since some of our readers will not share Rotherham's explanation as including Hezekiah's editing—please relate this to the life of David and show how *all* the psalm can be related to David.
4. Please remember God lives in the eternal everlasting NOW—all the proud liars of David's day (and Hezekiah's day) are destroyed—God does NOT live in the time-space sequence called life—how does this help?

PSALM 13

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Sorely Tried Believer in Jehovah Expostulates,
Entreats, and Ultimately Exults.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Expostulation; Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Entreaty; Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Exultation.

(Lm.)—Psalm—by David

- 1 How long Jehovah—wilt thou forget me for ever?
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?