

## PSALM THIRTY AND THIRTY-ONE

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. All of us can remember the exhilaration we felt when once the fever of flu left us, or the nausea; we awoke one morning and we were no longer sick. This seems to be the background of this Psalm. Perhaps the sickness was more serious than flu. Perhaps we have been healed from another sickness. Discuss.
2. "At eventide there cometh to lodge, Weeping, but by morning, Jubilation." There are other translations of verse 5, discuss them.
3. There are some beautiful contrasts; discuss these: anger and favour, a moment and a lifetime, evening and morning, weeping and joy, mourning and dancing, sackcloth and festive attire.
4. Verse nine seems to suggest that man has one primary task on earth—what is it? How do we fulfill it?
5. This is a song of dedication of the House—why isn't it used at a church dedication? Discuss.

## PSALM 31

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Fellowship in Suffering and Salvation.

### ANALYSIS

Stanzas I. and II., vers. 1-4, and 5-8, Suffering, caused chiefly by enemies, some of them Idolatrous, Overcome by Steadfast Faith. Stanza III., vers. 9-12, The Lament of a Leper. Stanza IV., vers. 13-16, A complaint of conspiracy, concluded with confidence of Salvation. Stanza V., vers. 17, 18, Prayer for Vindication from the Lawless. Stanza VI., vers. 19, 20, Jehovah's Goodness Admired. Stanza VII., vers. 21, 22, Praise for a Special Deliverance from an Alarming Danger. Stanza VIII., vers. 23, 24, Closing Exhortation to Love, Confidence and Courage.

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(Lm.) Psalm—By David.

- 1 In thee Jehovah have I taken refuge—  
oh shame me not to the ages deliver me:

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 In thy righteousness bow down unto me thine ear—  
speedily rescue me:  
Become thou to me a stronghold-rock—  
a house of munitions<sup>1</sup> to save me:
- 3 Because my cliff and my fastness art thou  
therefore<sup>2</sup> lead me and guide me:<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Wilt thou bring me forth out of the net which they have  
hidden for me—  
because thou art my stronghold.
- 5 Into thy hand I commit my spirit—<sup>4</sup>  
thou hast ransomed me O Jehovah.
- 6 O God of truth! thou hatest<sup>5</sup> such as  
give heed to unreal vanities.<sup>6</sup>
- 7 I therefore unto Jehovah have directed my trust—  
I will exult and be glad in thy kindness,—  
Thou who hast looked upon my humiliation—  
hast taken note of the distresses of my soul,
- 8 And hast not delivered me into the hand of an enemy—  
hast given standing in a roomy place to my feet.
- 9 Be gracious unto me Jehovah, for distress is mine—  
wasteth away<sup>7</sup> my soul and my body;<sup>8</sup>
- 10 For consumed with sorrow is my life—  
and my years with singing:
- 11 Staggered with humiliation<sup>9</sup> is my strength—  
and my bones waste away because of my distress;  
I have become a reproach and to mine acquaintances a  
terror—<sup>10</sup>  
in the street they flee from me;<sup>11</sup>

1. Or: "castle." *Ml.*: "house of fastnesses."  
2. *M.T.*: "for the sake of thy name, then."  
3. *Cp.* 71:3.  
4. *Cp.* *Lk.* 23:46.  
5. So some *cod.* (w. *Aram.*, *Sep.*, *Syr.*, *Vul.*)—*Gn.* "This reading gives the contrast required by the next line"—*Kp.*  
6. So *Dr.* "That is false gods, or idols: *cp.* *Deu.* 32:21, *Jer.* 14:22."  
7. *M.T.*: "with vexation mine eye."  
8. *Ml.*: "my belly," *Heb. betan.* *Cp.* 44:25.  
9. So *Gt.*—*Gn.*  
10. So apparently *Br.* *M.T.* (as rendered by *Dr.*): "Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach, and unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a dread to my familiar friends: they that see me without flee from me." ("Read probably," says *Dr.* "I am become a reproach exceedingly, and a dread to my familiar friends, and to my neighbours.")  
11. "This verse is difficult"—*Per.*

PSALM THIRTY-ONE

- 12 I am forgotten like a dead man out of mind—  
I am become like a missing vessel.
- 13 For I have heard the whispering of multitudes—  
“A terror round about!”<sup>1</sup>  
When they have sat in conclave together—  
to take away my life<sup>2</sup> have they intrigued;
- 14 But I on thee have set my trust—  
Jehovah my God are thou.
- 15 In thy hand are my times—  
rescue me from the hand of my foes and my pursuers,
- 16 Light up thy face on thy servant—  
grant me salvation<sup>3</sup> in thy kindness.
- 17 Jehovah! oh let me not be put to shame that<sup>4</sup> I have called  
on thee:  
shamed be the lawless—become silent for hades;
- 18 made dumb be lips of falsehood,  
which are speaking against a righteous one arrogantly  
with pride and contempt.
- 19 How great is thy goodness O Jehovah,<sup>5</sup>  
which thou hast treasured up for them who revere thee,  
which thou hast wrought before the sons of men  
for them who take refuge in thee.<sup>6</sup>
- 20 Thou hidest them in the hiding-place of thy presence,  
from the harshness<sup>7</sup> of men:  
Thou treasurest them in a shelter  
from the strife of tongues.
- 21 Blessed be Jehovah! in that he hath made wonderful his  
kindness for me in a city beseiged.
- 22 But I had said in mine alarm—  
“I am driven out<sup>8</sup> before thine eyes!”  
Nevertheless thou didst hear the voices of my supplication,  
when I cried for help unto thee.
- 23 Love ye Jehovah all ye his men of kindness,

1. Jer. 6:25, 20:3, 10, 46:5, 49:29, Lam. 2:22.

2. U.: “soul.”

3. Or.: “deliverance”; occasionally “victory.”

4. Or.: “for.”

5. Some cod. (w. Sep., Vul.) add this “Oh Jehovah”—Gn.

6. Clause transposed for clearness of sense and assonance of ending.

7. So. Br. “Plottings”—Kp. “From the bandings together”—Dr. “Conspiracies”—Per. “From the factions of the people”—Del.

8. Cp. Jonah 2:4.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

it is the faithful Jehovah preserveth;  
but he repayeth in abundance<sup>1</sup> the proud doer.

24 Be strong<sup>2</sup> and let your heart be bold—  
all ye who are waiting for Jehovah.

(Nm.)

### PARAPHRASE

#### PSALM 31

Lord, I trust in You alone. Don't let my enemies defeat me. Rescue me because You are the God who always does what is right.

2 Answer quickly when I cry to You; bend low and hear my whispered<sup>3</sup> plea. Be for me a great Rock of safety from my foes.

3 Yes, You are my Rock and my fortress; honor Your name by leading me out of this peril.

4 Pull me from the trap my enemies have set for me. For You alone are strong enough.<sup>4</sup>

5, 6 Into Your hand I commit my spirit . . .

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You have rescued me, O God who keeps His promises! for I worship only You; and how You hate all those who worship idols, those imitation gods.

7 I am radiant with joy because of Your mercy, for You have listened to my troubles and have seen the crisis in my soul.

8 You have not handed me over to my enemy, but have given me open ground in which to maneuver.

\* \* \* \* \*

9, 10 O Lord, have mercy on me in my anguish. My eyes are red from weeping; my health is broken from sorrow. I am pining away with grief; my years are shortened, drained away because of sadness. My sins have sapped my strength! I stoop with sorrow and with shame.<sup>5</sup>

11 I am scorned by all my enemies and even more by my neighbors and friends. They dread meeting me and look the other way when I go by.

1. Ml.: "on the basis of abundance"—O.G.

2. Heb.: HIZKU (?reminding one of HEZEKIAH).

3. Implied.

4. Literally, "for You are my refuge."

5. Literally, "Even my bones are rotting away."

## PSALM THIRTY-ONE

12 I am forgotten like a dead man, like a broken and discarded pot.

13 I heard the lies about me, the slanders of my enemies. Everywhere I looked I was afraid, for they were plotting against my life.

14, 15 But I was trusting You, O Lord. I said, "You alone are my God; my times are in Your hands. Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.

16 Let Your favor shine again upon Your servant; save me just because You are so kind!

17 Don't disgrace me, Lord, by not replying when I call to You for aid. But let the wicked be shamed by what they trust in; let them lie silently in their graves,

18 Their lying lips quieted at last—the lips of these arrogant men who are accusing honest men of evil deeds."

19 Oh, how great is Your goodness to those who publicly declare that You will rescue them. For You have stored up great blessings for those who trust and reverence You.

20 Hide Your loved ones in the shelter of Your presence, safe beneath Your hand, safe from all conspiring men.

21 Blessed is the Lord, for He has shown me that His never-failing love protects me like the walls of a fort!

22 I spoke too hastily when I said, "The Lord has deserted me," for You listened to my plea and answered me.

23 Oh, love the Lord all of you who are His people; for the Lord protects those who are loyal to Him, but harshly punishes all who haughtily reject Him.

24 So cheer up! Take courage if you are depending on the Lord!

## EXPOSITION

This psalm might very well be described as a Mosaic of Misery and Mercy. Its most striking feature is, the bringing together of such varied experiences of suffering, that the reflective reader seems compelled to picture to himself several distinct types of sorrow; and herein probably lie the greatest charm and value of this psalm.

For two stanzas, we realize that we are at home with David: the dangers are his, and the deliverances; the favourite phrases also and figures are his. We may even go so far as to suggest that the subdued climax to which these stanzas rise in vers. 7

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and 8 admirably suits the time of the coronation of David in Hebron. He had not then reached the summit of dominion over all Israel; but his feet had become firmly planted in a *roomy place*. Many a time had the courtiers and soldiers of Saul, sought to catch him by a *net* of diplomacy or military stratagem. More than once, we know, he was in such imminent danger of death, as to have been moved to *commit* his imperilled *spirit* to his *redeeming* God.

The third stanza transports us into a widely different scene. We are in the presence of a stricken one, who is *wasting away*, who *staggers* under the *humiliating* blow which has fallen upon him. If he goes into the *street*, his old *acquaintances* flee from him: in dismay and disgust he stays in his "several" house until he is *forgotten*. We instinctively think of the leper-king Uzziah! Who, but an author having deep sympathy for lepers, would have introduced such a realistic picture into a psalm? But one touch of *nature* makes the whole world kin! And Hezekiah had felt that touch.

Again we are transported, by the fourth stanza, into a scene of persecution. We have set before us a victim of intrigue, whose likeness we recognize. He is a man with a nickname. They mockingly call him *Magor missaviv*, *A terror round about*. It is no other than Jeremiah. How he came here is another question. Ezra or one of the Sopherim may have let in his picture into this gallery of portraits of Famous Sufferers—in which Jeremiah well deserved a place.

But now, in the fifth stanza, we seem to be brought back to an earlier conclusion of the psalm. The voice is Hezekiah's. The *lawless* foreigners are in evidence. They do not *whisper* like Jeremiah's cowardly persecutors: no! they *speak arrogantly with pride and contempt*—like that "vile person"—Rabshakeh! And it is against an *individual righteous one* that the villain points his profane tongue. We count ourselves happy that we are beginning to know that righteous KING OF ISRAEL better than we did! *He* suffered of old for his momentary pride: *we* have long suffered for his modesty.

But the tones of his harp wax more fully and loud. Note to what a goodly theme he rises in the sixth stanza—how largely he generalises—how lofty are his conceptions of *Jehovah's goodness*, as one while He *hides his loved ones in his presence from the harshness of men* and at another works his wonders *before the sons of men*.

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More specific still, is the reminiscence of personal history contained in stanza seven. Over and over again, may Hezekiah have anticipated flight from the holy city. He had, in his alarm, imagined himself reproaching his Divine Protector—"I am driven out before thine eyes." But the realisation of that extreme stage of desperation had been spared him. Jehovah had *made his kindness so wonderful*, as effectually to prevent it.

After this, what more fitting than that praise should be merged into exhortation? and, as the psalmist calls upon his *men of kindness*, official as well as unofficial, to *love Jehovah* as well as praise him, and remembers the *preservation* granted to himself and his fellow-believers, he seems to be glancing to the mountains on which the Assyrians fell when he says, *But he repayeth abundantly* the proud doer. *Be strong*, he says, almost signing his name, see footnote on ver. 24) and *let your heart be bold, all ye who*, at any time for evermore, shall be *waiting for Jehovah*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. G. Campbell Morgan suggests this psalm contains an experience common to all of us—he says:

In this song we find the seasons of the soul as we all know them sooner or later. First autumn with its winds and gathering clouds, yet having sunlight, and a golden fruitage, even though the breath of death is everywhere (vers. 1-8). Then follows winter, chill and lifeless, full of sobs and sighing (vers. 9-13). After that the spring, with its hope and expectation, its sweeping rains, and bursting sun-gleams (vers. 14-18). At last the glad and golden summer (vers. 19-24). We need them all to complete our year! (*Notes on the Psalms*—p. 60)

2. Verse five sounds very familiar. Who used it? Show how appropriate it was. If we do not commit our Spirit to Him in the hour of sunlight will we do it in the hour of darkness?
3. Somehow the condition of the body becomes the condition of the soul—did then God intend man to be sick? Isn't sickness unnatural? Discuss.
4. Mr. Rotherham has a real struggle trying to identify the author as either Hezekiah, Jeremiah, or David. We have but little difficulty identifying ourselves in verses 9 through 12. Indicate and discuss your own "sobs and sighs."

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. "I spoke too hastily when I said, 'The Lord has deserted me.'" Discuss the essential element of faith. What is faith? How do we obtain it? What will increase it?

## PSALMS 32, 33

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Felicitations to the Forgiven, and Examples of the Songs that they Sing.

### ANALYSIS

Part I., Psalm 32. Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Happy the Forgiven; yet Divine Discipline has sometimes to Drive to Confession. Stanza II., vers. 5, 6, Confession brings Pardon, and promotes Exhortation. Stanza III., ver. 7, Petitions prompted by Exhortation. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, Divine Response to Petitions. Stanza V., vers. 10, 11, A Moral and an Invitation.

Part II., Psalm 33. Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Praise to Jehovah urged by his Word, Work, and Character. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, Jehovah's Creatorship a Ground for Earth's Reverence. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Jehovah Overruleth All Nations for the Good of his Own Nation. Stanza IV., vers. 13-17, Jehovah's Regard for All Nations should Wean them from Trust in Brute Force. Stanza V., vers. 18-22, Experience Gratefully Closes the Song.

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(Lm.) By David—An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 How happy is he—  
whose transgressions is forgiven,<sup>1</sup>  
whose sin is pardoned,<sup>2</sup>
- 2 How happy the man—  
to whom Jehovah reckoneth not iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 When I refused to confess<sup>3</sup> my bones became old with my  
loud lamentation;<sup>4</sup>  
for day and night heavy on me was thy hand,—
- 4 I was changed into misery as when thorns smite me.<sup>5</sup>

1. Ml.: "lifted off," "taken away."

2. Ml.: "covered."

3. Ml.: "when I kept silence."

4. M.T. adds: "all the day."

5. So Br., after Sep.