

THOUGHTS FROM PSALM 123*

– King James Version –

1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

The child of God looks upwards, figuratively speaking, in vocal or silent prayer, and takes assurance in the firm belief that God *IS* – exists – and that he will regard the fervent prayers of his people. (Heb. 11: 6) Thus it has been from ages past to the present, across the vast tracts of history (Mal. 3: 6). The same LORD resides in the symbolic ‘heavens’ and is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning, without end – without limitation.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

In the manner of those attending at court or in a palace, we watch diligently for the LORD, and wait with alacrity – not to earn mercy and compassion by our own merit, but with joy, to demonstrate our desire to do his will. The LORD does not force pointless regimentation upon us, nor is he a harsh, haughty overlord; those who are justified by faith in the Son, consecrated to his will, may approach God any hour of day or night for prayer and comfort. ‘In all cases where obedience is due [to God] it should be rendered with a willing heart; but when superiors in state, family or society charge us to do what God forbids, or not to do what he commands, we are to disobey them, not in a challenging, but in a mild manner and spirit. And if civil governments forbid their [citizens] to believe in and serve the Lord, or command them to do what God forbids, such should “obey God rather than men”.’ (*The Present Truth*, Nov.-Dec., 1980, p. 84, col. 2; Acts 5: 28, 29)

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

A plea for mercy, repeated for emphasis, reflects the distress of a petitioner treated with scorn by the oppressors, leaving us dispirited: ‘We have had more than enough of contempt’ (RSV). Added to this, perhaps sins we have committed and not repented of lie heavy on the conscience, sully our fellowship with God. Our adversary, the devil, will lever our own guilt against us and harass us, endangering our peace of mind. Beloved, hold true to the conviction that God is merciful, and when we approach him in Jesus’ name he will graciously forgive.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

The psalmist speaks for all of God’s people (‘we’), reviled by those who love sin and who denigrate those they deem weak and foolish in worldly matters (1 Cor. 1: 27). But a lofty spirit does not befit the LORD’s children. We are to be little in our own eyes but expansive in good will toward others, making our pilgrimage through this world as inoffensively and as cheerfully as possible.

* ‘This Psalm is probably a complaint of the [Jewish] captives in Babylon relative to the contempt and cruel usage they received.’ – *Clarke’s Commentary*