

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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Lord, if thine eye surveys our faults,
And justice grows severe,
Thy dreadful wrath exceeds our thoughts,
And burns beyond our fear.

Thine anger turns our frame to dust;
By one offence to thee
Adam with all his sons have lost
Their immortality.

Life, like a vain amusement, flies,
A fable or a song;
By swift degrees our nature dies,
Nor can our joys be long.

Tis but a few whose days amount
To threescore years and ten;
And all beyond that short account
Is sorrow, toil, and pain.

Our vitals with laborious strife
Bear up the crazy load,
And drag those poor remains of life
Along the tiresome road.

Almighty God, reveal thy love,
And not thy wrath alone;
O let our sweet experience prove
The mercies of thy throne!

Our souls would learn the heav'nly art
T' improve the hours we have,
That we may act the wiser part,
And live beyond the grave.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

PLEADING CHILDREN

“So teach us....”

Psalm 90:12

Our God allows us to plead with Him. So, notice the pleading in Psalm 90:12-15. There is pleading for instruction, for compassion and for mercy.

We may plead for instruction. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (v. 12). People enjoy counting money but what about counting days? Here is a plea for instruction—“teach us.” This is the prayer of a child of God. We need to be aware of the limitation of our days and be ready to “fly away.” “Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer” [Spurgeon]. What was the purpose of this plea? “That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” How sobering to look into a grave knowing it shall soon be your body’s bed as your soul takes flight. Realizing mortality is a test in sobriety. Our Lord alone can bring our lessons to a happy end. Oh, to apply our hearts to wisdom, but remember “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

We may plead for compassion. “Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants” v. 13). Moses, the human penman of the Psalm, prays for a reversal of what has gone before. Whereas God has said to man, “Return” (to dust, v. 3), now Moses says to God, “Return” (to show compassion, vv. 13 ff.). “As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask ‘how long?’ Our fault in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him” [Spurgeon]. “And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.” God’s “repentance” is a frequent phrase in Scripture, which looks at God from the human perspective: He appears to us to change. This is actually a request of the Lord to show us compassion. The Lord chastened Israel His people, but He did not disown them. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

We may plead for mercy. “O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil” (vv. 14-15). Since life is so brief that it is apt to fly away, Moses asks the Lord to answer him “early with mercy.” How do we turn the darkest trials into pleas at the throne of grace? If you have a compassionate desire before the Father, you may speak with Him. The submissive child of God desires to please his father.

Obedient children desire the manna of God's Word. The desire for early satisfaction with mercy is "that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." "Rejoice" means to cry out or shout for joy. And to be "glad all our days" means a gladness in the Lord in the totality of days. "Make us glad" in verse 15 is the same word for "glad" as in verse 14, meaning a gladness or rejoicing in the Lord. The request is that the days of gladness be commensurate with the days of affliction or depression. Yes, he desired that the days of joy would be in the same measure as those of sorrow. There has been much suffering so there may be much joy or triumph. "God who is great in justice when he chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through; let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith" [Spurgeon]. Yes, may we learn to plead with our great God.

Matthew Henry wrote, "Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy: 1. That it would be a full fountain of future joys: 'O satisfy us with thy mercy, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be while we lie under thy wrath, but that we may rejoice and be glad, not only for a time, upon the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness.' With respect to those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full (1 John 1:4), so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation and nothing can separate them from it. 2. That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs: Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us; let the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. Lord, thou use to set the one over-against the other (Eccl. 7:14); do so in our case. Let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling; now put into our hands the cup of salvation.' God's people reckon the returns of God's loving-kindness a sufficient recompense for all their troubles."