

# PSALM 101

David was certainly the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow which he made to God when he took upon him the charge of a family and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government, immediately after the death of Saul (as some think), or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David (as others think), is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and, by that means, good order, in it: but it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to those that do well. Here is,

**I.** The general scope of David's vow (v. 1, 2).

**II.** The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness (v. 3-5, 7, 8) and that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous (v. 6). Some think this may fitly be accommodated to Christ, the Son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by these rules, and who loves righteousness and hates wickedness. In singing this psalm families, both governors and governed, should teach, and admonish, and engage themselves and one another to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them and God's presence with them.

## ~~Psalm~~ PSALM 101:1-8

### DAVID'S PIOUS RESOLUTION

#### *A psalm of David.*

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate and a good master of a family; and, if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to a universal reformation. Observe,

**I.** The chosen subject of the psalm (v. 1): *I will sing of mercy and judgment*, that is,

**1.** Of God's mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of Providence concerning David since he was first anointed to be king, during which time he had met with many a rebuke and much hardship on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, had had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note,

**(1.)** God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed — *mercy and judgment*; God has set the one over-against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his family; when there was mercy in the return of the ark there was judgment in the death of Uzza.

**(2.)** When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee-paraphrase of this is observable: *If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or If thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord! will I sing my hymns for all.* Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or,

**2.** It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would, in this psalm, promise to be merciful, and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly and love mercy is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had occurred to him. Family-mercies and family-afflictions are both of them calls to family-religion. David put his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

**II.** The general resolution David took up to conduct himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, v. 2. We have here,

**1.** A good purpose concerning his conversation — concerning his conversation in general (how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant bind himself to his good behaviour), and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat in the throne, but how he would *walk within his house*, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather, they are more concerned to set a good example of *ruling their own houses well*, <sup><500></sup>1 Timothy 3:4. When David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, <sup><100></sup>2 Samuel 6:20. He resolves,

**(1.)** To act conscientiously and with integrity, to *walk in a perfect way*, in the way of God's commandments; that is *a perfect way*, for *the law of the Lord is perfect*. This he will walk in *with a perfect heart*, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk *in a perfect way with a perfect heart*.

**(2.)** To act considerately and with discretion: *I will behave myself wisely; I will understand or instruct myself in a perfect way*, so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence in the ways of Christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of *behaving ourselves wisely*; but, while we keep to the good way, we must be *wise as serpents*.

**2.** A good prayer: *O when wilt thou come unto me?* Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God come to him and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with *a perfect heart in a perfect way*. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David (<sup><084></sup>1 Samuel 18:14), we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, *behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and*, as he prayed, *the Lord was with him*.

**III.** His particular resolution to practise no evil himself (v. 3): “*I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I will not design nor aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God and the public welfare.*” He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business we must see that what we set our eyes upon be right and good and not any forbidden fruit, and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man that he shuts his eyes from seeing evil, <sup><335></sup>Isaiah 33:15. “*Nay, I hate the work of those that turn aside from the paths of equity* (<sup><317></sup>Job 31:7), not only I avoid it, but I abhor it; *it shall not cleave to me.* If any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly.”

**IV.** His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, nor show them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him; for those who hated to be reformed would certainly hinder every thing that is good. When he comes to mention particulars he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house, nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he mentions those whose sins were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution and to behave himself wisely. He will have nothing to do,

**1.** With spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against (v. 4): “*A froward heart* (one that delights to be cross and perverse) *shall depart from me,* as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. *I will not know,*” that is, “I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a *wicked person;* for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump.”

**2.** With slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation secretly (v. 5): “*Whoso privily slanders his neighbour,* either raises or spreads false stories, to the prejudice of his

good name, *him will I cut off* from my family and court.” Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince. *If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked,* <sup>419D</sup>Proverbs 29:12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will prevent the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him: he will punish not only him that falsely accuses another in open court, but him that privily slanders another. I wish David had remembered this vow in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba.

**3.** With haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for *only by pride comes contention*: “Therefore him *that has a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer*; I will have no patience with those that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain that they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families.” God resists the proud, and so will David.

**4.** With false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds (v. 7): “*He that worketh deceit*, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet, as soon as he is discovered, *shall not dwell within my house*.” Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such persons as agents for him: *He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight*, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was *a man after God's own heart*, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the great day, banish from his presence *all that love and make a lie*, <sup>46215</sup>Revelation 22:15.

**V.** His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good (v. 6): *My eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land*. In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the *faithful in the land*; for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out; for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise

princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them and act under them. *He that walks in a perfect way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, shall serve me.* The kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and, if any man is better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David has his eyes upon *the faithful in the land*; his secret is with them, and they *shall dwell with him*. Saul chose servants for their goodliness (~~1~~ 1 Samuel 8:16), but David for their goodness.

**VI.** His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court (v. 8): *“I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them.”* He would do his utmost to *destroy all the wicked*, so that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked. He would do it early; he would lose no time and spare no pains; he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do anything to purpose in the work. That which he aimed at was not only the securing of his own government and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*. Not Jerusalem only, but the whole land, was the *city of the Lord*; so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the *city of the Lord* to be purged from *wicked doers*, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the new Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.