

END OF PSALM 68

You are Psalms

Some people think you never get discouraged, but the fact is, when you do, you know where to run. Your prayers are open and honest because you realize that God already knows your heart, He's just waiting to hear you spill it. And when you do, what starts out as heavy ends up becoming a song of praise. You may struggle... and often you do... but each time, you grow in your understanding of God's faithfulness. You're just a song waiting to happen.

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PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 68

**CHRIST IN HIS PASSION DECLARETH THE GREATNESS OF HIS SUFFERINGS, AND
THE MALICE OF HIS PERSECUTORS THE JEWS; AND FORETELLETH THERE
REPROBATION**

1. Save me, O God: for the waters are come in even unto my soul.
2. I stick fast into the mire of the deep: and there is no sure standing, I am come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.
3. I have labored with crying; my jaws are become hoarse: my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God.
4. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause. My enemies are grown strong who have wrongfully persecuted me: then did I pay that which I took not away.
5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my offenses are not hidden from thee.
6. Let not them be ashamed for me, who look for thee, O Lord, the Lord of hosts. Let them not be confounded on my account, who seek thee, O God of Israel.
7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.
8. I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to the sons of my mother.
9. For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
10. And I covered my soul in fasting; and it was made a reproach to me.
11. And I made haircloth my garment: and I became a byword to them.
12. They that sat in the gate spoke against me: and they that drank wine made me their song.

Continued >

(Continuing from preceding page)

13. but as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord; for the time of thy good pressure, O God. In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.
14. Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast: deliver me from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.
15. Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up: and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
16. Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy is kind; look upon me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.
17. And turn not away thy face from thy servant: for I am in trouble, hear me speedily.
18. Attend to my soul, and deliver it: save me because of my enemies.
19. Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame.
20. In thy sight are all day that afflict me: my heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but it was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.
21. And they gave me gall for my food: and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
22. Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense, and a stumbling block.
23. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not; and their back bend thou down always.
24. Pour out thy indignation upon them: and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
25. Let their inhabitants be made desolate: and let there be none to dwell in their tabernacles.
26. Because they have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten; and they have added to the grief of my wounds.
27. Add thou iniquity upon their iniquity: and let them not come into thy justice.
28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living: and with the just let them not be written.
29. But I am poor and sorrowful: thy salvation, O God, hath set me up.
30. I will praise thy name O God with a canticle: and I will magnify him with praise.
31. And it shall please God better than a young calf, that bringeth forth horns and hoofs.
32. Let the poor see and rejoice; seek ye God: and your soul shall live.
33. For the Lord hath heard the poor, and hath not despised his prisoners.
34. Let the heavens and the earth praise him; the sea, and everything that creepeth therein.
35. For God will save Sion, and the cities of Juda shall be built up. And they shall dwell there, and acquire it by inheritance.
36. And the seed of his servants shall possess it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.

PSALM NUMBER: 68

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Save me, O God: for the waters are come in even unto my soul."
2. "I stick fast in the mire of the deep: and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me." The history of the

dwelt therein." That means, not only will the primitive faithful, but even their posterity, possess that Sion, whether on earth or in heaven; for the Church of Christ, which is built on a rock, never dies. "And they shall love his name shall dwell therein;" as many as shall be found to love his name shall permanently live in his Church, and afterwards in the celestial Sion. Those who shall be found on the last day to have had no charity, like chaff, will be separated from the corn, cast into the fire, and burned. Life everlasting is the reward of charity, according to James 1, who says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." Sinners, then, having faith alone, without charity, may belong to the Church as well as the just, in the way that the chaff lies in the barn as well as the grain; as good and bad fish are found together in a net; but they will not be so always, nor will they "acquire by inheritance" the heavenly Sion, that they may dwell forever therein.

Christ, and beware of all covetousness, for man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." Whereas, on the contrary, it is said of God, "in him was life" John 1; and in Psalm 35, "for with thee is the fountain of life; and in Eccles. 1, "the word of God is high in the fountain of wisdom;" and in Proverbs 8, "he that shall find me shall find life." For wisdom is the life of a rational soul, and the soul is then most wise and most perfect, when it sees its first and supreme cause in itself, without anything coming between them. Seek God, then, by walking in the way of his commandments, diverging neither to the right nor to the left, and when you shall have come to him, then "your soul shall live."

33. "For the Lord hath heard the poor: and hath not despised his prisoners." He assigns a reason for its been a good thing to seek God, that we may live, because the holy fathers visited by Christ, in his descent into Limbo, experienced the truth of it. They sought God for long time, and were the first to find him; the way to eternal life having been opened by Christ, and they having been introduced thereto by him. "For the Lord hath heard the poor." All the patriarchs and prophets were poor in spirit, dwelt in this world as so many strangers and pilgrims in search of their heavenly country. Such poor were heard by the Lord, and having heard them, "he hath not despised his prisoners," for prisoners they were, inasmuch as they could not have passed from their prison to their heavenly country, had not Christ, by his death, burst the gates of hell, and broken its chains of iron.

34. "Let the heavens and the earth praise him; the sea, and everything that creepeth therein." He invites the whole universe to return thanks for the favors conferred on it, making special mention even to the reptiles, without mentioning men and Angels at all, of whose readiness to praise God he had no doubt.

35. "For God will save Sion, and the cities of Juda shall be built up. And they shall dwell there, and acquire it by inheritance." The establishment of the Church, through the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, is now predicted, or, as some will have it the establishment of the celestial Jerusalem, or perhaps both, "for God will save Sion." He will protect from every danger and persecution on earth, and will afterwards endow with immortality, his primitive Church formed out of the Jews; that is, the assembly of the apostles and primitive disciples. "And the cities of Juda, shall be built up;" that is, the primitive Church will be propagated by the ascension of many living stones, and many Churches will be built all over the world, called cities of Juda, that is, of confession, because the confession of the true faith builds up and propagates the Church, for Juda signifies confession. "And they shall dwell there." He now foretells the solidity and the happiness of the Church. For the cities, that is, the Inhabitants of the cities of Juda, "shall dwell there;" that is, in Sion, "and acquire it by inheritance;" for all the real faithful of the several churches acknowledge the Apostolic Church, that of Sion, excluding of course, heretics and schismatics. And the same true faithful, if they remain in the faith, "which worketh by charity," will also inhabit the celestial Sion, and will "acquire it by inheritance," because, "if sons, they are heirs also." Romans 8.

36. "And the seed of his servants shall possess it: and they that love his name shall

Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, takes very little notice of the intensity of his sufferings, because the evangelists wished to show that it was quite voluntary, and borne with the greatest fortitude. But, as it was right that the world should know that the sufferings of Christ were intense beyond measure, and learn from thence the extent of their debt to the Redeemer, the Holy Ghost was pleased to reveal the intensity of his sufferings, long before, to the prophets, and, through them, as trustworthy witnesses and above suspicion, to be narrated to us. Isaias, therefore, wrote much about them, so did Jeremias, but none more than David. In the two first verses, then, of this Psalm, the passion of Christ is compared to immersion of one into most deep and muddy water. "Save me, O God." Not as regards my soul, for that he could not lose, but my body; and he does not ask that absolutely, but to express the intensity of the pains he was suffering, and the natural repugnance of man to death; in the same spirit in which he said in the garden, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." "For the waters have come in even unto my soul." He now begins the simile of one tossed into the water. Because I am like one cast into the water, and just feeling it so to enter into his vitals as to prevent his further breathing, and, consequently, living. "I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing." I am like a man not only thrown into the deep, but even into a muddy deep, when there is no bottom, no standing. "I am come into the depth of the sea." It is not into a small pool I have been thrown, but into a great and deep sea, overwhelmed by a heap of water over me;" "and a tempest hath overwhelmed me," because, a fierce storm of winds and waves has completely sunk me. This gives us some idea of the extent and the severity of Christ's sufferings; for they were not confined to the simple death on the cross; his pains and his sufferings were all but innumerable. The "mire of the deep," signifies the sins of the human race that kept him in punishment. The "tempest that overwhelmed him," signifies God's justice and decree that man's sins should be atoned for, as also the rage and cruelty of the Jews, and it may also signify his own ardent love for mankind. That storm for us caused him to suffer, as the apostle says, "who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" and as St. Peter said to the Jews, "you have killed the author of life;" and St. Paul again, "Christ loved the Church and delivered himself up for it." The powerful storm then that sunk Christ into the depths of his death and passion, was partly good and laudable, partly bad and deserving extreme censure.

3. "I have labored with crying; my jaws are become hoarse: my eyes have failed, whilst I hope in my God." From this verse we can infer, that what he said in the two previous verses are not to be taken in the strict sense of the words, for if he had been drowned, he certainly could not cry out. This verse is also to be read under similar limitation, for Christ cried out in his passion, when he said, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And again, when he said, "into thy hands, Father, I commend my spirit." These cries could hardly have made him hoarse. Nor is it the fact that "his eyes failed," expecting help from God. The meaning, then, is that his sufferings were as intense and as continuous as with those whose pains make them hoarse in calling for help, and whose sight has failed in looking up to God for assistance in their sufferings. If Christ, then, was

always silent, and “like a lamb led to the slaughter,” sought for no help, as if he were suffering nothing, it was all owing, not to the lightness of his sufferings, but to his own firmness, his power of endurance, and the extent of his love. Had his lamentations been at all commensurate to his sufferings, his jaws would certainly have become hoarse through constant vociferation, and his eyes would have become dim in his searches for one to help him; and, therefore, as we said at first, the Prophet expresses the intensity of his sufferings, while the evangelist glanced at the extent of his constancy under them.

4. “They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause. My enemies are grown strong who have wrongfully persecuted me: then did I pay that which I took not away.” Speaking now in the person of Christ, he explains, in plain language, what he had figuratively expressed before. He compared Christ’s persecutors to a swell of waters, and to a violent tempest; he now plainly says they were most violent, and almost innumerable, and were thus fierce and violent without any provocation whatever. “They are multiplied above the hairs of my head.” They were more numerous than the hairs of my head, that can scarcely be counted. “Who hate me without cause.” Their number is clear from the Gospel, for beside the Counsel of the Elders, Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, there was a great body of the people, “who cried out, ‘crucify him.’” Whole cohorts of the pagan soldiers joined them, for “Herod with his army mocked him.” In Pilate’s house, an entire company of soldiers assembled to deride him, to whom was added Judas the traitor, to betray him. And that “they hated him without cause,” cannot be questioned, for “he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil,” and never harmed or injured anyone. The excuse they put forth in the council, namely, “if we let him alone, so the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation,” was proved, by the event, to have been dictated by a false and a mistaken prudence; for though they did not let him alone, though they obstructed, as far as in them lay, the progress of the Gospel, still the Romans came, took their place and their nation away, which would not have befallen them, had they given a favorable reception to Christ the teacher and the source of peace, mildness, and love. The Prophet gives an additional instance of their violence. “My enemies are grown strong who have wrongfully persecuted me.” My unjust persecutors are strengthened, have taken courage, have succeeded, and that through their injustice, for they compelled me to pay “that which I took not away,” to suffer punishment without deserving it. Every unjust man may be called a robber; because he robs God of his glory; and therefore, when he is punished, he pays for what he so took away. Now, Christ never robbed nor took away, for he never sinned, and yet underwent the severest punishment. That the thief hanging on the cross acknowledged, when he said, “and we indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil.” Luke 23.

5. “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my offenses are not hidden from thee.” Having said that he suffered unjustly, and that he had to pay what he did not take away, he now assigns a reason for his having chosen so to suffer, when he might have easily delivered himself from such unjust persecution; and the reason he assigns is his own foolishness, and his offenses, however hidden from the world, being well-known

house of Israel;” and Daniel 9, “and the people that shall deny him, shall not be his;” Osee 1, “for you are not my people, and I will not be yours;” and the Lord himself, in the Gospel, frequently promised the same to the Jews, saying, “the kingdom of God will be taken from them, and the children of the kingdom would be cast out;” and that, in their place, “many would come from the east and from the west, and repose with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

29. “But I am poor and sorrowful: thy salvation, O God, hath set me up.” He now, at length, in the end of the Psalm, predicts the glory of Christ, and the edification of his Church, speaking as he did hitherto in the person of Christ. “I am poor and sorrowful;” so I was while I hung naked on the cross, covered all over with wounds. He thus, in leaving this world, took nothing with him but our sins and miseries, thus giving us an example, how by gladly despising the good things of this world, and bearing all its crosses with patience, we make thread in his footsteps. “Thy salvation, O God, hath set me up;” when I was in such a state, in need of everything good, overwhelmed with everything evil and bad, “thy salvation” raise me up from the dead, wiped away all my misery, and replenished me with blessings and happiness. For, how can unhappiness find a place in him, adopted by salvation itself, and circled all round by it.

30. “I will praise the name of God with a canticle: and I will magnify him with praise.” Christ, in the form of man, raised up and glorified by God the Father, now returns him thanks, and will do so forever, saying, having now discharged my labors, and free as I am from all pain, I will never cease praising the name of God; that is, his power, “with a canticle,” that is, with joy and gladness; “and I will magnify him with praise;” a repetition of the same to produce effect.

31. “And it shall please God better than a young calf, that bringeth forth horns and hoofs.” The sacrifice of praise offered to God in heaven, is far and away beyond the most valuable sacrifice offered in the law, among which the most superior was that of a young heifer, whose hoofs and horns were just beginning to shoot; and yet my canticle of praise will be more acceptable in the sight of God than such a sacrifice.

32. “Let the poor see and rejoice: seek ye God, and your soul shall live.” He now mingles exhortation with his praises. Let the poor understand and consider those things, that they may learn to rejoice in their poverty. He speaks to those who are poor, as he is; that is, poor from choice, and not from necessity, and who, though they may be rich, dispense their riches as stewards and not as masters, agreeable to God’s will; that they may indulge, and not in a spirit of pride, in works of charity and not in the gratification of their passions; and, finally, who repeat the expression, “Blessed be the name of the Lord,” with equal devotion, whether in prosperity or in adversity. “Seek ye God, and your soul shall live.” You poor in spirit, who despise everything earthly, as you are disencumbered of such a load, raise up your spirits, seek God, and your soul, which, as a perishable thing, cannot live, will then truly live. “Take heed, says

that Christ was smitten to a certain extent, in which the Jews had no part; and smitten, in other respects, by the Jews, with God's permission. He was smitten by God, and the Jews had no part whatever in it, when he assumed mortal, frail, suffering flesh, subject to hunger, thirst, fatigue, heat, and cold, and many other grievances. Now, the incantation, that brought all those things on him, was the act of the Holy Ghost; and, in this way, God alone struck Christ, when, without any fault on his part, he was made subject to so many consequences of original sin. The Jews added to these inflections when they wounded and persecuted Christ. For, though God advisedly meant and intended Christ so to suffer, and took advantage of the perversity of the Jews to bring it about, still, the Jews themselves, in their own malice and wickedness, persecuted and took away the life of the Redeemer. The Prophet, therefore, says, "because they have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten;" for smite him you did when you sent him into the world, "in the likeness of sinful flesh;" subject to hunger and thirst to heat and cold, and other innumerable inconveniences: him "they persecuted," by calumnies, reproaches, and false testimonies;" and they have added to the grief of my wounds;" to the intense grief I felt at the consideration of their sins innumerable, and which I had undertaken to heal and to cure, as if the wounds were my own, they "added" the pain of the lash, the thorns, and the nails; and, even when I was dead, they "added" the wound in my side; and even when I had risen from the grave, and would seem to have been beyond their persecution, they followed it up by wounding me through my members, by stoning and slaying my disciples. "Add thou iniquity upon their iniquity." As they have "added to the grief of my wounds," so do you, O just Judge, "add iniquity upon their iniquity;" in thy justice, instead of delivering them from their first iniquity, let them accumulate iniquities. "Let them fill up the measure of their fathers," that "upon them may come all the just blood that has been shed upon the earth." God is said to do a thing when he permits it, and that not by chance, but by a fixed decree, to punish the sins of those who deserve so to be blinded and deserted; for no punishment is more severe than the causing one sin to be the punishment of another. "And let them not come into thy justice." An explanation of the preceding sentence; for they who do "not enter into the justice" of God; that is, they who are not justified, who are not admitted to that justification which God gratuitously works in the vessels of mercy, they rush from sin to sin, adding sin to sin. "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living." Some will have this to mean: let them be put to death; but the following sentence, "and with the just let them not be written," altogether forbids that explanation. In the holy Scriptures nothing is more usual than for one member of a verse to be an explanation of the other; and thus, "with the just let them not be written," is one and the same with "let them be blotted out of the book of the living," which forbids any other interpretation of the living and those who alone have real life in them; that is, the just, the wicked being truly dead in their reins. The book of the living means that book in which the names of God's true servants, who alone have got real justification, and who, as been children and heirs, are enrolled. For, in fact, the Jews, who were formally God's people, being now blotted out of the book of the living and the just, are no longer God's people nor have they a part in the inheritance of the children of God; and, on the contrary, the Gentiles, who were not God's people, by faith in Christ came to be God's people, and have a share in the kingdom of God. That was predicted by Ezekiel 13, "they shall not be in the council of my people, nor shall they be written in the writing of the

to God. "My foolishness;" that is, the foolishness of Adam that he took upon himself, "and my offenses," the offenses of Adam and his posterity, which you bore without committing. "O God, thou knowest my foolishness," you know that I am suffering for the folly of the first man, who believed the deceiver when he told him, that by eating the forbidden fruit he would become equal to God; and through his disobedience what has been the result of his foolishness! Saint Augustine adds, that the foolishness of Christ may be said to be that which may be looked upon as such by men, and may still be the height of wisdom, namely, that when by one word he may have delivered himself from death, still he preferred suffering the most bitter torments, and the death of the cross itself, to redeem his servants and even his enemies from torments and death. That seemed folly to men, but God knows that such folly is wiser than all human wisdom. Just as to those who know nothing of agriculture, it seems folly and an irreparable loss to throw a quantity of the best grain into the earth; but when the same grains are multiplied and gathered in the harvest, then, instead of its appearing to have been folly, it turns up to have been the height of wisdom.

6. "Let not them be ashamed for me, look for thee. O Lord, the Lord of hosts. Let them not be confounded on my account, who seek thee, O God of Israel."

7. "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face." In his solicitude for the members of his Church, and that his passion may not be a source of scandal to them, or perhaps of despair, in spite of his promise, he says, "Blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me;" and on the eve of his passion, "you will be all scandalized in me this night;" he therefore now says, "let them not be ashamed for me who look for thee;" that is to say, let not those who confide in thee be ashamed on my account, as if I had been abandoned by thee, and my hope had been vain. Let them not say, who will ever expect the Lord, or confide in the Lord, after his thus deserting and abandoning his only Son? Which he repeats and explains, when he says, "let them not be confounded on my account, who seek thee, O God of Israel;" the words being an explanation of the words, "let them not be ashamed," and the words, "who seek thee," being synonymous with, "who look for thee." Instead of Lord of hosts, he says now O God of Israel, the show that men have just reason for confiding in him, he being Lord of hosts, and therefore supreme in power, and at the same time he is the God of Israel, and in consequence, the friend and protector of his people, and therefore kind to them; and not only all-powerful, but most willing, and ready to defend his own. He finally assigns his reason for this just demand. "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;" it was for your honor, and not for my own sins, that I have suffered so much ignominy. It was on your account, that "shame hath covered my face," for the same glory, your glory, I suffered contumely, stripes, derision, spits in the face, and the like, that truly filled my face with shame and confusion.

8. "I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to the sons of my mother."

9. "For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." The Prophet, speaking to the person of Christ, explains the cause of the persecution of the Jews. It was because the Lord censured and reprov'd their evil doings, as he himself says, John 7, "the world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil;" and in Wisdom 2, we read, "let us lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life." He therefore says, "I am become a stranger to my brethren;" my brethren the Jews look upon me as a stranger, "and an alien to the sons of my mother;" I am looked upon as a foreigner and an alien by the sons of my mother, the synagogue. The very thing that John wrote in the beginning of his Gospel, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." For though they once said, "we know him and whence he is;" and the Lord himself said to them, "you know me and whence I am;" still, at another time, they said, "we know that the Lord hath spoken to Moses; but as to this man, we know not from whence he is;" that is, we know him not, he is a foreigner, when he says, "for the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up;" because zeal for God's temporal house, the temple which the Jews were in the habit of daily profaning by secular business; as also for God's spiritual house, the congregation of the faithful, that they were daily defiling by their vices; "eat me up;" consumed, fired, and pained him; and, under the influence of such zeal, he reprov'd the Jews grievously, as may be seen in different parts of the four evangelists; and, while he justly reprov'd them, with a view to their correction, they, in return, abused and blasphemed him, saying, "thou hast a devil. Thou art a Samaritan. In Beelzebub the prince of devils, he casteth out devils; we know that this man is a sinner;" and he, therefore, now adds, "and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." Any offense against the Son constitutes one against the Father, they being essentially one; and though all sins may be looked upon as common offenses to the Father as well as to the Son, those connected with miracles may be said especially to touch the Father, on which Christ himself said, "the works which the Father hath given me to perfect, give testimony of me," John 5; and in John 14, "the Father who abideth in me, he doth the works." The calumny, then, in the reproach, "in Beelzebub the prince of devils, the casteth out devils," offered special injury to the Father, inasmuch as it attributed those works of God, which the Son was performing in the name of his Father, and which the Father was producing through the Son, to the devil. Those "reproaches of them that reproached thee," the Father, fell upon the Son, because it was him the Jews intended to calumniate, and not the Father, as also because the Son cheerfully suffered those calumnies that assail the Father; and in this sense the verse is quoted by St. Paul, Romans 15.

10. "And I covered my soul in fasting; and it was made a reproach to me."

11. "And I made haircloth my garment: and I became a byword to them." This is a very obscure passage, and the more so by reason of the difference between the Septuagint and the Hebrew versions. The most probable explanation of it seems to be as follows. The soul is taken here for the entire man, so that when David says, he "covered his soul," he means, he covered himself, or covered his head, in fasting.

and wrong interpretations they misunderstand it, and thus the very Scriptures, which, if faithfully studied, may bring them to life everlasting, leads them to eternal perdition, keeping them, as it does, in their incredulity. The same applies to them as "a recompense" for their wickedness, for it is right that they who do not wish to see the light should remain in the dark. It is also "a stumbling block" to them; for, instead of recognizing the cornerstone sent to them by God, they rather dashed up and knocked themselves against it; and hence, it has become too, as Isaias 8 says, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." "Let their eyes be darkened that they see not." The root of the aforesaid evils is, God's having allowed both their understanding and their affections, to be depraved. The eyes of their soul are darkened, nay more, according to St. Paul, "there is a veil upon their heart," and furthermore, "they are blinded," Isaias 6, Matthew 13, John 12, Romans 11. Their affections, too, are depraved, for they have no taste for anything but the things of this world, which is conveyed in the words, "and their back bend thou down always;" that is to say, allow them to be ungrateful, and punish them for it, that they may be always groveling and bent down, so that they may see nothing but the earth. That we may understand such blindness and perversity to be the effect of God's anger, he now adds, "pour out thy indignation on them;" plain language enough, which the apostle confirms, 1 Thessalonians 2, "who both killed the Lord Jesus, and the prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God," and in the next verse he adds, "for the wrath of God has come upon them to the end." That wrath of God brought a spiritual plague on them first, and then a temporal one, but they were exiled from the land of promise, and scattered all over the world; to which the Prophet alludes when he says, "that their habitation be made desolate;" which was literally fulfilled when, by the orders of the Emperor Titus, Jerusalem was pulled down and rendered uninhabitable; it was, to be sure, afterwards rebuilt and inhabited, by Gentiles, Christians, or Saracens, but not by the Jews. As far as the Jews, then, are concerned, it is still a desert, for a few only of them are allowed to live there, a thing predicted by our Lord himself, when he said, "behold, your houses shall be left to you desolate."

26. "Because they have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten; that they have added to the grief of my wounds."

27. "Add thou iniquity upon their iniquity: and let them not come into thy justice."

28. "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living: with the just let them not be written." As the Jews were punished for having given gall for food to Christ, by having their own table turned into a snare for them, so the Prophet says they will now be punished by adding iniquity upon their iniquity, in the same way that they heaped punishment upon punishment, and pains upon pains on Christ. But we have to explain how the Jews persecuted him whom God hath smitten, and how they added to the grief of his wounds. God does not seem to have smitten Christ, except in his allowing the Jews to smite him; and whatever he suffered seems to be from God as well as from the Jews. We are to understand, then,

hunger he got gall, and in his thirst vinegar. There were many at the time sorry for the death of Christ, but there were not many “grieved together with him;” that is, whose sorrow sprung from the same source as that of Christ’s. The apostles and the pious women, to be sure, grieved for Christ death, for the death of his body, but Christ himself grieved the spiritual death, and the spiritual blindness of the Jews, who madly raged against the physician who came to cure them. In like manner, he looked for “one that would comfort me, and I found none;” because the comfort he looked for was the conversion of the wicked. During his passion many were hardened, few on none converted. The thief was converted, but it was in the very end of his passion; but in his very passion, the crowd cried out, “away with him, away with him, crucify him;” the apostles were scandalized and fled; Peter denied him, Judas fell into despair.

21. “And they gave me gall for my food: and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” It does not appear from the Scriptures that they gave him gall to eat, for St. Matthew, who mentions the gall, said it was given to him to drink, and not to eat. “They gave him wine mixed with gall to drink,” which perhaps was not, properly speaking, gall at all, for it was a bitter drink, and St. Mark, relating the same, says it was wine mixed with myrrh, which possibly was the reason why St. Matthew did not quote this verse of the Psalm, as is his wont, when any passage is fulfilled by the life or doings of Christ. It is, therefore, probable that the word food is to be understood, in a spiritual sense, to signify to us the bitterness of the sins of blessed Savior had to digest in his passion. As regards the vinegar, it was not only spiritually but literally fulfilled, as is clear of John 10, where the evangelist states, then on Christ’s saying, “I thirst,” they offered him vinegar on a sponge, that the Scripture may be fulfilled, which was the passage here.

22. “Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense, and a stumbling block.”

23. “Let their eyes be darkened that they see not; and their back bend thou down always.”

24. “Pour out thy indignation upon them: and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.”

25. “Let their habitation be made desolate; and let there be none to dwell in their tabernacles.” The Prophet begins now, by way of imprecation, to foretell the calamities that were to fall on the Jews, by reason of their ingratitude and cruelty to Christ, who had been sent to them as a Savior and the Redeemer, and he enumerates the spiritual as well as the temporal punishments, of which we have daily instances. “Let their table become as a snare before them.” The father say that “their table” means the reading of the Scriptures, being the table from which pious souls are fed with God’s truths; and he calls it a table, to place it in contrast with the gall they gave him for food; as if he said: they gave me gall for my food, and you will make their food and their table a snare before them. That table is daily before the Jews, for they daily read Moses and the prophets, but it is quite a snare to them, because by false

Now, among the Jews, the covering one’s head was a sign of great grief and sorrow, and generally accompanied their fasts; hence we read in Psalm 34, “I humbled my soul in fasting;” and the practice of covering the head when in grief and trouble appears from many passages in the Scriptures; for instance, 2 Kings 15, “but David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, going up and weeping, walking barefoot, and with his head covered.” And in chapter 19, “and the king covered his head, and cried with a loud voice: O my son Absalom, who Absalom, my son. O my son;” and in Esther 6, “Aman hastened into his house, with his head covered.” And Isaias, speaking of the manner of fasting, has, chapter 58, “is this such a fast as I have chosen for a man to afflict his soul for a day? Is this it to wind his head about like a circle, and to spread sackcloth and ashes?” In this passage, “to wind his head about like a circle,” means to wind the covering about it, and bind his head all round tightly with it. Now, we don’t read that Christ fasted with his head covered, nor that he wore sackcloth, much less that he was derided for so doing; on the contrary, it was objected to him that he was, “behold, a man that is a glutton and a wine drinker;” and his disciples were found fault with because they did not fast like the disciples of St. John and the Pharisees. It is true, the Lord fasted forty days in the desert, but that was a private fast, with which he could not be reproached. He also fasted several days while he was taken up in preaching, as he watched several nights while absorbed in prayer; but we do not read that they were made a matter of reproach to him either. Finally, in this passion, he fasted from the Vespers of Thursday to the ninth hour on Friday, and, from exhaustion and the punishment, no doubt, both hungered and thirsted; nor was his head without being covered, for, covered with a helmet of thorns, he fasted severely and bitterly, with no other food than gall, and no drink by vinegar; they still we find no mention whatever in the Gospel of the sackcloth and ashes. We must, then, with St. Augustine, allow that these verses have a spiritual meaning, and are so to be explained; and then we are to understand the fasting in tears and sorrow to signify the ardent hunger and thirst for the salvation of souls that afflicted him so deeply; and the sackcloth to represent the mortal and frail flesh he chose to assume, that by such humility he may induce mortals to despise the things of this world, and long for those of the next; and, for such reasons, he became “a reproach,” and became also a “byword;” that is, a thing to be scoffed at among the Jews. And that Christ was derided and scoffed at is plain, from Mark 5; for, when he said, “the girl is not dead, but sleepeth, they laughed him to scorn;” and when he spoke of the necessity of giving alms, “now, the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.” And, in his passion, he was derided by the soldiers, by Herod, by the high priests, and many others.

12. “They that sat in the gate spoke against me: and they that drank wine made me their song.” By way of appendix to the foregoing persecutions, he adds: the judges and the princes, in their councils, sought my death, suborned false witnesses against me; and, finally, condemned me. Judgment was generally delivered at the gates; hence we have, in Proverbs 31, “her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land.” And they that drank wine made me their song;” not only in their public assemblies, but even in

their private parties of pleasure, did they talk of me, making me the butt of their mirth and ridicule.

13. "But as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord; for the time of thy good pleasure, O God. In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation." The Prophet having hitherto explained the extent and the greatness of the sufferings of Christ, now enters into Christ's prayer to his Father, to be delivered from such calamities, of which St. Paul writes, Hebrews 5, "who in the days of his flesh, offering up prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears to him, that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence." Whence we gather that Christ's prayer was not an absolute prayer that he should not suffer, or that he should not die, but that he should not be detained in his passion or in death, in which "he was heard," for that prayer was put up while he hung on the cross, and after three days, by a glorious resurrection, he was delivered from death, and every other tribulation. "But as for me, my prayer is to thee." I offered myself to thee, God the Father, for them, saying, "the time of thy good pleasure, O God," the time defined by you, when it would be your good pleasure to deliver me from such torments, and to reconcile the whole world by such an oblation, has now arrived. We read the same in John 17, "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son;" and John 19, "it is consummated." – "In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation." He goes on with his prayer, and asks, that as "the time of his good pleasure is come," his prayer may be heard. "In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation;" that is, through the immense mercy that prompted you to promise reconciliation through the passion of your Son. "In the truth of thy salvation," and by reason of the truth; that is, the veracity and the certainty of salvation, for God is no less pious and merciful him promising that salvation which he did promise.

14. "Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast: deliver me from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters."

15. "Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up: and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." He asks to be delivered in the same figurative language that he used in the three first verses, under the figures of water, mud, and storm. "Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast," that I may not sink so deep that it, that I could not be pulled out, for he said previously, "I stick fast in the mire." He now prays that he may not be kept fast and it. "Deliver me from them that hate me," from my wicked persecutors, "and out of the deep waters," from the grievous tribulations into which they have plunged me. "Let not the tempest of water drown me." Having previously said, "a tempest hath overwhelmed me;" he, therefore, now asks that he may not be drowned in it, that he may not be detained in the deluge of water, which he explains by the expression, "nor the deep swallow me up," so that I may never rise again. "And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." Let not the pit into which I have fallen close upon me; while it is open, there is some hope of escape, once it closes there is none.

16. "Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy is kind; look upon me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies."

17. "And turn not away thy face from thy servant: for I am in trouble, hear me speedily."

18. "Attend to my soul, and deliver it: save me because of my enemies." In order to show the greatness and the extent of Christ's suffering, he now, speaking in the person of Christ, prays at greater length. "Hear me, O Lord, for thy mercy is kind;" and he offers three reasons for being heard, because of God's mercy, by reason of the greatness of his pain; and the third by reason of his relentless enemies. The first is taken from the mercy of God, who is always most kind and merciful to those who are in trouble. The second reason is found in the verse, "and turn not away thy face." God never turned away his face from his Son, though he seemed to do so when he left them hanging on the cross in the most intense pain, forcing him to exclaim, "O God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?" And it is the same he has in view, when he says here, "turn not away thy face from thy servant;" that is to say, they me no longer in these torments. The third reason is found in the expressions "attend to my soul and deliver it." He asked in the previous verse to be "heard speedily." And he now explains what he wanted, saying, "attend to my soul;" that is, to my course of life now run, and deliver my soul by speedy resurrection; and he assigns a reason for his so doing, which is the third, as we have already said, namely, "save me because of my enemies;" take me from death and sorrow, restore me to life everlasting, that my enemies, when they shall have seen their efforts against me were fruitless, may be either confounded or converted; which really happened; for when the people heard that Christ arose from the grave, and saw the fact confirmed by evident signs and prodigies, many in sorrow began to say, "what shall we do men, brethren?" And three thousand were at once converted. More of them in their obstinacy were so confounded as to say, "what shall we do to those men? For a miracle indeed hath been done by them, conspicuous to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; it is manifest, and we cannot deny."

19. "Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame."

20. "In thy sight are all they that afflict me: my heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: for one that would comfort me, and I found none." He calls God himself to witness the extent of his sufferings, and especially what he was suffering from slander and calumny, for high-minded souls feel more thereon than they do from any corporal sufferings. "Thou know my reproach;" the calumnies they are heaping on me, "and my confusion," the shame I suffer in consequence, for the innocent, in such cases, suffer as well as the guilty, when they see credit attached to the false accusations that are made against them; "and my shame," the shame that follows confusion, however unjust it may be. "In thy sight are all they that afflict me." As well as my afflictions cannot escape your notice, so you must see those who inflict them, from whom I can expect nothing but reproaches and misery, a thing my heart long since expected. "And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, and there was none." He finally adds, that he not only had to console him under such sufferings, but in his