

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: 16

A just man's prayer in tribulation against the malice of his enemies.

1. Hear, O Lord, my justice: attend to my supplication. Give ear unto my prayer, which proceedeth not from deceitful lips.
2. Let my judgment come forth from thy countenance: let thy eyes behold the things that are equitable.
3. Thou hast proved my heart, and visited it by night; thou hast tried me by fire: and iniquity hath not been found in me.
4. That my mouth may not speak the works of men: for the sake of the words of thy lips, I have kept hard ways.
5. Perfect thou my goings in thy paths; that my footsteps be not moved.
6. I have cried to thee, for thou, O God, hast heard me: O incline thy ear unto me, and hear my words.
7. Show forth thy wonderful mercies; thou who savest them that trust in thee.
8. From them that resist thy right hand keep me, as the apple of thy eye protect me under the shadow of thy wings.
9. From the face of the wicked who have afflicted me. My enemies have surrounded my soul:
10. They have shut up their fat: their mouth hath spoken proudly.
11. They have cast me forth, and now they have surrounded me: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth.
12. They have taken me, as a lion prepared for the prey; and as a young lion dwelling in secret places.
13. Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, and supplant him; deliver my soul from the wicked one; thy sword.
14. From the enemies of thy hand. O Lord, divide them from the few of the earth in their life: their belly is filled from thy hidden stores. They are full of children: and they have left to their little ones the rest of their substance.
15. But as for me, I will appear before thy sight in justice: I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.

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: 16

Explanation of the Psalm

1. "Hear, O Lord, my justice: attend to my supplication. Give ear unto my prayer, which proceeded not from deceitful lips." He first prays that his just cause may be heard, for with a just judge, the cause is more regarded than the person; he asks then that his prayer may be attended to; for God not only loves justice, but also the just; and, as St. James has it, "The prayer of the just availeth much." He finally unites both justice and prayer, when he says, "Give ear unto my prayer which proceedeth not from deceitful lips;" that is, my prayer that does not proceed from deceitful lips, but is based on justice. The meaning then is: Lord, may justice move thee; may prayer, the prayer of the just, move thee.
2. "Let my judgment come forth from thy countenance: let thy eyes behold the things that are equitable." Another argument from the justice of God, as if he said: To you, O God, I appeal; by you, as being the most just of judges, I wished to be judged. "From thy countenance;" that is, from thy mouth let judgment proceed—my sentence be pronounced. "Let thy eyes behold the things that are equitable." Close not thy eyes, and cloak not the calumnies of the wicked, but open them and see what justice demands.
3. "Thou hast proved my heart, and visited it by night; thou hast tried me by fire: and iniquity hath not been found in me:" A reason assigned for wishing to be judged by God, for he alone searches the hearts, and thoroughly knows the innocence of his servants. "Thou hast proved my heart;" you have tried me where no one else can, interiorly; you have proved my sincerity, and he tells how "Thou has proved my heart;" you have tried me where no one else can, interiorly;

protect me. "Thy sword;" some connect it with the preceding; others make it the beginning of the next sentence. If we adopt the reading of the Vulgate, the meaning is: Deliver my soul from the wicked; to do which you must take "thy sword" from your enemies; meaning their power of harm.

14. "From the enemies of thy hand. O Lord, divide them from the few of the earth in their life: their belly is filled from thy hidden stores. They are full of children: and they have left to their little ones the rest of their substance." A prophetic imprecation, in which is predicted separation of the wicked from the just, the former obtaining the goods of this world, the latter those of the world to come. "Divide them from the few;" separate the crowd of the wicked from "your little flock," "in their life," not only in the world to come, which is sure to them, but even in the present, which may be properly called "their life," which alone they love and seek, separating themselves from the just, who are dead to the world. The separation consists herein, that "their belly is filled from thy hidden stores;" that is, they fill their belly with the fruits and good things of the earth, supplied by God's bounty, from his hidden treasures every succeeding year, and say it is their own portion. "They are full of children: and they have left to their little ones the rest of their substance." They abound in children, to whom they leave the residue of what themselves cannot consume, for the children of this world look upon it as supreme happiness to abound in riches, and to be blessed with heirs to enjoy them.

15. "But as for me, I will appear before thy sight in justice: I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." The difference herein consists, they covet an abundance of the good things of this world. "But I," as well as the rest of the just, will "hunger after justice" here. To have satiety of glory and happiness hereafter; and, as I study to live in justice, in thy sight here, your glory will appear to me hereafter; and then will I be truly satisfied, having no more to seek or to desire.

End of Psalm 16

11. "They have cast me forth, and now they have surrounded me: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth." In order to show the malice of his enemies, he goes on to show how they assail him, now in one way, presently in quite a different manner, yet always in a destructive manner. One time "They cast me forth;" Now "they surround me:" those who just banished me from sharing or enjoying anything with them now seek me, surround me that they may overwhelm me with injuries; and the reason is, because "they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;" meaning they have firmly resolved not to look up to God, who is in heaven, nor to fear him; but to look down on the earth alone and seek for the things that belong to it.

12. "They have taken me, as a lion prepared for the prey; and as a young lion dwelling in secret places." They have not only surrounded me, but treated me with the greatest cruelty; with the same cruelty and avidity that a lion pounces on its prey, "and as a young lion dwelling in secret places;" the same idea repeated.

13. "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, and supplant him; deliver my soul from the wicked one; thy sword." Having explained the malice of his enemies, he asks of God, who alone can do it, to come and free him. "Arise, O Lord;" do not defer your help any longer, "disappoint him;" that wicked man, who like a lion laid hold on me to devour me, disappoint his teeth, that he may not fasten them in me and kill me. And, in fact, it is God alone that can "disappoint" the action of any one or thing, however violent; as he disappointed the teeth of the lions from hurting Daniel, and the fury of the fire from consuming the three thrown into the furnace; a source of consolation to the just, who know God's power to be equal to protect them from either the teeth of the lion or the flames of the furnace. "Supplant him." Deceive him; make him, by the wonderful providence, suppose that when he is fastening his teeth in his own flesh, he is fastening them in the flesh of the just. "Deliver my soul from the wicked." Do not allow me to be killed by the wicked, raging like a roaring lion; but save me,

you have proved my sincerity, and he tells how "Thou hast visited by night." On two occasions one's interior may be seen; when an opportunity offers for sinning in private, and in the time of tribulation: for there are many wicked persons, to all appearance with a fair exterior, when they have an opportunity of committing sin in private, without any fear of detection, then only show what they are made of. So in the time of prosperity, the bad cannot be distinguished from the good, but apply the fire of persecution, and the gold shines out, the stubble burns. The first is expressed by the words, "Visited it by night;" that is, in secret, when an opportunity for committing sin presented itself; the second comes under the words, "Thou hast tried me by fire;" that is, with grievous tribulations; and yet thou hast found no iniquity in me.

4. "That my mouth may not speak the works of men: for the sake of the words of thy lips, I have kept hard ways." He shows how it happened that "There was no iniquity found in him," from the fact of his having kept to "The hard ways" of justice; not for any earthly hope or reason, but because such was agreeable to God's commands. For those who observe God's commandments from human motives do so exteriorly, when they are likely to be observed, and thus the latent iniquity is detected in them; but they who observe the commandments, in order to please God, keep them externally and internally, and thus no iniquity is detected in such persons. He therefore says: "I have kept hard ways;" that is, I have kept to the road of justice, however rough and rugged, nor has tribulation of any sort caused me to go out of it. "For the sake of the words of thy lips," influenced thereto by your commandments, your threats, and your promises, "That my mouth may not speak the works of men:" That I may not be obliged to ask the help of man; that I may not put my hope in man; "Nor speak (meaning praise) the works of men."

5. "Perfect thou my goings in thy paths; that my footsteps be not moved." Acknowledging that it was not by his own strength, but by the grace of God, that he remained in the narrow path of justice, he asks God to confirm the favor. "Perfect thou my goings in thy paths: that my footsteps be not moved:" strengthen and make sure my footsteps in this your path, for fear, if deprived of thy help, I may stray from it.

6. "I have cried to thee, for thou, O God, hast heard me: O incline thy ear unto me, and hear my words." Having explained the arguments derived from his own innocence, and from the justice of God, he again repeats the prayer in the beginning of the Psalm. Lord, to thee "I have cried, for thou hast heard me." I have cried with confidence to thee, for on all occasions you have heard me, and now too, with your usual benignity, "Incline your ear to me, and hear my words."

7. "Show forth thy wonderful mercies; thou who savest them that trust in thee." A third argument derived from God's mercy. I have proved my innocence; have appealed to your justice. I now invoke your mercy, for, however innocent I may consider myself of the crimes for which I am suffering, I may have many other sins for which I may be justly punished. "Show forth thy wonderful mercies" then. Astonish every one at the extent of them in delivering me, for to you it belongs to deliver all who put their trust in thee.

8. "From them that resist thy right hand keep me, as the apple of thy eye. Protect me under the shadow of thy wings." Protect me, as you would "The apple of your eye," with the greatest care, from those "that resist thy right hand:" in injuring those whom you protect, or who refuse to walk where you lead. This does not contradict the passage in the book of Esther, "There is no one who can resist thy will." For the will spoken of there, is the will of his good pleasure which is always carried out; but here is meant the will of his expression, which is not always carried out, for God permits the wicked to do many things opposed to his expressed will; that is, against his law, and afterwards punishes them according to their merits. "The apple of your eye," a most delicate, though valuable article, requiring the greatest care, and, therefore, provided by nature with various coverings, as well as with brows and eyelashes; such are we, frail and delicate, and such is the

care we stand in need of. "Protect me under the shadow of thy wings." The same petition, under another figure. As the chickens are covered by the wings of the hen, are hidden, and lie securely under them, so that the birds of prey cannot hurt them; the just man prays to be so protected from his persecutors.

9. "From the face of the wicked who have afflicted me. My enemies have surrounded my soul:" "The face of the wicked," signifies the sight of the wicked; as the wings of the hen cover the chickens, and prevent their being seen by the birds of prey; or it may mean the bite or the anger of the wicked, for their teeth, as well as their anger, are displayed in the faces. "Who have afflicted me," means that the just man, having been so often and so severely bitten by the wicked, appeals to God's protection, for fear of being entirely destroyed under the repeated biting. Such similes are of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. "I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings," Psalm 62; "He will overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust," Psalm 90; and the Lord himself, in Matt. 23, "How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou would not." "My enemies have surrounded my soul." The last argument drawn from the malice of his enemies. They have surrounded, pressed in upon me on every side.

10. "They have shut up their fat: their mouth hath spoken proudly." That is, they have no mercy, though they see me reduced to the last extremities. "Shut up their fat" is synonymous with, "Closing his bowels;" that is, having no mercy, according to 1 John 3, "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?" As fat increases, the bowels generally close; and the Prophet chose the former expression, that he may not only declare the fact, but the cause of the bowels being closed, namely, the increase of the fat, which means the wealth of this world, which causes man to be proud, to despise his neighbor, and thus spiritually "Shut up his bowels."