

END OF PSALM 63

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: 63

*A prayer in affliction, with confidence in God that
He will bring to naught the machinations of persecutors.*

1. Hear, O God, my prayer, when I make supplication to thee: deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy.
2. Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant; from the multitude of the workers of iniquity.
3. For they have whetted their tongues like a sword: they have bent their bow a bitter thing.
4. To shoot in secret undefiled.
5. They will shoot at him on a sudden, and will not fear: they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said: Who shall see them?
6. They have searched after iniquities: they have failed in their search. Man shall come to a deep heart:
7. And God shall be exalted. The arrows of children are their wounds:
8. And their tongues against them are made weak. All that saw them were troubled;
9. And every man was afraid. And they declared the works of God: and understood his doings.
10. The just shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in him: and all the upright in heart shall be praised.

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: 63

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Hear, O God, my prayer, when I make supplication to thee: deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy." As usual, the Prophet asks to be heard, and then tells what he wants. "Hear, O God, my prayer, when I make supplication to thee;" grant I may pray not in vain. "Deliver my soul, from the fear the enemy." A petition that may be understood in two ways; the first, making him ask to be delivered from the fear of the enemy about to kill him, by removing the cause of his fear; that is, rendering the enemy either unable or unwilling to kill him, which seems to be the literal explanation. The second explanation makes him ask to be freed from this fear, not by removing the cause of it, but by such an increase of love and constancy as will make him rise above fear, to render him insensible to fear any death but the death by sin, or in other words, that he may "not fear men, that can kill the body and cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul in hell." Such is the explanation of St. Augustine, a most useful and spiritual one, for in any tribulation nothing can be better than to be free from the fear of the world, and rooted in the fear of the Lord. In the latter view of it, Christ speaks in the person of his weak members; in the former view of the passage, he seems to have spoken in his own person; for as on the day before his passion, he let himself down to tremble, to fear, and to pray in the garden, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" so he wished it to be here predicted.

2. "Thou has protected me from the assembly of the malignant; from the multitude of the workers of iniquity." Christ now shows that his prayer was heard, and that, as well as he was heard in times past, his members would, in time to come. "Thou has protected me from the assembly of the malignant." We know from the Gospel, how often "the princes of the Jews assembled against Jesus to put him to death," and to extinguish his name and his religion. This was not confined to the princes, for the very soldiers and satellites, "assembled to work iniquity;" that is, to mock, to scourge, to crucify our Savior. Yet God so protected him, that neither the assembly of the malicious Jews, nor the host of Gentiles, "workers of iniquity," could harm him. God, to be sure, suffered Christ's person to be scourged and flayed, but those scourges and temporal death wrought our salvation, and were turned into glory and triumph, and the beginning made by the head, as would followed up by the members, and will continue to go on, for God protected the martyrs, so that the loss of their lives was not only of no harm to them, but even turned to their everlasting glory; and God will equally protect all the pious, by causing their tribulations and persecutions always to turn their benefit.

3. "For they have whetted their tongues like a sword: they have bent their bow a bitter thing."

4. "To shoot in secret the undefiled." These verses refer to "the assembly of the malignant," who fought not with their hands, but with their tongues, that is, by their consultations, accusations, importunities with Pilate to destroy Christ. He compares the language of the

malicious Jews to swords and arrows; the former striking openly and close to the hand, the latter, from a distance, and without been seen. So with the Jews, they openly slew Christ with the sword of their tongue, when they brought him before the council, and accused him, and condemned him, as if he had been convicted saying, "He is guilty of death;" and afterwards, when they again accused him before Pilate, and over and over insisted on his being crucified. "For they have whetted their tongues like a sword," to strike him by their cross questions in their examination. "They have bent their bow, a bitter thing." They not only struck openly at him with the sword, but even in his absence, by private snares and plots, they shot their arrows at him, when they sent so many to him to take advantage of what he said, when they held a private conference with Judas the traitor, and when they suborned false witnesses against him. "They have bent their bow a bitter thing," laid snares that are nothing else but bitter and deadly things. "To shoot in secret the undefiled." Such was the end, scope, and object of the conspiracy, the show that Christ was a sinner and a false one, which they sought to prove by false and suborned witnesses; that Christ, who was truly immaculate, came into the world to wipe away the stain of sin from others.

5. "They will shoot at him on a sudden and will not fear: they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said: who shall see them?" Having said that the "assembly of the malignant" had "bent their bow" "to shoot at the undefiled," he now predicts the certainty of it, for the fact of their being hardened and confirmed in wickedness; for the Holy Ghost foresaw and foretold, the more than incredible obstinacy of the Jews; which prophecy Isaias also predicted, chapter 6, to which St. John alludes. "They will shoot at him on a sudden." They will quite unexpectedly shoot their arrows from their ambush, "and will not fear;" will shoot boldly, having no fear of the Lord before them, and no respect for the all seeing eye of God. "They are resolute in wickedness." They will have no fear is so shooting at the innocent, because they are obstinate and hardened, and have made up their minds to it in the very spirit in which they cried out to Pilate, "He is guilty of death;" and hence, when Pilate afterwards tried all means to divert them such a crime, they only obstinately cried out, "crucify him." "They have talked of hiding snares." To the obstinacy of the wicked Jews, he now adds their hypocrisy, through which they sought to cover their wickedness and malice, under pretense of allegiance to Caesar. Pilate knew that well; for, as St. Matthew says, "he knew that through envy they had delivered him up;" which they sought to conceal, saying, "we found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar," Luke 23; and again, "if thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend; for, whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar." The meaning, then, of "they have talked of hiding snares," is: they said to each other, let us enter into a plot, pretending that we are concerned only for the injury done to Caesar by this man, "who shall see them?" Who will ever find out what we are at? Who, therefore, shall punish us? As if God does not see everything or as if it were of no consequence to be seen by him, who is a supreme Judge of all.

6. "They have searched after iniquities: they have failed in their search. Man shall come to a deep heart." The Prophet proceeds in relating and enlarging on the malice of the Jews, who, not content with having recourse to treachery and hypocrisy, had recourse to a most searching investigation to try and make a case out against Christ. Hence, "the chief priest and all the council sought for false testimony against Jesus," and, though the witnesses did not agree, they said to him, "do you make no answer to what these testify against you?" "They have searched after iniquities," then, means, to look out for false testimony, and then, knowingly to act on it, as if it were true. "They have failed in their search," because they found nothing that bore even the semblance of truth; and, because, through God's providence they were so struck with blindness, that they should make themselves an object of derision to everyone, by bringing forward witnesses to prove to a fact that occurred while the witnesses were asleep; for, they said to the guards on the sepulcher, "say you, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep." "Man shall come to a deep heart." Having entered into the perversity of the wicked enemies of Christ, he now predicts the part Christ himself was to take in these persecutions. "Man shall come with a deep heart;" that is, Christ, as man, "shall come to" offer and give himself up, as one ignorant and infirm, yet having an intimate knowledge of the secrets of their hearts. "Shall come to" all the sufferings they planned in their hearts find him; that is, will patiently and humbly bear all the injuries they, in "a deep heart," with consummate and deep malice prepared for him. The "deep heart" may be also referred to Christ's own heart; thus, he will enter into his own deep and profound heart, the heart in which he determined, in the form of a servant, to be abused and ill treated by the Jews, while the form of God, who was to raise him up, lay hid within.

7. "And God shall be exalted. The arrows of children are their wounds:" While he humbles himself as man, he will be exalted as God; for then, especially, will the wisdom of God be seen superior to the malice of man, when it shall appear that Christ, by his death, conquered death, and by his Resurrection, repaired life. "The arrows of children are their wounds." The power and wisdom of God caused the wounds inflicted on the Savior to harm him just as little as would some many arrows shot from the hands of babies, whose weak and infirm hands can injure no one. And, in fact, what signifies the wounds that were perfectly healed in three days, of rather immediately? For his body rose impassable and immortal.

8. "And their tongues against them are made weak. All that saw them were troubled;" Their calumnies and blasphemies were of no more avail, than if they were so many swords of lead; "they are they weak," against themselves, to their own detriment and danger, alluding to what he already said of them in the third verse, "for they have whetted their tongues like a sword; they have bent their bow, a bitter thing;" in other words, they labored to whet the sword of their tongue, and to shoot their deadly arrows from their bow; but their tongue became like a sword of lead, and their arrows like those of children. The same may be said of all the persecutors of the martyrs and of the just; for the day of judgment will show how little the cruelty of their persecutors harmed them. "When they shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them." Wisdom 5. "All that saw them were troubled." He now tells us the consequence of the arrows of the Jews becoming

arrows of children, and their calumnies and contumelies being all refuted by the Resurrection of Christ; it was, that "all that saw them were troubled." The Jews were astonished and cofounded when they heard from the apostles that he whom they had put to death had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, would come to judge the living and the dead; and saw what they heard confirmed by great signs from heaven.

9. "And every man was afraid. And they declared the works of God: and understood his doings." All who had the right use of their reason began to tremble, to fear, and to say, "men, brethren, what shall we do?" Of such holy fear St. Luke writes, Acts 2. "And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles in Jerusalem, and there was great fear at all." "And they declared the works of God." Those seized with such holy fear, especially the apostles, who were in such terror when Christ arose and first appeared to them. "They declared the works of God;" began at once to preach his Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, doctrine, and miracles, "and understood his doings." The word "and" is often used in the Scripture as it is here, to signify "because." The apostles, then, instructed by Christ, who after his Resurrection, "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." As also by the Holy Ghost, who descending on them, "taught them all truth," John 16: they "understood his doings," and announced them to the whole world.

10. "The just shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in him: and all the upright in heart shall be praised." The consequence of all such preaching by the apostles will be, that everyone truly justified, that is, everyone changed from my wicked to a just man, will thenceforth "rejoice in the Lord, and shall hope in him;" having shaken off all servile and worldly fear, "for the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity," Galatians 5; and, ultimately, "all the upright in heart shall be praised;" all who shall have persevered in justice, and thus, had their hearts directed to God; who relished nothing, sought nothing but what was pleasing to him; they will be praised by God in the great theater of the whole world; while, on the contrary, in the very same theater will the perverse in heart, the overwhelmed with intolerable confusion.