

you in my prayers, all my journeys, casualties, and laborers, (for the Hebrew word for life comprehends so much;) and “thou hast set my tears in thy sight;” you, most merciful and kind Father, have not turn your face away, but you have looked upon my face with pity “as also in thy promise;” a thing you could not well avoid, having promised me faithfully that you would protect me.

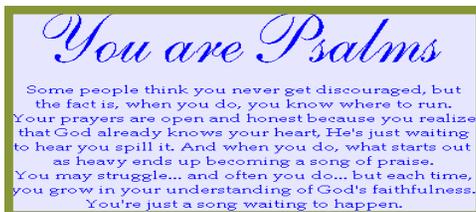
9. “Then shall my enemies be turned back. And when they soever I shall call upon thee, behold, I know thou art my God. He can close by thanking and praising God. Behold, he says, I am known by experience that “in what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold, I know thou art my God;” that is, by listening to my prayer, you will prove that you are my God.

10. “In God will I praise the word; in the Lord will I praise his speech. In God have I hoped: I will not fear what man can do to me.” This first has already been explained, it being nearly identical with verse 4, the difference being hardly worth an explanation.

11. “In me, O God, are vows to thee, which I will pay, praises to thee.” For all the favors conferred on him, he promises that he will discharge all the vows of praise he made while in tribulation. “In me, O God, of vows to thee,” I have a lively recollection of them all, “which I will pay, praises to thee;” these vows being promises of constant hymns of praise and thanksgiving to thee for all the favors conferred on me.

12. “Because thou hast delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling: that I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living.” We have now a summary of all God’s favors. “Because thou hast delivered my soul from death;” you have saved me from Saul, or Achis, the king of the Philistines, who would bent on my ruin; “my feet from falling;” preserved me from falling into sin, notwithstanding the numerous temptations by which I was urged to destroy Saul, or to curse him; and saved me from the death of the body, as well as of the soul. “That I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living;” in the light of this life, which those who are dead enjoy not; and in the light of grace, which infidels and sinners have not; that I may, at length, come to the light of eternal glory enjoyed by those who alone, and properly speaking, can be classed among the living. These words are applicable to Christ, who by his Resurrection, was delivered from the death of the body, without any possibility of his ever again being subject to it, or to any suffering, and lives and reigns on the right hand of the Father, “in the light of the living.” Amen.

END OF PSALM 55



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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: 55

A prayer of David in danger and distress.

1. Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot: all the day long he hath afflicted me fighting against me.
2. My enemies have trodden on me all the day long; for they are many that make war against me.
3. From the height of the day I shall fear: but I will in thee.
4. In God I will praise my words, in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do against me.
5. All the day ;ong they detested my words: all their thoughts were against me unto evil.
6. They will dwell and hide themselves: they will watch my heel. As they have waited for my soul.
7. For nothing shalt thou save them: in thy anger thou shalt break the people in pieces. O God,
8. I have declared to thee my life: thou hast set my tears in thy sight, as also in thy promise.
9. Then shall my enemies be turned back. In what day so ever I shall call upon thee, behold, I know thou art my God.
10. In God will I praise the word; in the Lord will I praise his speech. In God have I hoped: I will not fear what man can do to me.
11. In me, O God, are vows to thee, which I will pay, praise to thee.
12. Because thou hast delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling: that I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living.

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: 55

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me underfoot: all the day long he hath afflicted me fight against me." He commences with a prayer for mercy, by reason of his avowal of his misery. He was suffering a most undeserved persecution from Saul, and in seeking to avoid it, he fell into a more grievous one from the Philistines; and, during a short respite from both, he was obliged to lie concealed in a cave, an exile, and a destitute. "Have mercy on me, O Lord," you, the only refuge of the wretched, "from man hath trodden me underfoot," meaning Saul, whom he designates man, rather than Saul, to contrast him with God; as if he said: have mercy on me, O Lord, for it is my fellow man that afflicts me; when the earth despises me, I looked up to the heavens; when my fellow servant persecutes me, I fly to my master. "All the day long he hath afflicted me," his injuries were not passing, or momentary, but they continued to be heaped on me, never let me rest. The truth of all this is apparent from 1 Kings. Nor is there any difficulty in applying this to Christ, who became man for our sake, and yet was always oppressed by man, and was afflicted from the day of his birth, to that of his burial, and after him it may refer to his Church, which is doomed to encounter persecution and trouble, even to the day of judgment. By the word "man," is meant, either the devil, who was called in the Gospel, "the enemy," or mankind wanting the Spirit of God, and, therefore, purely man, as the apostle, 1 Corinthians 3, says, "for, whereas there is amongst you envying and contention, are you not carnal, and walk according to man?" And immediately after, "are you not men?" Whence the Lord himself, Matthew 16, says, "whom do men say the Son of Man is?" But whom do you say that I am?"

2. "My enemies have trodden on me all the day long; for they are many that make war against me." David was persecuted, and his death sought for, not only by Saul, but by all his retainers; and the devil is helped by all his fallen angels, in his assaults on the Church.

3. "From the height of the day I shall fear: but I will trust in thee." However numerous my enemies may be, I will not fear them, but "from the height of the day I shall fear;" that is, I will fear God's judgment, proceeding as they do from the most intense light, such as we have at midday, a light penetrating everything, even the inmost recesses of the heart; which fear shall be united with hope: for though I fear the brightness of your light, I will, at the same time, "trust" in your mercy and goodness.

4. "In God I will praise my words; in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do against me." He enters at greater length into the confidence he has in God, and his reasons for it. God had long since, through Samuel, promised him the kingdom, as we read in 1 Kings 13, where Samuel says of David, "the Lord hath sought him a man according to his own heart; and him hath the Lord commanded to the prince over his people;" and in 1 Kings 16, "the anointed him in the midst of his brethren." Such was the promise that inspired him with so much confidence, and to it he alludes, when he says, "in God I will praise my words;" that is, relying on God's assistance, I will ultimately praise the promises he made me, as most faithful, when they shall have been accomplished; and, therefore, "I will not fear what flesh can do against me." I will not fear the threats and persecutions of my enemies, who, being flesh, are weak and feeble, when compared with God, who has assured me of the kingdom. This verse can be easily referred to Christ, for the angel, was taken to the Virgin, said, "the Lord will give him the throne of David his father;" and Christ could say with the greatest truth I will not fear what flesh can do against me.

5. "All the day long they detested my words: all their thoughts were against me unto evil." He returns to an account of the malice of his enemies, and says, that all the time he was among them, they never ceased impugning all his words and actions, and seeking his death; which is just as applicable to Scribes and Pharisees, calumniating and plotting against our Savior, as it is to David's enemies.

6 "They will dwell and hide themselves: they will watch my heel. As they have waited for my soul." He now relates another malicious trait in his enemies. "They will dwell and hide themselves," while they are apparently on the best of terms with me, living as friends and companions in one house with me, they will, meanwhile, hide themselves, plotting and conspiring against me: "they will watch my heel," to trip me up, if possible, and destroy me. Such was the behavior of Saul's dependents towards David, and of the Jews towards Christ. Though he speaks in the future tense, he intends the past, the Hebrew idiom allowing, in many cases, the future to be used for the past.

7. "For nothing shalt thou save them: in thy anger thou shalt break the people in pieces, O God." He now predicts the ruin of his enemies, God, in his justice, awarding to them what they intended for their neighbor. "As they have waited for my soul," as they privately lay in wait for me to have my life, so you, O God, "for nothing shalt thou save them, nothing will induce you to save them; but, "in thy anger thou shalt break the people in pieces," and pursue them to destruction. And so he did; for Saul and his troops perished in the mountains of Gelboe. The Jews had their city sacked by the Romans, and the survivors of the siege were scattered all over the world, and they will be signally punished on the day of judgment.

8. "I have declared to thee my life: thou hast set my tears in thy sight, as also in thy promise." Having discussed the punishment of his enemies, he now returns to pray for himself, saying, "O God, I have declared to thee my life;" I have put