

END OF PSALM 113

## 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: 113

**God hath shown His power in delivering His people; idols are vain.  
The Hebrews divide this into two psalms.**

1. When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people:
2. Judea was made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.
3. The sea saw, and fled: Jordan was turned back.
4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of the flock,
5. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou didst flee: and thou, O Jordan, that thou wast turned back?
6. Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye hills, like lambs of the flock?
7. At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob:
8. Who turned the rock into pools of water, and the stony hill into fountains of waters.
9. Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to thy name give glory.
10. For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake: lest the Gentiles should say: Where is their God?
11. But our God is in heaven: he hath done all things whatsoever he would.
12. The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men.
13. They have mouths, and speak not: they have eyes, and see not:
14. They have ears, and hear not: they have noses, and smell not:
15. They have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not; neither shall they cry out through their throat:
16. Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them.
17. The house of Israel hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector.
18. The house of Aaron hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector.
19. They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector.

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20. The Lord hath been mindful of us, and hath blessed us. He hath blessed the house of Israel: he hath blessed the house of Aaron.
21. He hath blessed all that fear the Lord both little, and great.
22. May the Lord add blessings upon you; upon you, and upon your children.
23. Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
24. The heaven of heaven is the Lord's: but the earth he has given to the children of men.
25. The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord; nor any of them that go down to hell.
26. But we that live bless the Lord, from tis time now and forever.

*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: 113**

#### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people." He begins that Psalm by telling how it was that the Jews, on their departure from Egypt, began to assume the form of a people peculiarly subject to God, and governed by his special providence, as if he were their king alone. Before they went to Egypt, they were a family, not a people, but during their sojourn in Egypt they multiplied greatly, but was still mixed up with the Egyptian, to whose king they were subject; but, on their departure from Egypt, they began to assume the form of a state of their own, Moses, as being God's vice regent and representative, having supreme authority; and that is why he alludes to when he says, "when Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob, from a barbarous people." Israel means here the people of Israel, who were descended of him, the house of Jacob being only a repetition of the same. The "barbarous people" are the Egyptians, who spoke a strange language; and such are called barbarous, according to the apostle, "if, then, I know not the power of the voice I shall be to him to whom I speak a barbarian, and he that speaketh a barbarian to me." The Egyptians, then, are called a barbarous people by reason of their using a different language from that of the Jews. "Judea was made his sanctuary." It was upon the departure of the Jews from Egypt that God sanctified the Jews, or chose them to be his own people. "Israel his dominion." The same nightmare in different language; that is, he assumed special care of and dominion over the children of Israel. By Judea we are not to understand the country, but the people; for it is Juda in Hebrew, and it is not unusual in the Scripture to call the Jews sometimes the children of Juda, at other times the children of Israel. Hence the names Jews and Israelites.

2. "Judea was made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion."

their sepulchers not praise the Lord, but also "they that go down to hell;" the spirits who have gone down to the infernal regions; they, too, will not praise God for temporal blessings they cannot now possibly enjoy. "But we that live," and are in the enjoyment of such blessings, "bless the Lord from this time now and forever," through all succeeding ages. Applying the passage to the Christians under the New testament, we had to bear in mind that "he heaven of heavens" means that supreme part of heaven where the children of God reside; of which the apostle says, "for we know that if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven;" that house God chose for himself, "but the earth," this visible world, "he has given to the children of men," as distinguished from the children of God; and, therefore, he adds, "the dead shall not praise thee, O Lord;" that is, they who, though living bodily, are spiritually dead, they will not praise you; "nor any of them that go down to hell;" will have died in their sins, and have gone to the eternal punishment; "but we that live" the life of grace, adhering to thee through faith and charity, citizens of our heavenly country, though we are detained here for awhile below upon earth, we, I repeat, "bless the Lord," and we "bless him forever."

got special help and protection from God. He then, in the same order, confirms his assertions of God having blessed the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and all who fear him, great and small, without any reference to greatness or littleness, whether of age, power, wisdom, or riches. When God is said to be “mindful,” it means that he regards with a singular providence; “and blessed us,” by assisting and protecting us – “us” meaning the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear him.

22. “May the Lord add blessings upon you; upon you, and upon your children.”

23. “Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” as we read in Luke’s 6; and as the heart of the holy Prophet was burning with desire for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor, he turns over the same subject, prophesying at one time, then exhorting, and then by praying all manner of happiness on mankind, in the hope of bringing them to have a holy fear of God, and to repose all their hope in him. Turning, then, to those who fear God, whose blessing he had assured them of, he says to them, “may the Lord and blessings upon you,” and not only on you, but “upon your children.” And thus may you be blessed with a full and entire benediction from the Lord, “who made heaven and earth;” that is, by him in whose hand is the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth. The saints of the Old Testament were very much in the habit of praying to the Lord for the dews of heaven and the fatness of the earth for their people; for all the fruits of the earth depend on them. In more spiritual meaning, God blesses with the dews of heaven and the fatness of the earth those to whom he gives spiritual and temporal blessings in abundance; as he did to Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and David, and such others.

24. “The heaven of heavens is the Lord’s: but the earth he hath given to the children of men.”

25. “The dead shall not praise thee, O Lord; nor any of them that go down to hell.”

26. “But we then live bless the Lord, from this time now and forever.” These three verses may be differently interpreted, applying them to the Jews under the Old Testament, or to the Christians in the New. If we apply them to the Jews, the meaning is: having said, “Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth,” he now asserts that it is only fair that they who have been blessed by the Lord should, in return, bless him while they live upon this earth, which he gave them for a habitation, leaving to the Angels the duty of blessing him in heaven, that being his habitation and that of his servants who minister unto him. “The heaven of heaven is the Lord’s;” that is, the supreme heaven belongs peculiarly to God and to the Angels who minister unto him; “but the earth,” with the elements that surround it, “he has given to the children of men” for their habitation, and for such a splendid portion of the universe man should constantly return thanks to God as long as they live and enjoy the fruits of that earth. Because “the dead shall not praise thee, O Lord;” for the dead, being devoid of sense, and no longer in possession of the goods of this world, and being even bereft of life, cannot praise God or return him thanks for his benefits. “For any of them that go down into hell.” Not only will the dead lying in

3. “The sea saw, and fled: Jordan was turned back.”

4. “The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of the flock.” He now recounts the wonderful things that happened on the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, as also during their stay in the desert, as well as on their entry into the land of promise, in order to prove thereby that their God was the true and all-powerful God, whom they should justly fear and worship; and he relates the first miracle, when the sea, at God’s word, was divided, in order to let the people pass, as we read in Numbers, but which he relates here in a most beautiful and figurative manner, addressing it as if it had sense, and giving us to understand that it drew back of itself from fear and reverence, on beholding the majesty of the Lord. With it he unites another miracle, though it happened forty years later, as belonging to the same element – the division of the waters of the River Jordan, to admit of the people passing over dry, as we read in Joshua 4. He then alludes to the miracles that happened on land when they got the law, when God descended on Mount Sinai, but then the earth was moved, and, struck with terror before God’s majesty, seemed, as it were, to dance and to shake, as we read in Exodus, “all the Mount was terrible;” the meaning of which is that such was the tremor in the mountain that it made them all terrible. He finally alludes to another miracle, the production of water in great abundance from the rock. But, to come to particulars, “the sea saw and fled.” The Red Sea, frightened, as it were, at the sight of the Lord, retired from its natural bed and fled. “Jordan was turned back.” In the book of Joshua it is stated that “the waters that curve down from above stood in one place, and swelling up like a mountain, were seen afar off;” but David gives us to understand that the water was not only raised up but that it was turned back, which is most probable, as it time necessary for many hundred thousand persons to pass over must have been not inconsiderable. If the water, then, did not recede as well a stand up, instead of being like a mountain, it would have been like something much more enormous. It did both, then; it stood up, and it flowed back as David sings, in order to admit a dry passage for the Israelites. “The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like lambs of the flock.” The mounds of Sinai, that is, its highest points, and the hills of the same mountains, its lower protuberances, were seen to leap, shake, and tremble, like so many frightened sheep and lambs; and, though the word skipping would seem to imply that it proceeded from joy, yet, here it must be interpreted as from fear, because it was on the same account that the mountains skipped as the sea fled; and, in a few verses after, we have, “at the presence of the Lord the earth was moved;” which words imply terror, and go to explain this passage.

5. “What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou didst flee; and thou, O Jordan, that thou wast turned back?”

6. “Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams and ye hills, like lambs of the flock?”

7. “At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God

of Jacob.”

8. “Who turned the rock into pools of water, and the stony hill into fountains of water.” In quite a poetic strain he asks the sea why it fled, the Jordan why it turned back, and the hills and mountains why they trembled; and answers that it was caused by the power of the presence of God, whom not only commanded the sea and the river, but, what is much more wonderful, changed one element to another, as he did when he turned the hard and solid rock into purling streams of the purest water. All this was caused “at the presence of the Lord;” in other words, because the Lord showed himself, manifested his might and power; and, at once, the whole earth, unable to stand his sight, “was moved,” trembled all over. That same Lord, “who turned the rock into pools of water,” as he did when the people clamored for it, “and the stony hill,” to show it was no ordinary rock, but a hard, gritty, flinty one that so supplied the water.

9. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to thy name give glory.” Having recorded the wonderful things that God did for his people on their departure from Egypt, he now, in the name of the whole people, prays to him not to regard their shortcomings, but his own glory, and to continue to protect his servants. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us.” We asked not for praise or glory on our own merits, which are none; “but to thy name give glory;” protect us for the glory of your name, and not for our own merits.

10. “For thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake: lest the Gentiles should say: where is their God?” He, in a very short space, assigns three reasons why God ought to seek the glory of his name in preserving his people. First, because he is merciful; secondly, because he is true and faithful in observing his promise; thirdly, that the Gentiles, seeing God’s people in a state of destitution, may have no cause for blaspheming him and them. He, therefore, says, “for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake,” show your glory, or give glory to thy name, for it is then your glory will be exhibited when you show mercy to your people; and then you will have carried out the truth of the promises you made our fathers, “lest the Gentiles should say: where is their God?” Lest the incredulous Gentiles should get an occasion of detracting from your power, and, perhaps, of ignoring your very existence.

11. “But our God is in heaven: he hath done all things whatsoever he would.”

12. “The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men.”

13. “They have mouths, and speak not: they have eyes, and see not.”

14. “They had ears, and hear not: they have noses, and smell not.”

15. “They have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not; neither shall they cry out through their throat.” He now, on account of his having said, “lest the Gentiles should say, “where is there a God?” Gives expression to a most beautiful antithesis between the true and false gods; as much as to say, “the Gentiles should get no opportunity of reproaching us; but if they should do so, saying, ‘where is their

God?’ We will answer, ‘our God is in heaven;’ and the wonderful things he has done bear testimony to it; for “he hath done all things whatsoever he wished;” while, on the contrary, their gods are on the earth; and thus hitherto are so unable to do anything that they cannot even make use of the members they appear to be endowed with; for, though they have the shape and figure of man, and appeared to have all his members and senses, they need to see, nor hear, nor smell, nor touch, nor walk, nor speak; they do not emit anything in the shape of the voice of a man, nor even of beasts.”

16. “Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them.” This is a prophecy in the shape of an imprecation, as is usual with the prophets; for the makers of, and the worshipers of idols, will likely become similar to the idols after the Resurrection; for, though they will be possessed of feeling and members, the case will be with them as if they had none; they will even desire to have none; for they will see, hear, smell, touch nothing but what will be hateful and disagreeable; and, with their hands and feet tied, they will be cast into exterior darkness, without being able in any way to help themselves. Even in this life they are like idols, because, though they hear and see, is more in appearance than reality; for they neither see nor hear that things that pertain to salvation, that things that are worth seeing, so that they may be said more to dream than to see or hear; as St. Mark has it, “having eyes ye see not, having ears ye hear not.”

17. “The house of Israel hath hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector.”

18. “The house of Aaron hath hope in the Lord: he is there helper and their protector.”

19. “They that fear the Lord, have hope in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector.” Having said, “let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them,” he adds, by way of antithesis, that the children of Israel trusted in the Lord, and that they had him, therefore, as a protector, naming the house of Israel first, which includes the whole Jewish nation; then the house of Aaron, which means the priests and Levites, the elite of God’s people, and who should, therefore, have special trust in God; and, finally, all those that fear the Lord; for at all times there were pious souls, however few they may have been, not belonging to the children of Israel who feared and worshiped God in all sincerity such were Job and his friends, and afterwards Naaman, the Syrian, and others.

20. “The Lord hath been mindful of us, and hath blessed us. He hath blessed the house of Israel: he hath blessed the house of Aaron.”

21. “He hath blessed all that fear the Lord, both little and great.” He now confirms what he had asserted, viz., that God would be the helper and the protector of those that trust him. He ranks himself among the number as having