

thee;" that I was wicked myself, and a friend of the wicked; but such is not the case, because "I will reprove thee" on the day of judgment, "and set before thy face;" make you to see the number and enormity of your sins, so that you cannot possibly gainsay the justice of your punishment.

22. "Understand these things you that forget God; lest he snatch you away, and then being none to deliver you." An exhortation, on the part of the Prophet, to those sinners who forget that God is a just and Almighty Judge, to reflect seriously on what he has just said, "lest he snatch you away," when they are thinking least of it, hurry them to judgment, and damn them as they deserve, "and there be none to deliver you."

23. "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me: and there is the way by which I will show him the salvation of God." God now concludes, by laying down, that the way of salvation lies entirely in the one sacrifice of praise, so that those who daily offer it will be saved on the day of judgment, and those who neglect it will be condemned amongst the reprobate. "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me;" whosoever will offer me such sacrifice will be acceptable in my sight, I will feel myself honored by him, "and there," in that sacrifice, "is the way" to salvation, for by that route you will arrive at the place where "I will show him the salvation of God," divine, full, and perfect salvation. How does it happen, though, that the essence of salvation is made to depend on the "Sacrifice of praise?" St. Augustine answers: because nobody truly praises God, unless he be really pious. The impious may praise him with their lips, but not by their lives; and thus their praise is idle, while their lives are in opposition to it. The "Sacrifice of praise," too, as we have already observed, does not mean, simply, praise, but such praise as proceeds from the altar of our hearts, on which is burning the fire of love. The "Sacrifice of praise," then, of necessity includes love; and it is, therefore, no wonder that it should be the sum of our salvation.

END OF PSALM 49

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: 49

The coming of Christ: who prefers virtue and inward purity before the blood victims.

1. The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken: and he hath called the earth, from the rising of the sun to be going down there of.
2. Out of Sion the loveliness of his beauty.
3. God shall come manifestly: our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall burn before him: and a mighty tempest shall be round about him.
4. He shall call heaven from above, and the earth, to judge his people.
5. Gather ye together his saints to him, who set his covenant before sacrifices.
6. And the heavens shall declare his justice: for God is judge.
7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify to thee: I am God thy God.
8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices: and thy burnt offerings are always in my sight.
9. I will not take calves out of thy house: nor he-goats out of thy flocks.
10. For all the beasts of the woods are mine: the cattle on the hills, and the oxen.

Continued >

(Continued from preceding page)

11. **I know all the fowls of the air; and with me is the beauty of the field.**
12. **If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.**
13. **Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? Or shall I drink the blood of goats?**
14. **Offered to God the sacrifice of praise: and pay thy vows to the Most High.**
15. **And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.**
16. **But to the sinner God hath said: why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth?**
17. **Seeing thou hast hated discipline, and hast cast my words behind thee.**
18. **If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him: and with adulterers thou hast been a partaker.**
19. **Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue framed deceits.**
20. **Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son.**
21. **These things hast thou done, and I was silent. Thou thought unjustly that I shall be like to thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face.**
22. **Understand these things, you that forget God; lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you.**
23. **The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me: and there is the way by which I will show him the salvation of God.**

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: 49

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "the God of gods, the Lord hath spoken; and he hath called the earth, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." Beginning with the first coming of the Messiah, he says that God, who was wont to speak through the prophets, speaks now himself, and addresses not only the Jews, but the "whole earth," meaning its inhabitants, as he really did through his apostles; for "their sound hath gone forth into all the earth. He is called her "God of gods," to give us to understand that Christ is truly God, the Son of the true God, and enjoying the same divinity as his Father. They can be only one true God in reality, though many get the title, for instance, the

troubles you should fly to me, and put your whole hope and trust in me, because "I will deliver thee" from every trouble; and you, in return, "shall glorify me" by the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

16. "But to the sinner God hath said: why dost thou declare it justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth?" Having instructed the just, and now proceeds to take the wicked to task. "To the sinner, God hath said:" caused me to admonish him thus. "Why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth?" Why do you profess to know my law, to recount its precepts, to profess to belong to my family, to be a child of Abraham, when you need to observe my law, nor keep my compact, nor thread in Abraham's footsteps?

17. "Seeing thou hast hated discipline, and hast cast my words behind thee." He first alludes to their secret sins, then to their public sins. "Thou hast hated discipline," set your mind entirely against the spirit of the law of God, "and cast my words behind thee;" forgot and despised them as completely as if you had thrown them over your shoulder.

18. "If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him: and with adulterers thou hast been a partaker." Hatred and forgetfulness of the law of God lead at once to sins of deed, such as theft and adultery; and as these two sins, springing from avarice and luxury, are most common, the Prophet makes special mention of them. "If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him;" and observe, he does not say, you too stole, or you too committed adultery, but not content with transgressing, you did it openly, ran with the thief, and was a partaker with the other, thereby boasting and glorifying in your wickedness.

19. "Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue framed deceits." He now passes to sins by word, saying, from your mouth, as if from a spring, was poured forth all manner of foul language, lies, falsehoods, and deceits.

20. "Sitting thou didst speak against thy brother, and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son." To aggravate those sins by word, they were spoken, not against a stranger, but against his own brethren, and it was done, not from a sudden impulse of anger, but deliberately, "Sitting," charges were invented, and calumnies spread abroad against the brother born of the same womb.

21. "These things hast thou done, and I was silent. Thou thought unjustly that I shall be like to thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face." God was looking on all the while, bearing with him, unwilling to chastise him, in the hope of his conversion. Thus, God sees and is silent, as if he did not see at all; but soon will come the day of judgment, when, as it is expressed in the third verse of this Psalm, "God will come manifestly, and shall not keep silence," as he here declares, for he says, "thou thought unjustly, then I shall be like to thee, but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face. Unfortunate sinners, have no fear of God, think their sins are not displeasing to him, but on the day of judgment, they will understand what he said here, "thou thought unjustly, that I shall be like to

10. "For all the beasts of the woods, are mine: the cattle on the hills, and the oxen."

11. "I know all the fowls of the air; and with me is the beauty of the field." The second reason why God does not require sacrifice from us is, that he is himself Lord of everything, and if he wants sheep, or cattle, or birds, or any thing else, we can easily have them all, being their sovereign Master. "I will not take calves out of thy house," because I have all such things of my own: beasts, birds, oxen; and not only beasts, birds, etc., but the "beauty of the field;" everything that grows; the fruits of the earth, that render the field beautiful, are mine.

12. "If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness hereof."

13. "Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? Or shall I drink the blood of goats?" A third reason assigned for God's requiring nothing from us, either for his necessities or his convenience, and that is, because he neither hungers nor thirsts; he is, consequently, subject to neither heat nor cold, nor does he need anything; and were he to need anything, his wants would be at once supplied, he being the Lord of all things. "if I should hunger, I would not tell thee," to provide food for me, "for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." Being a spiritual and immortal substance, I require no solid food, and, therefore, I need no "flesh of bullocks, or blood of goats."

14. "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise: and pay thy vows to the Most High."

15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I would deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Having established the insufficiency of sacrifice, unaccompanied by interior submission and love, he now teaches us, that it is by such interior acts of virtue that God is most pleased, and that it is through such acts we can be saved in the Last Judgment. We have here to notice the difference between the praise of God, and the "sacrifice of praise," we may praise God with our lips alone, but the "sacrifice of praise" can only be offered by those, who, on the altar of their hearts, light up the fire of charity, on which to pour the incense of praise to God; that is to say, by those who believe, and understand, to a certain extent, that God is supremely good, and after knowing and believing so much of him, love him with their whole heart, admire and praise him, as being most beautiful, most perfect, and most wise. The sacrifice of praise, then, is the mark and the consequence of our knowledge and love, and as the blessed in heaven always see and love God, of them is said, in Psalm 83, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever." He, therefore, says, "offer to God the sacrifice of praise," not with your bare lips, it must proceed from a thorough knowledge and love of God, "and pay thy vows to the Most High." When you shall have praised God, as God, look upon him in the light of being the source and spring of every blessing you enjoy; look upon your own nothingness, thank him, and pay that tribute of obedience, the principal one among "the vows" due to him, that you promised, when you became one of his people and family; and that is more pleasing to him than any sacrifice whatever, "for obedience is better than sacrifice," 1 Kings 15 "and call upon me in the day of trouble;" as you were wont, in your prosperity, to acknowledge me as the source of every blessing, so in your

gods of the Gentiles, who are no more than demons; angels and sanctified persons, by reason of their adoption, sometimes get the title; and the judges and rulers of the world, by way of comparison, sometimes are so called; but all these are subject to the one true and only God, who, therefore, is here styled "God of gods." He, therefore, says, Our Lord Christ, who is "the God of gods" on his arrival in this world, "hath spoken" the words of his Gospel; "and he hath called the earth," in inviting all to hear him, as he did when he said, "come to me, all you who labor and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you." "From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." To give us to understand that by the word "earth" he did not mean Palestine, or any part of it, but the whole world.

2. "Out of Sion, the loveliness of his beauty." He tells us in what place God began to speak. In Sion, as it was foretold by Isaias 2, "for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the law from Jerusalem;" and, in the last chapter of Luke, "it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead on the third day. And that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, he hath called the earth;" all created beings endowed with reason that inhabit the globe, "out of Sion, the loveliness of his beauty." When the Lord spoke, he spoke from Sion, a city of rare and surpassing beauty, and so it was; it is styled in the Lamentations as being "of perfect beauty," a most noble, ancient, and populous city; the seat of government, and of the high priest, having in it the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, and many other accessories worthy of the capital of the kingdom and of religion; whence it was always considered the type of the divine and heavenly city.

3. "God shall come manifestly: our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. A fire shall burn before him: and a mighty tempest shall be round about him." He now foretells the second coming of Christ. The God of gods came and called the earth; but he came incognito, in the form of a servant, in human shape, in all his meekness, to redeem us by his death and passion; but he will secondly, "come manifestly," in all his pomp and power; not in an obscure manager, but in the clouds of heaven; not nailed to a cross between thieves, but on the judgment seat amidst his angels. And he will not only "come manifestly," but when he comes, "he will not keep silence," as he did in his first coming, when, "like a lamb led to the slaughter, he did not open his mouth," which silence he still observes, however cognizant he is of our sins; but he will come with a trumpet and with a dreadful noise, as we read in Matthew, "he will send his angels with the trumpet and a loud voice, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds; and, in 1 Thess. 4, "for the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trumpet of God;" and, in 1 Cor. 15, "at the last trumpet, for the trumpet shall sound." A fire shall burn before him: and a mighty tempest shall be round about him. "Alluding to the general conflagration of the world; that is, of everything in it, such as cities, gardens, vineyards, palaces, all animals and perishable things; of which Saint Peter says, in his Epistle." But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be

dissolved with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up. The meaning, then, is: a fire shall burn before him, to destroy everything on the face of the earth, and a “mighty tempest shall be round about him;” the whole world in confusion, land, sea, the air, the heavens, “men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world.”

4. “He shall call heaven from above, and the earth, to judge his people.” There will be an immense crowd present, such will be the spectacle to witness. “He shall call heaven from above;” all the angels will be summoned, as we read in Matthew, “when the Son of Man shall come in his Majesty, and all his angels with him.” He will summon the earth too: all from Adam down will appear there; and this great assembly will be called “to judge his people;” to sit in judgment on them, and to separate the good from the bad; as we read in Matthew, “so shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just;” and again, “he will separate the sheep from the goats;” that is to say, the celestial Judge will have as little trouble on that day, in selecting the just from out of the wicked, as would the shepherd, in distinguishing the sheep from the goats in his flock.

5. “Gather ye together his saints to him, who set his covenant before sacrifices.” Though all men will be brought up for judgment, it concerns the faithful especially, “for they who do not believe are already judged,” John 3; hence, in Matthew, the faithful are specially introduced for judgment; and questioning is made, not on their faith, but on their works. By “the saints,” then, we are to understand the faithful members of God’s Church whether enrolled therein by circumcision or by Baptism. Thus David says, in Psalm 85, “preserve my soul for I am holy;” and the apostle, in his Epistles, calls all Christians “holy.” He then addresses the angels, and says, “gather ye together his saints to him.” Bring up for judgment his own people who have been sanctified by him through the sacraments, and that such will be done through the angels is clear from the passage in Matthew, “the Angels show go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just;” and further on, “he shall send his Angels with a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect.” “Who set his covenant before sacrifices,” explains who the saints are, they being those “who said his covenant before sacrifices; those will which is expressed more clearly in the Hebrew, a means, they would have engaged themselves as God’s people, which engagements has been ratified by sacrificing to him, in which, principally, his worship consists. The meaning of the passage, then, is that God’s saints would be summoned to judgment: that is, those who enter into an engagement with God to honor and serve him, and thus merit blessing and protection.

6. “And the heavens shall declare his justice: for God is judge.” When all shall have been assembled the judgment, then at length “the heavens shall declare his justice.” Sentence will be passed from heaven on the good and on the bad, from which all will see how great is the justice of God, a thing we don’t often see when he permits the just to be oppressed by the wicked; and all heaven and all its celestial spirits will confirm his justice, exclaiming, “thou art just, O Lord, and righteous is thy judgment.” Nor can the celestials be deceived, “for God is judge,” in whom injustice can have no

place.

7. “Hear, O my people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will testify to thee: I am God thy God.” The Prophet now turns to the instruction of the people, and tells on what subject they are to be judged, of what they are to account for in judgment, so that everyone may prepare himself. To give greater weight to his admonitions he introduces God himself, speaking in a most paternal and friendly manner. “Hear, O my people, and I will speak.” If you don’t hear me, I will not speak to you, but I will speak to others who have ears to hear. For the Lord, most justly, in Matt. 11, and other places, often says, “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear;” for, as the ears of a deaf person are purely ornamental, and not useful; so those endowed with reason, and who will not apply it to understand anything concerning God, have the ears of their minds as if they had no such things at all. We must, then, when we wish God to speak to us, attentively reflect they consider on what he is saying. This he explains more clearly by adding, “O Israel! And I will testify to thee.” Hear, Israel, my people, and I will clearly show you what most concerns you. By Israel we are not to understand that people exclusively to me: the whole Christian world, who imitate the faith of Israel, are here comprehended; nay more, they are, perhaps, more specially alluded to; as the apostle, Romans 9, says, “for all are not Israelites that are of Israel; neither are all they who are the seed of Abraham, children; but they that are the children of the promise, are counted for the seed.” “I am God, thy God;” a reason why we should hear him who speaks, he being no less than God, and peculiarly our God; for which we have the strongest assurance that he knows how, and wishes, to give us the most useful instruction. If he be God, he knows every thing; if he be our God, he loves us; and, therefore, wishes to teach us what is most useful.

8. “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices: and thy burnt offerings are always in my sight.” God does not look for sacrifices, as if he wanted them, or by reason of their being very agreeable to him; he rather looks for interior virtue, consisting in faith, hope, love, and obedience; with such adjuncts sacrifices are acceptable; without them, quite odious and hateful. So Samuel, 1 Kings 15, says, “doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be obeyed?” And Isaias 1, “to what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims, saith the Lord?” So our Lord himself speaks, Matt. 23, “woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites who pay tittle of mint, and anise, and cumin; and have let alone the weightier things of the law: judgment, and mercy, and faith.” And finally, David’s own language, in Psalm 50, we he says “for if thou hadst desired sacrifice I would indeed have given it; with burnt Offerings thou wilt not be delighted. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humble heart, O God thou wilt not despise.” The meaning, then, is: I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices. I will not accuse you nor condemn you for the fewness of them, for they are sufficiently numerous, as “thy burnt offerings are always in my sight,” always to be found on my altar.

9. “I will take no calves out of thy house: nor he – goats out of thy flocks.”