

END OF PSALM 142

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: 142

**The psalmist in tribulation calleth upon God for his deliver.
The seventh Penitential Psalm.**

1. Hear, O Lord, my prayer: give ear to my supplication in thy truth: hear me in thy justice,
2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified.
3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul: he hath brought down my life to the earth. He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old:
4. A my spirit is in anguish within me: my heart within me is troubled.
5. I remembered the days of old: I meditated on all thy works: I meditated upon the works of thy hands.
6. I stretched forth my hands to thee: my soul is as earth without water unto thee.
7. Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit hath fainted away. Turn not away thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
8. Cause me to hear thy mercy in the morning; for in thee have I hoped. Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk: for I have lifted up my soul to thee.
9. Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, to thee have I fled:
10. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land:
11. For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt quicken me in thy justice. Thou wilt bring my soul Out of trouble.
12. And in thy mercy thou wilt destroy my enemies. And thou wilt cut off all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

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: 142

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Hear, O Lord, my prayer: give ear to my supplication in thy truth: hear me in thy justice." The Psalmist commences by asking for an audience in truth and justice, and tells us what he wants, because he takes it for granted that God knows full well what he wants, namely, forgiveness of the sin that he was now paying the penalty of. Now, God knew full well why he asked for it, and wished his prayer should be heard, because he saw the desires of his heart, as also, perhaps, understood them from his groans and sighs, arising from perfect contrition. Thus, we read of Mary Magdalene, who made no expression when she sought for forgiveness, but let the tears, with which she washed the Savior's feet, convey to the Savior what she sought; and, hence, the immediate reply, "thy sins are forgiven thee." David, then, full of contrition, and groaning internally, in asking pardon for his sin says, "hear, O Lord, my prayer," the purport of which you are well acquainted with; and repeats it, saying, "give ear to my supplication in thy truth;" that is to say, in accordance with the faithful observance of the promise you made of forgiveness to the truly penitent. And he repeats it again when he adds, "hear me in thy justice." Justice meeting here a strict adherence to, and observance of, his promise. St. John Chrysostom interprets justice to mean the kindness with which God receives the penitent; and he says that David studiously says, "hear me in thy justice," instead of hear me in justice, because the justice God exhibits towards the penitent deserves rather than the name of inexpressible kindness. The moment God sees anyone truly penitent, and acknowledging their faults, he at once forgives them, as he says, through Isaias 43, "tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself." Judges here below seek a confession from the accused, in order to condemn him; God seeks for it in order to absolve him. Finally, the father of the prodigal son, that is, God, the moment he beheld the son on his return, exclaiming, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against thee," threw himself on his neck, kissed and embraced him, ordered the best robe and ring to clothe him, and the fatted calf to be killed to celebrate his return.

2. "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified." Having asked for pardon on the ground of God's promises, to which he faithfully adheres, he asks for pardon again, on the ground of the frailty and infirmity of human nature. "And enter not into judgment with thy servant." Do not dispute the matter with me, I will make no defense, I will avow my guilt instead of pleading my innocence, "for in thy sight no man living shall be justified;" because not only one like me, but any human being whatever will be cast when they come to stand in

so illuminate my mind as to know the path of justice, through the aid of which I may be able to come to you; because "I have lifted up my soul to thee;" because it is to you I have directed my course; for you I have renounced the desires of the world; thee alone I desire; and I, therefore, ask for the light of wisdom, for fear of straying from thee.

9. "Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, to thee have I fled."

10. "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land."

11. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt quicken me in thy justice. Thou wilt bring my soul out of trouble." He follows up the same petition, begging to be delivered from the temptations of the devil, who frequently seeks to blind up the mind, so that it may not see the path of justice. These concupiscence's so raised up by the devil, make things appear in a very different light from what they really are; and hence arises an error of judgment. "Deliver me from my enemies;" from his temptations; for I have renounced him, and fled to thee. "Teach me to do thy will." Assist me by your light to repel his temptations, and find out the true path, and so understand your goodwill and your thorough good pleasure; "for thou art my God;" I desire and wish to serve you alone; because you are my God, the source and the end of all the goods I enjoy, from whom I have got existence and all the goods of soul and body, and from whom I expect happiness and everlasting glory. "Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land." Having previously asked for wisdom, which appertains to the understanding – but we, then, in reality, tread the paths of justice when we understand, and we intend to do what is right. "Thy good Spirit;" not my spirit, but yours, which is essentially good and of which the Savior says, "how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him?" That good Spirit is the Holy Ghost, who is essentially good, and through whom "the charity of God is poured out into our hearts;" and this it is that makes us wish to work and carry out our wishes; and it is of it Ezekiel speaks when he says, "and I will put my Spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in my commandments." This good Spirit "shall lead me into the right land;" in that plain and direct road, the Lord's law, which is most plain and direct. The "right land" may also mean out country above, where all is right and straight, and nothing distorted or crooked. "For thy name's sake, thou wilt quicken me in thy justice." To show us that justification, which is a sort of spiritual resuscitation, is not to be had from our own merits, but from the gratuitous gift of God, he adds, "for thy name's sake," for the glory that will accrue to you by the gift of so much grace, "thou wilt quicken me in thy justice."

12. "And in thy mercy thou wilt destroy my enemies. And thou wilt cut off all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant." He concludes, by predicting his own salvation and deliverance, and the ruin of all his enemies, which will certainly be accomplished on the last day. And what the Prophet says of himself is equally applicable to all the true servants of God, who have preserved their innocence, or who, by true penance, have returned to the paths of justice.

judgment before you. Human beings may be divided into sinners, the just here below, and the just in heaven. Sinners, such as homicides, adulterers, and the like, may justify themselves in the eyes of man, their crimes being of the occult, or incapable of proof; but they will not be justified before God, who knows their hearts and sees their conscience, and will bring them in guilty on its testimony. The just, in this place of trial, will not be justified before God, because they will not dare to justify themselves, but will rather say with the apostle, "for I am not conscious to myself of anything; yet in this I am not justified but he that judgeth me is the Lord;" for, perhaps, he sees something in me that I do not see; and with Job, then, I should rather say, "I, who although I should have any just think, would not answer, but would make supplication to my judge." Another reason why they "will not be justified" is, because they feel that their justice has not been acquired by themselves, but is a free gift of God; and thus, they will not justify themselves before God, as if the justification proceeded from themselves, but they will rather return thanks to him who justifies them. Finally, "they will not be justified" in the sight of the Lord, because, however just they may be, and free from sin, they still feel themselves to be sinners, inasmuch as they are subject to sin every day, and need to say with the rest of the Saints, "forgive us our trespasses;" and with St. John, "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." The just in heaven, who are not only free from crime and sin, but are even beyond the reach of either, "are not justified in thy sight," because they do not attribute their justice to themselves, but to the God who conferred it on them, and compared with whose justice all others may be looked upon as pure injustice, for "the stars are not pure in his sight." Lutherans and Calvinists seek to prove from this passage, that there is no real justice in the justified soul, it being merely imputed to it; and that all of the acts of the just are so many mortal sins, deserving eternal punishment, if God chose to impute them so. In reply, we must observe, that David did not say that there was no just person to be found; on the contrary, in Psalm 17, he says, "and the Lord will reward me according to my justice, and will repay me according to the cleanness of my hands, because I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not done wickedly against my God, and I shall be spotless with him," etc.; and in Psalm 118, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Observe, also, that David does not say no one will be justified, but he says no one "will be justified in thy sight," either because the justice anyone may come to is not from themselves, but from God; or, because, however just anyone may get to be, they still are not free from venial sins and imperfections; or, finally, because no matter how just and perfect anyone may become, they can be called anything but just, when compared to the infinite and increate justice of God; just as all light, however brilliant, dwindles into insignificance, when compared to that of the sun, to which Job alludes, when he says, chapter 4, "shall man be justified in comparison of God? And, again, in chapter 9, "indeed I know it is so, and that man cannot be justified compared with God."

3. "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul: he hath brought down my life to the earth. He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been dead of old." He now puts forward a third reason for obtaining pardon, derived from

the grievousness of the temptation under which he fell; for it was not spontaneously, or without being under the influence of temptation, as did the reprobate Angels, who, consequently, were not forgiven, that he fell, but it was under a most grievous temptation of the devil, our enemy, “who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” that he was laid prostrate and hurled from the height of Innocence to the lowest depths of mortal sin. The word “for,” then, is to be read with “hear me in thy justice;” as much as to say, hear me, because you are just, because you adhere to your promise, because “in thy sight no man living shall be justified;” because “the enemy hath persecuted my soul,” by exciting me to adultery, and tempting me to murder, and thus “brought down my life to the earth,” made me vile and contemptible in thy sight, and that of the holy Angels. “He hath made me to dwell in darkness,” etc. He goes on to detail the calamities in which he got involved through sin, into which he fell through the persecution of the devil. Having “brought down his life to the earth,” he next made him “dwell in darkness,” in spiritual darkness; and that by binding the eyes of the interior, so as to be taken up with false for true happiness, not to advert to the depths and precipices, and to lose sight entirely of the way that leads to life; and finally, to cause him to dwell in darkness, as completely as those who have been dead and buried for many years, speaking of which darkness the apostle, says, Ephesians 4, “having the understanding obscured with darkness, alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance which is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;” and in chapter 6, “for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness.”

4. “And my spirit is in anguish within me: my heart within me is troubled.” He now explains how, by the light of divine grace, he began to see the darkness in which he had been enveloped, and how he had fallen in his love for the things of this world, and how therefrom arose great anxiety and fear of God’s judgments, and of the wretched state into which he had fallen through sin. Such is the first stage of penance. He was in such a state of anxiety as nigh caused his death, had he not been consoled with the hope of mercy. “My heart within me is troubled.” When I began to reflect on my miserable state I was troubled not lightly, nor superficially, but in the inmost recesses of my heart, as should all those who seek to imitate the repentance of David.

5. “I remembered the days of old: I meditated on all thy works: I meditated upon the works of thy hands.” He now tells how he began to get his breathing in such anxiety, and by his example shows the way to recovery after a relapse. “I remembered the days of old.” I began to remember the mercy with which you dealt with our fathers from time immemorial, when you bore their infirmities, healed their sores, and spared their iniquities. And it was not a passing thought I bestowed on them, but “I meditated on all thy works.” I studied all you works, whether of nature or of grace, with the greatest care; and I saw that mercy predominated in everyone of them, which he repeats, when he adds, “I meditated upon the works of thy hands” – was quite absorbed in reflection on all your works.

6. “I stretched forth my hands to thee: my soul is as earth without water unto thee.” The consideration of God’s mercy having inspired him with hope, he began to sigh and to look up to him. “I stretched forth my hands to thee” in prayer; from my soul thirsts as much for your grace, as the parched earth does for the rain. A most appropriate comparison; for as the earth, when devoid of moisture, does not adhere together, is not clothed with herbage, nor adorned with flowers, produces no fruit, and is altogether idle and unproductive; so the soul, without God’s grace, offers no resistance to temptation; but like the dust, that is carried about by the wind, as neither the clothing of justice, nor the ornaments of wisdom, nor the fruit of good works, of all of which the penitent had practical experience, and was therefore the most thirsty.

7. “Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit hath fainted away. Turn not away thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.” The turpitude of the sin he acknowledged and the desire of grace now so presses on the penitent, that he can brook no further delay; and the fact of the penitent not deferring his confession, and the other remedies suggested, from day to day, but running at once to his spiritual physician, just as one taken suddenly ill would urgently send for the doctor, or one suffering from thirst would run to the water, is a sign of true contrition. “Hear me speedily;” I cannot bear my wretched state any longer; wash me quickly for my iniquities; heal, at once, my disease; because “my spirit hath fainted away;” I am in the last extremities, can scarcely draw my breath. “Turn not away thy face from me” – the same petition in different language – as much as to say, do not refuse to be reconciled, be not inexorable; look upon me with a face of benignity and mercy, “lest I become like those that go down into the pit;” the lowest pit of hell; for such is the fate of those whom God refuses to pardon, and from whom he withholds his grace.

8. “Cause me to hear thy mercy in the morning; for in thee have I hoped. Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk: for I have lifted up my soul to thee.” He again reverts to the same subject, in another man, however. “Cause me to hear thy mercy in the morning;” that is, at once, in the very beginning of the day; or the morning may mean that dawn of grace that succeeded the dark night of sin in which he had so long lain; as if he were to say: the night of sin, in which I have been enveloped, has been long enough; through you mercy, let the day of grace and reconciliation now commence, and let me hear your voice, saying, “I am thy salvation, for in thee have I hoped;” that is to say, may the grace of hope already given me, merit the grace of forgiveness; for though the sinner can merit nothing with God, still, grace itself merits an increase of it, that by its increase it may merit the being perfected; and, as St. Augustine observes, that as justification is obtained through faith, the same may also be said of hope. “Make the way known to me wherein I should walk; for I have lifted up my soul to thee.” The penitent having now succeeded in securing his justification, and fearful of a relapse, earnestly asks for the grace of knowing the path of justice, and of walking in it, and the desire of forming such rule of life as becomes a friend and child of God, after being reconciled to him, is also a mark of a true penitent. “Make the way known to me wherein I should walk;”