

16. "Let all that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say always: the Lord be magnified." As he prophesied confusion to his persecutors in the form of an imprecation, so he now predicts joy to his subjects in the same form. "Let all that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee." All those who seek the glory of God, who love him and put their trust in him, "will rejoice and be glad" in God; that is, with divine and unspeakable joy, "and say always, the Lord be magnified." Let them not attribute any good they may have to themselves, but say, may "the Lord be magnified" by all "who love thy salvation;" who love the Savior you sent them, Christ Jesus; or who love and desire the true and everlasting salvation that you alone can confer.

17. "But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me. Thou art my helper and protector; O my God, be not slack." He now returns to the state he was in at the time of his passion, (Christ,) and says, "but I am a beggar and poor;" needy and destitute of all human help. In the Hebrew, the first conveys the idea of poverty; the second of affliction; quite applicable to Christ, especially when he hung naked on the cross; but, however poor and afflicted he may have appeared to man, he was rich in the protection of his Father; and, therefore, he adds, "the Lord is careful for me." The Lord is concerned for me. He calls his Father "the Lord," because he speaks in the person of a servant; that is, as the Son of Man, in which nature he hung upon the cross. "Thou art my helper and my protector: O my God, be not slack." When he had briefly expressed when he said, "the Lord is careful for me," he now explains at greater length, saying, "thou art my helper and my protector." For God the Father was "careful" for his Son, by helping and protecting him, helping him in overcoming past dangers, protecting him by removing future ones. "O my God, be not slack;" namely, to deliver me from all trouble by a speedy resurrection.

END OF PSALM 39

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: 39

Christ's coming, and redeeming mankind.

1. With expectation I have waited for the Lord; and he was attentive to me.
2. And he heard my prayers, and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs. And he set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps.
3. And he put a new canticle into my mouth, a song to our God. Many shall see, and shall fear: and they shall hope in the Lord.
4. Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord; and who hath not had regard to vanities, and lying follies.
5. Thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God: and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee. I have declared, and I have spoken: they are multiplied above numbers.
6. Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require.
7. Then said I: behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me.
8. That I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.
9. I have declared thy justice in a great church: lo, I will not restrain my lips: O Lord, thou knowest it.
10. I have not hid my justice within my heart: I have declared thy truth and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy mercy and thy truth from a great council.

Continued >

(continued from preceding page)

11. Withhold not thou, O Lord, thy tender mercies from me: thy mercy and thy truth have always upheld me.
12. For evils without number have surrounded me: my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head: and my heart hath forsaken me.
13. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: look down, O Lord, to help me.
14. Let them be confounded and ashamed together that seek after my soul to take it away. Let them be turned backward, and be ashamed that desire evils to me.
15. Let them immediately bear their confusion, that say to me: it is well, it is well.
16. Let all that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say always: the Lord be magnified.
17. But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me. Thou art my helper and my protector; O my God, be not slack.

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: 39

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "With expectation I have waited for the Lord; and he was attentive to me." Christ, in the person of his people, declares how long the redemption was expected. It was looked for during four thousand years; while in the meantime, mankind was promised deliverance from the miseries into which they had fallen by the sin of our first parents, sometimes through the prophets and patriarchs, sometimes through figures and oracles. "With expectation I have waited for the Lord," for a long time, without any intermission. I have been expecting the Lord to have mercy, to visit and to free his people, "and he was attentive to me." I have not been disappointed, for he has heard me.
2. "And he heard my prayers, and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs. And he set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps." He now explains the expression in the last verse, "he was attentive to me," for "he heard my prayers;" and the consequence was, that "he brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs." The Hebrew for "pit of misery" conveys the idea of a deep dark place, full of the "mire of dregs," into which many have fallen, from whose groans and lamentations the greatest disorder and confusion ensued. Such is the state of the wicked, who have not known God and his commandments; and are stuck in the mud of their carnal desires, that renders them not only incapable of arriving at eternal happiness, but causes them to quarrel and wrangle perpetually with each other. The grace of the Redeemer brings us out of this pit, so soon as we begin, through faith,

certainly had a most accurate knowledge of all the sins, past, present, and future; but he uses the expressions in ordinary use, to signify how numerous were the sins he undertook to satisfy for. We have a similar expression in Mark 6, "and he could not do any mighty work there, and he wondered because of their unbelief." He could have done any works he pleased there, but he is said not to have been able to do them, to give us an idea of being incredulity of the people that prevented him from doing them.

13. "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: look down, O Lord, to help me." He now returns to the prayer he commenced in verse 11, and prays to be delivered, by a speedy resurrection, from such evils. "Be pleased, O Lord," Father, whom I must call Lord, by reason of the form of a servant I have assumed, be pleased "to deliver me" from the many troubles that have surrounded me. "Look down, O Lord, to help me;" you seem as if you had for some time abandoned me, "and turned your face away from me," leaving me to go through the sufferings of the cross without the slightest consolation; but now "look down to help me," that you may at once replenish me in the joy of a glorious resurrection.

14. "Let them be confounded and ashamed together, that seek after my soul to take it away. Let them be turned backward, and be ashamed that desire evils to me." Christ's enemies, who thought him entirely destroyed, were terribly confused at his Resurrection. That he now prophesies in the form of an imprecation, a thing usual with the prophets. "Let them be confounded and ashamed together." Let them be overwhelmed with confusion "that seek after my soul to take it away," who seek to take away my life by putting me to death, and totally extinguishing me. Such was the intention of the Jews, a thing they thought they had accomplished when they nailed him to the cross. But immediately after, when they heard of his Resurrection, saw it confirmed by signs and wonders, and believed by the mass of the people, "they were confounded and ashamed;" and will be infinitely more so on the last day. Then they shall see him whom they impiously presumed to judge, and against whom they suborned false witnesses, judging the whole world with the greatest justice. "Let them be turned backward and be ashamed that desire evils to me." A repetition of the preceding sentence, as if to strengthen it. "Let them be turned back," retire in confusion, "and be ashamed," blush with shame, "that desire evils to me; not only those who seek to kill me, but all who seek for my disgrace or confusion.

15. "Let them immediately bear their confusion, that say to me: it is well, it is well." He repeats the same thing a third time, saying, "let them immediately bear their confusion that say to me: it is well, it is well." Let not their confusion be deferred, but after three short days let them be confounded, as they were, "who say to me, it is well, it is well;" that is, those who gloried in having triumphed over me, and congratulated each other there on.

10. "I have not hid thy justice within my heart: I have declared thy truth and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy mercy and thy truth from a great council." Many preach while they expect any benefit thereby, or fear no injury in consequence; but when they cease to hope, of fear presses, they keep their preaching to themselves, and will not let it out. Not so with Christ; and, by his example, he tells us what to do thereon, and he, therefore says "I have declared thy justice," and "have not hidden it in my heart," through negligence, fear, or any unworthy motive. His remarks on the justice that God requires from us, that is, that he announced it, and did not "hide it," are now applied, in like manner, to God's justice and mercy, for he calls justice truth; that is, the fidelity with which he gives to everyone according to his works; and he calls mercy salvation, which he mercifully holds out to those who hope in him. He says, then, "I have declared thy truth and thy salvation;" that is to say, I have announced "the truth" that is in you, declaring to all how faithfully and how inexplicably you reward the good, and terribly punish the wicked; and I have, at the same time, announced "thy salvation;" that is, with what mercy you save all those that trust in thee. "I have not concealed thy mercy and thy truth from a great council." What he called "salvation," in the preceding sentence, he now expressly calls "mercy," and connects it with truth, meaning justice. "I have not concealed," through any fear whatever, "from a great council," from any number however great, "thy mercy and thy truth," but have publicly and boldly announced them. A fact easily proved from the Gospels.

11. "Withhold not thou, O Lord, thy tender mercies from me: thy mercy and thy truth have always upheld me." He (Christ) passes now from his preaching to his passion; and, as well as he made known the justice and the mercy of the Father to mankind, he now prays to the Father not to defer the same mercy and justice towards himself, but by a speedy resurrection to deliver him from his death and passion. "Withhold not thou, O Lord, thy tender mercies for me." Father, you see how bitter are my sufferings for having made known your justice and mercy to man; do you, therefore, "withhold not your mercies for me," by immediately raising me up, as hitherto "thy mercy and thy truth have always upheld me."

12. "For evils without number have surrounded me: my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs on my head; and my heart hath forsaken me." A reason for having said, "withhold not, O Lord, thy tender mercies for me," because "evils without outnumber have surrounded me." Christ's sufferings were truly without number, and seemed to crowd in upon him designedly. And they were thus innumerable, because our sins, for which he undertook to make satisfaction, were so. "My iniquities," the iniquities of mankind, "which the Father placed upon him," Isaias 53, in which he, therefore, looked upon as mine, "that I may bear them in my body upon the tree;" all those evils "have overtaken me, and I was not able to see." They were so numerous that they blinded me. For "they are multiplied above the hairs of my head;" exceed my hairs in number; and thus, overwhelmed by their number, I fainted, "in my heart hath forsaken me;" my strength, my very life, forsook me. This expression of Christ's, "I was unable to see," is not to be taken literally, as if the Lord could not see the number of the sins, by reason of their being so extremely numerous; for he

to know the true God, the real and eternal happiness; and, liberated through hope and charity from our carnal desires, we have peace with God and with ourselves. "And he set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps." He that had fallen into the "pit of misery," felt from the path in which God had originally placed him, and made it a safe and easy path to the kingdom of heaven; and, therefore, he who afterwards rescued him "from the pits of misery and the mire of dregs," put him back on a path solid and firm, and quite as straight and level; which is the meaning of, "he set my feet upon a rock," the feet he rescued from a deep and miry pit he has put upon a high and firm rock, "and the rock was Christ;" for he says of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He, therefore, put the feet of the just on the faith, the doctrine, and the example of Christ, that they may follow his footsteps; "and directed my steps." He not only put me on the solid, but also on the straight road, and thus "directed my steps in the way of peace."

3. "And he put a new canticle into my mouth, a song to our God. Many shall see, and shall fear: and they shall hope in the Lord." The moment God put me on the straight and firm road I began to "sing a new canticle." Theretofore, while I was the "old man," I sang nothing but what turned upon the world and its pleasures; but once I became "renewed in the spirit of my mind," I began to sing "a new canticle" on the love of God, one that God himself "put into my mouth," which, therefore, is one most agreeable to him. "Many shall see and shall fear, and they shall hope in the Lord." God's people now delivered from the pit of misery, or Christ himself, in the person of his people, so delivered, foretells that many will be likewise delivered. "Many shall see" the pit of misery, and those that have been saved from it, "And will fear and will hope in the Lord;" will fear the pit, and put their trust in the deliverer, for the first step to salvation is, when God, by his grace, begins to open the eyes of the sinner, to see his miserable state, and to feel through whom he can be delivered, and thence begins "to fear and to hope in the Lord."

4. "Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord; and who hath not had regard to vanities, and lying follies." He invites, exhorts, and encourages all to imitate those who have been delivered. "Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord." Truly happy is he who has really placed all his hope in the Lord, who alone is all-powerful and merciful; and, therefore, is both willing and able to deliver from every trouble, all those that put their trust in him. To make the matter clearer, he adds, "and who hath not regard to vanities, and lying follies;" who looked for help from no one, especially from vain, empty things, that can save no one; "and lying follies." Such fallacious helps as have just been alluded to, including astrology, incantations, witchcraft, etc., in which many believe and confide, but which may be justly designated as "lying follies."

5. Thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God: and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee. I have declared, and I have spoken: they are multiplied above number." He now proceeds to explain that most profound mystery of man's redemption, through which many have been, and many more will be, brought out of "the pit of misery and the mire of dregs;" and he first states, in general, that the works of God are wonderful. "Thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God, and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee." There is no one like thee in thy thoughts, or the forecasting of thy wisdom, not one to be compared to thee. "I have declared, and I have spoken; they are multiplied above number." A reason assigned, why no one can be compared to God in regard of his wonderful works and profound thoughts; and he says, "I have declared, and I have spoken;" I have made known some of his wonderful works, through the prophets, through the wise, through the very elements of the world; for, "the heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of his hands." "They are multiplied above number;" they are so numerous that they are past counting, and, therefore, cannot be properly announced or explained.

6. "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require." Truly "wonderful are all God's works;" in all of them "the depth of his thoughts" most splendidly appear, but far and away, and beyond, and above all, in his work of the redemption: what can be imagined more marvelous than for God to stoop to the form of a servant, to become a beggar and a pauper, to rescue man from the "pit of misery," and raise him to the enjoyment of heaven? To have the same God, in the form of a servant, scourged with rods, and crucified between robbers, that he may place his servants in that choir of angels? And to carry out all these things with the greatest wisdom, the greatest justice, without offering the slightest injury to the Divinity, nay, even thereby augmenting his glory?! Christ himself, using the pen and the language of David, explains this mystery in the following verses. "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire;" you would not be appeased by the sacrifice of cattle, nor by the oblation of bread and incense, but by a victim of infinite price; you, therefore, wished me to assume a mortal body, that by my "obedience even unto death," I may atone for the disobedience of the first man; and since you refused "sacrifice" of cattle and "oblation" for sin, "then said I: behold, I come," that I may be the priest and the sacrifice; and thus satisfy for the human race, and "bring them out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs." Observe here, that by "sacrifice and oblations" we are rather to understand the victim or matter offered, then the right or ceremony. Observe also, that though the Prophet says, "sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire," we are not thence to infer the sacrifices of the old law were of no value; what he conveys is, that they were of no value in regard of making satisfaction for sin, as the apostle says to the Hebrews, "for it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats, sins should be taken away." "But thou hast pierced ears for me." There are a variety of versions of this sentence, some conveying the idea of Christ having his ears ready for his father's command to save man; the present reading conveying the idea, that he was in the hands of his father, like a slave who had his ears pierced, ready, at a moments notice to do his masters bidding.

7. "Then said I: behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me."

8. "That I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart." He said, "behold, I come;" he now tells us why, "that I should do thy will;" and the will of God was, that he should sanctify us by the oblation of his body, by his passion and death; so the apostle explains this passage in Hebrew 10, where he quotes it, and adds, "we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once." "In the head of the book it is written of me." What book? Some will have it, Genesis; some, the first Psalm; some, the prophets; others, the Gospel of St. John; others, the Book of Life; all defensible; but I look upon the most simple and most literal interpretation to be, the summary, or the whole of the Holy Scriptures. The Hebrew favors this interpretation; instead of "the head of the book," it is in the Hebrew, "in the volume of the book," that is to say, in the whole volume, because the whole Scripture has reference to Christ. Hence, the Lord himself says, "what is written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled;" and in the same gospel we read, "he interpreted to the two disciples; all that was written of him in the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and all the prophets." And our Lord, speaking of the Scriptures in general, said, "search the Scriptures, for they bear testimony of me;" "in the head of the book," then, does not mean the first chapter or title page of the book; but the substance and the true meaning is: all the Scriptures testify that I came into the world "that I should do thy will," by obedience to you in the most trifling matters. Turning, then, to the Father, he adds, "O my God, I have desired it," I have most cheerfully accepted your decree;" and thy law in the midst of my heart;" I have put thy law in the midst of my heart; there is nothing I have been more desirous, more anxious for, than to obey your law. Speaking of the just, David says, "God's law is in his heart;" but speaking of Christ, the head of the just, he says, "his law is in the midst of his heart," and those who belong to Christ should have his Spirit, so that they may prefer his law to everything, so as to have it constantly before their memory, their will, and their understanding.

9. "I have declared thy justice in a great church: lo, I will not restrain my lips: O Lord, thou knowest it." Though God's principal object in the death of Christ was, that he should atone for mankind, he willed also that Christ should previously announce the Gospel; that his preaching may be the path to his passion; and that he may be not only a Redeemer, but also a teacher and a preacher to man; and he, therefore, says now, "I have declared thy justice;" I have announced thy most just law, and the works it requires, and that publicly, before countless crowds of people, of which you yourself are witness. And, in fact, Christ never ceased preaching. From his infancy he preached, by example, contempt of the things of this world, modestly, temperance, humility. From his baptism, from the time that the father said, "hear ye him," he began to preach, and never ceased to the day of his death, which he continued through his apostles, and will continue, through their successors, to the end of the world.