

END OF PSALM 47

## 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: 47

**God is greatly to be praised for the establishment of His church.**

1. Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.
2. With the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion founded, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king.
3. In her houses shall God be known, when he shall protect her.
4. For behold, the kings of the earth assembled themselves: they gathered together.
5. So they saw, and they wondered: they would be troubled: they were moved.
6. Trembling took hold of them. There were pains as of a woman in labor.
7. With a vehement wind thou shalt break in pieces the ships of Tharsis.
8. As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God hath founded it forever.
9. We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple.
10. According to thy name, O God, so also is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of justice.
11. Let Mount Zion rejoice, and the daughters of Juda be glad; because of thy judgments; O Lord.
12. Surround Zion, and encompass her: tell ye in her towers.
13. Set your hearts on her strength; and distribute her houses, that ye may relate it in another generation.
14. For this is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: he shall rule us for evermore.

*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: 47**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain." The Prophet being about to praise a certain edifice, commences by praising the architect, and says that in the holy city the wonderful skill and wisdom of God, who built the, is truly, displayed. "Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised;" and so he is, whether we look at his essence, his power, his wisdom, his justice, or his mercy, for all are infinite, everlasting, and incomprehensible; and thus, so much is God "exceedingly to be praised," that all the angels, all men, even all his own works would not suffice thereto; but of all things we have revealed, there is no one thing can give us a greater idea of his greatness, or for which we should praise and thank him more, than the establishment of his Church; and, therefore, the Prophet adds, "in the city of our God, in his holy mountain;" that is to say, the greatness of God, and for which he deserves so much praise, is conspicuous in the foundation and construction of his Church, which is "the city of our God, in his holy mountain;" that is, made as perfect as possible. For, it is said in Isaia 2, "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on top of mountains." And the Lord himself calls his Church "a city placed on a mountain." To touch briefly on the remarkable points of this edifice, just consider, first, the incredible variety of nations, differing in language, manners, customs, and laws, so uniting in the profession of one faith, and the use of the same sacraments, as to form one people, nay, even one family. Consider, secondly, the same Church, founded on Peter, a poor, ignorant, rude fisherman; and yet founded so firmly, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; for, in spite of that world in which Christ's Church is spending its exile, in spite of all the powers of darkness, in spite of all the persecutions of the wicked, she will ultimately arrive in safety at the land of promise; and, placed, at length, above the highest heavens, will reign undisturbed in everlasting happiness. Such things, certainly, could not be accomplished, but by that great God; that is, by a most powerful and skillful architect who, therefore, "is exceedingly to be praised," or, rather, is beyond all praise.

2. "With the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion founded, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king." The Prophet assigns a reason why God should be so "exceedingly praised" in his Church, typified by Mount Sion and the city of Jerusalem, and assigns as a reason, God's having "founded it with the joy of the whole earth,"

honored of God; be you also as living stones, built-up, a spiritual house.” He, therefore, says, “surround Sion, and encompass her.” Surround the holy city with walls, where they are needed. Holy souls are called the walls of a city, for they protect the rest of the people from their enemies; “tell ye in his towers; close quote announced it publicly from some elevated place, (as we have already said,) the preaching of the Gospel is the instrument to found and build the city. “Set your hearts on her strength.” Think seriously on the defense of the city, that she may in no wise be exposed to the enemy; “and distribute her houses;” after the walls shall have been founded and built, set about the houses; and as a great many must needs be built, “distribute” their parts to the various workmen, that the houses may be the more quickly built, and the city be filled and increase; and thus it will come to pass “that ye may relate it in another generation;” that is, that by your having so multiplied God’s people, posterity may have the knowledge of God himself.

14. “For this is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: the shall rule us for evermore.” This is what is to be told to posterity, that God, who did so many wonders in his holy city Jerusalem, “he is our God unto eternity.” We will never desert him, nor will he desert us. We will be his people for ever, and “he shall rule us for evermore.”

using the word “founded” in the present, not in the past tense; for the establishment of the Church is always going on, and never a thing of the past. Various churches are daily springing up where one never existed before. For the Church is not like a small house, that takes little time to build, but is rather a great city, spread over the world; built in various ages, by spiritual architects, successors of the apostles, who, by their preaching, lay Christ as the cornerstone, and erect a spiritual edifice thereon. That foundation is laid “with the joy of the whole earth,” because, throughout the world, the Church is established by the preaching of the Gospel, which never fails to bring the most unbounded spiritual joy and gladness to those who receive it. It is, therefore, that such knowledge is compared by the Lord to a “treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all he hath, and buyeth that field;” and, in the Acts of the apostles, when the Church was being founded in Jerusalem, it is said, “they took their meat with gladness;” and, in chapter 8, speaking of the preaching of Philip, and his establishment of the Church in Samaria, it says, “and there was great joy in that city;” and the eunuch of Queen Candace, when he heard the faith from the same Philip, and was baptized, “went his way rejoicing;” and, in chapter 13, we read that when St. Paul began to preach to the Gentiles, and lay the foundation of the Church, “the Gentiles hearing this were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.” When he talks of the foundation of Mount Sion, we are not to understand him as speaking of the mountain of that name; for that was in existence from the beginning of the world; but of the spiritual mountain, of which it was the type. Mount Sion means, then, the Church of Christ, so-called by reason of the eminence of doctrine, and the perfection of life, to be found in the Church. The same Church is also styled “the side of the north,” because, as Mount Sion, lying on the north side of the land of promise, protects it from the withering, bitter blasts of the north wind, so the Church of Christ is like a wall, warding off the spiritual north blast; that is, the blast of the unclean spirits; for those who nestle in the bosom of the Church, that is to say, who received her doctrine and obey the laws, are not easily injured by the north blast, spreading its pernicious dogmas by example. Finally, the same Church is called “the city of the great king,” which tends much to ennoble it, by reason of the Church of Christ having him for its King, who is Prince of the kings of the earth, and King of kings, and Lord of lords. All other authorities in the Church are but servants, servants of Christ, as the apostle says, “let a man so look upon us as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.” Even the very supreme head of the Church calls himself the vicar of Christ, and not only acknowledges himself to be the servant of God, but even the servant of his servants.

3. “In her house shall God be known, when he shall protect her.” He now assigns a second reason for the Lord being “great and exceedingly to be praised” in his city of Jerusalem, because he not only founded it well, but constantly protects and exalts it. God, who founded his Church like a royal city, will then especially “be known in a houses;” that is, by all her inhabitants, when, in time of persecution, “he shall protect her.”

4. "For behold, the kings of the earth assembled themselves: they gathered together."

5. "So they saw, and they wondered: they were troubled: they were moved:"

6. "Trembling took hold of them. There were pains as of a woman in labor."

7. "With a vehement wind thou shalt break in pieces the ships of Tharsis." The Latin fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, explain these verses in a different way from the Greek fathers, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Euthymius; the former apply it to the Gentiles embracing the faith; the latter, to those resisting it. According to the Latins, the meaning is: the Gentiles will cause God to be known in the Church. "For behold, the kings of the earth," and their subjects, converted by the preaching and the miracles of the apostles, assembled themselves, gathered together; that is to say, came into the one faith, all of various sects and superstitions, and became one people; so much so, "that they have but one heart and one soul," as we read of the first Christians in the Acts, and their conversion was effected, for "they saw" the wonders and prodigies, "and they wondered; and having come to a knowledge of the greatness of their error and their sin in worshiping idols, instead of the true God, "they were troubled, they were moved;" by true penance; whence, also, "trembling took hold of them;" looking at the frightful risk they had so long run of eternal damnation. "There were pains," no small or trifling ones, but smart, severe ones, like "the pains of a woman in labor;" which, however, ended in great joy. "But when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Thus the sorrow of the penitent terminates in the most inexplicable joy, when the grace of adoption, the seed of the pledge of eternal salvation, is poured into his heart, and then is accomplished, "with a vehement wind thou shalt break in pieces the ships of Tharsis," for the Holy Ghost, inhabiting the soul in process of justification, and inflaming it with the vehement warmth of his charity, "breaks in pieces the ships of Tharsis;" the vehicles of pride, luxury, and avarice; for we in Kings and Paralipomenon, of the ships hastened to Tharsis with flowing sails, bringing gold and silver from it; and swollen sails are the type of pride; the tossing of the ship of luxury, and the gold and silver, of avarice.

8. "As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God: God hath founded it forever." These are the expressions of the children of the Church in rejoicing to know, by experience, what they had heard was promise, the stability of Christ Church. We have more reason to rejoice thereon, for we have heard Christ say, "on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" and now, after sixteen hundred years, after so many and so grievous persecutions by pagans and heretics, we see it was impossible for the Church to have failed. The Prophet then, speaking in the person of the faithful, says, "as we have heard" it foretold by the prophets and by the apostles, "so have we seen" it accomplished in the Church, which is "the city of a Lord of Hosts," whom all created things serve, and is, therefore, "the Lord of Hosts;" that is, of armies, "who is our God." But what we have seen and heard is, that "God had founded it for ever," so that there is no danger of its ever being destroyed.

9. "We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple." An admission on the part of God's people, that the great things God did, and still does for his Church, are not to be attributed to their own works or merits, but entirely to his mercy. The stability of thy Church and the other innumerable favors which we heard were promised, and we now see realized, have all come from your hands, and not from ours. We therefore acknowledge it "in the midst of thy temple;" publicly before all, that "we have received your mercy;" to it we attribute all our happiness.

10. "According to thy name, O God, so also is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of justice." He goes on, in the person of the same people, in praising God for the favors received from him, and as he commenced with, "great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised," he now says, "according to thy name, so is also thy praise unto the ends of the earth;" that is to say, the measure of your praise must be coordinate with the greatness of your name. For, as the name of God was made known all over the world, by the great and wonderful things done by God, in the establishment of propagation of his Church; so also is Christ praised through the whole world, even to its very extremities: and he tells us why God will be praised for his justice, "thy right hand is full of justice;" for God's justice in rewarding in the good, and punishing the wicked, is justly extolled all over the world. God's hand is said to be "full of justice," not that there is no mercy in his hand, but that there is no place or room for injustice. "For the Lord is just in all his works," Psalm 144.

11. "Let Mount Sion rejoice, and the daughters of Juda be glad: because of thy judgments, O Lord." As "God's right-hand is full of justice," the Prophet exhorts his people to rejoice, knowing as they do, from experience, better than others, how just the Lord is. "Let Mount Sion rejoice;" that is, his people signified by Mount Sion; "and the daughters of Juda be glad;" let the women unite therein with them. "Because of thy judgments;" looking at the justice with which you protected your friends, and chastised your enemies.

12. "Surround Sion, and encompass her: tell ye in her towers."

13. "Set your hearts on her strength; and distribute her houses, that ye may relate it in another generation." He now, in the end of the Psalm, exhorts them to build up and fortify the holy city of which he spoke in the second verse. Such a city is not like an ordinary material city, which is at once founded and built: the founding and building of the city intended here, will be going on to the end of the world, and must be built and renewed with living stones, that will need daily to be put in, until the perfect city shall be dedicated on the day of judgment. So the apostle says, Ephesians 2, "in whom you are also built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit;" and in chapter 4, he says, "and some indeed he gave to be apostles, and some prophets, and others evangelists, and others pastors and teachers; for the perfection of the saints, for the work of the ministry, unto the edification of the body of Christ." And 1 Peter 2, "to whom approaching the spiritual stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and