

PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST IN THE LORD *and do good;
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.*

PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 25

*David's prayer to God in his distress, to be delivered,
that he may come to worship Him in His tabernacle.*

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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1. Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence: and I have put my trust in the Lord, and shall not be weakened.
2. Prove me, O Lord, and try me; burn my reins and my heart.
3. For thy mercy is before my eyes: and I am well pleased with thy truth.
4. I have not sat with the council of vanity; neither will I go in with the doers of unjust things.
5. I have hated the assembly of the malignant; and with the wicked I will not sit.
6. I will wash my hands among the innocent; and will compass thy altar, O Lord.
7. That I may hear the voice of thy praise: and tell of all thy wondrous works.
8. I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house; and the place where thy glory dwelleth.
9. Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked: nor my life with bloody men.
10. In whose hands are iniquities: their right hand is filled with gifts.
11. But as for me, I have walked in my innocence: redeem me, and have mercy on me.
12. My foot hath stood in the direct way: in the churches I will bless thee, O Lord.

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: 25

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence: and I have put my trust in the Lord, and shall not be weakened." David, having a misunderstanding with the king, appeals to the King of kings, there being none other to whom he could appeal. "Judge me, O Lord." Be you, O Lord, my judge; let not Saul take it on him, but do it yourself. "For I have walked in my innocence," with confidence I challenge God's judgment, because my conscience which God alone beholds, does not reprove me, "For I have walked in my innocence." I have led an innocent life. "I have put my trust in the Lord, and shall not be weakened." Trusting in God's justice, I will not fail, but will conquer.
2. "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; burn my reins and my heart." Having stated that he led an innocent life, he proves it by the testimony of God himself, who neither can deceive nor be deceived; for he does not tell God to "prove and try him," in order to come at truth of which he was ignorant, but that he may make known to others what he in secret sees. David then, on the strength of a good conscience, and in the sincerity of his heart, speaks to the Lord, saying, "Prove me and try me;" search with the greatest diligence, examine the inmost and deepest recesses of my heart; nay more, "burn my reins and my heart," examine my thoughts and desires as carefully as gold, when tested by the fire. I do not think David asks here to be proved and tried by adversity, or that "his reins and heart" should be scorched by the fire of tribulation, when he seems to be asking for the very contrary; but he asks, as I stated before, to be "proved and tried" by a most minute examination and inspection; and God having the most minute and exact knowledge of everything, that he may declare to the world the innocence of his servant, and thus silence the calumny of his enemies.

12. "My foot hath stood in the direct way: in the churches I will bless thee, O Lord." These words have reference to the concluding expression in the last verse, "have mercy on me." I have asked to be delivered from my present trouble by reason of the rectitude of my life; I ask for future mercy, because "My foot hath stood;" that is to say, is firmly fixed and planted in the direct, honest road, and, therefore, I cannot easily leave the straight path of thy law; and, in thanksgiving for it, "I will bless thee" and praise thee "in the churches" the assemblies of the pious.

END OF PSALM 25

3. "For thy mercy is before my eyes: and I am well pleased with thy truth." He assigns a reason for wishing to be "proved and tried," inasmuch as his conscience encouraged him therein, as if he said: I beg of you to prove me, for I have trod thy paths, for "all thy ways are mercy and truth," Psalm 24; and "thy mercy is before my eyes," which I always look upon and consider, in the hope of being able to imitate it, and to act by my neighbors in conformity with it; "And I am well pleased with thy truth." It has pleased me, and I have therefore lived according to it.

4. "I have not sat with the council of vanity: neither will I go in with the doers of unjust things."

5. "I have hated the assembly of the malignant; and with the wicked I will not sit." Theodoret, in my opinion, most properly says, that these words apply to the idolatrous assemblies of the Gentiles in their temples, of which David had the greatest abhorrence, and which he witnessed while in exile with the king of the Philistines. Everything, he says, here appears to be put in opposition to what he says in other parts of the Psalm, for instance, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house;" and a little before that, "I will compass thy altar, O Lord:" and herein after, "In the churches will I bless thee, O Lord." He calls the assembly of the idolaters the "council of vanity," for what can be more vain? What, more vain than idols, false images? As the apostle says, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world," 1 Cor. 8. throughout the Scriptures idols are called vain, or vanities, Deut. 32, "They have provoked me with that which was no God and have angered me with their vanities;" and 1 Kings 12, "And turned not aside after vain things, which shall never profit you, nor deliver you, because they are vain." See also 3 Kings 16; Jer. 2, and various other passages. The same idolaters are styled, "Doers of unjust things," because the height of injustice is to give to creatures the worship due to God alone. "The council of vanity," in one verse is called the "Assembly of the malignant" in the next; "Doers of unjust things" in the same verse are called the "Wicked," a name peculiarly appropriate to idolaters, in the following verse.

6. "I will wash my hands among the innocent; and will compass thy altar, O Lord." Having expressed his hatred of the conventicles of the idolatrous infidels, among whom he was then living, he adds, that he has, on the contrary, the most intense love for the tabernacle of the Lord and the assembly of the saints; and briefly states what he means to do when, through God's assistance, he shall have been called from exile to his own country. "I will wash my hands among the innocent; and will compass thy altar, O Lord." Before I go into thy temple, I will do what all pious people are wont to do: "I will wash my hands," and go about your altar joining those in the act of it, in hymns of praise. For the meaning: Some will have it, that David alludes to the washing of hands, as a proof or sign of one's innocence, as Pilate washed his hands before the Jews, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man;" as if he said: See, I have washed my hands, do not pollute them with the blood of this just man; and I, therefore, dare not condemn him. We often use a similar expression when we wish to get out of a thing. We say; "I wash my hands of it." I consider, however, the sense more likely to be, and more keeping with the rest of the chapter, to consider David alluding to a custom of the Jews, who, previous to their entering the tabernacle, purified both themselves and the victims they offered, which purifications or lotions, are called by the apostle Heb. 9, "Divers washings, and justifications of the flesh;" and, as those external lotions ought to be a sign of internal purity, David, therefore, says, "I will wash my hands among the innocent," as a sign of my real internal purity as an innocent person would wash them; and not with the hypocrites, who do so with clean hands and unclean heart. The expression, "I will compass thy altar," some understand of the number of victims; but I rather think it refers to those who in the hymns of praise will go about the altar, as the following Psalm has it, "I have gone round, and have offered up a sacrifice of jubilation;" and in the very next verse to this we have, "That I may hear the voice of thy praise, and tell of all thy wondrous works."

7. "That I may hear the voice of thy praise: and tell of all thy wondrous works." An explanation of the expression, "I will compass thy altar, O Lord," that with the choir of worshippers I may hear, and join in singing the praises of the Lord. Saint Augustine, arguing against the Pelagians, proves, with great accuracy and piety, from this passage, that they only hear the voice of God's praise who refer all their actions, and all they possess, to God's free gift. For the hearts of the just, "who have ears to hear;" are always devoted to God's praise, thanking him for all their own merits and virtues; whereas, on the contrary, those who presume on their own justice, and are swollen with the idea of their own perfections, as if they had them by their own exertions,

and not from God, do not hear "the voice of thy praise," but the voice of their own praise.

8. "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house; and the place where thy glory dwelleth." Nothing gave him more trouble in his exile than being unable to see the tabernacle of the Lord. His mind, deeply inflamed with the love of God, looked upon no spot on the earth more beautiful than that where God was wont to show himself visibly. The tabernacle that contained the Ark of the Covenant was called, "The house of God," "the place of the habitation of his glory," because a bright cloud would frequently descend thereon, to signify God's presence there; the God "who inhabiteth light inaccessible," 1 Tim. 6, and because there, too, was the oracle from which God gave his responses.

9. "Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked: nor my life with bloody men." Having appealed to God, at first, as a judge, and having exposed his innocence, of which God was witness, he concludes by a prayer, that judgment may be delivered in his favor, "Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked." Do not condemn me as you do the wicked; "My soul" means me, as it does frequently through the Scriptures, and by "Bloody men," he means those who, like so many homicides, were persecuting him.

10. "In whose hands are iniquities: their right hand is filled with gifts.' He tells us who are the wicked and the bloody men of whom he spoke in the forgoing verse; they are those who receive bribes for unfair judgments, glancing at the sins of those in power, the judges. With much point he says, "In whose hands are iniquities;" attributing the iniquity to that part of the body that touches the bribe, to show the bribe was the cause of the iniquity.

11. "But as for me, I have walked in my innocence: redeem me, and have mercy on me." He repeats his reason for not being condemned with the wicked, namely, because "He walked in his innocence," that is, led an innocent life. "Redeem me, and have mercy on me." Deliver me from my present troubles, and then have mercy on me, that I may not fall into them again. The words "redeem" and "deliver," most frequently have the same meaning in the Scriptures, unless, perhaps, the Holy Ghost may insinuate that any deliverance of 'the elect from tribulation may be called redemption, inasmuch as such is effected through the blood of Christ our Redeemer.'