

omnipotence is, that he made “the heaven and earth.” Referring to the two verses previous to this one, we can hardly dismiss them or the Psalm without observing on the manner in which God is wont to rescue his servants from grievous temptations, which is barely touched upon in the expression, “the snare is broken.” The snare usually breaks, when the bird, frightened by some noise, or seeing some more dainty food, makes a violent plunge, and thus breaks the snare. For when the bird is satisfied with the bait in the snare, and has no consciousness of being caught in the snare, it makes no effort to fly away, and thus wait quietly until the fowler comes, catches it, and kills it. So it is with man in temptation; for when God’s grace begins to move him, or when he gets alarmed by the noise of hell or of God’s judgments, he begins to reflect that the troubles of this world are irksome enough, but that the torments of the next, along with being everlasting, are far and away more irksome and more grievous; or that, sweet as the present life may be, sweet as its pleasures may be, sweet as its riches maybe, that they will bear no comparison with the sweet rewards of the life to come, he gets inflamed with the love of such rewards, and with the fear of hell, from which he acquires a great accession of strength, so that, by one vigorous effort of a firm resolution of never offending God again, he breaks the snare of temptation, flies off on being delivered, and joyfully chants, “our help is the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” What persecution can subdue, what torments can conduct such reflections?

END OF PSALM 123

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: 123

**The church giveth to God
for her deliverance from the hands of her enemies.**

1. If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say:
2. If it had not been that the Lord was with us, when men rose up against us.
3. Perhaps they had swallowed us up alive. When their fury was enkindled against us.
4. Perhaps the water had swallowed us up.
5. Our soul hath passed through a torrent: perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable.
6. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us to be a prey to their teeth.
7. Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered.
8. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

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: 123

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "If it had not been that the Lord was with us, that Israel now say:"
2. "If it had not been that the Lord was with us, when men rose up against us,"
3. "Perhaps they had swallowed us up alive. When their fury was enkindled against us,"
4. "Perhaps the water had swallowed us up." Such abrupt and unfinished expressions in the beginning of the Psalm indicate the great joy and exultation that will not suffer the speaker to finish his sentences. The multitude of the saints, then, delivered from great temptations, exclaim, "if it had not been that the Lord was with us" we never could have escaped. Before he finishes the sentence, however, he invites all the people of Israel to unite with him in his tribute of thanks and praise: and again repeats "if it had not been that the Lord was with us" – "perhaps they would have swallowed us up alive." Here is what would have happened to us had not the Lord been with us and lent us his powerful assistance, "when men rose up against us, perhaps they had swallowed us up alive." When our persecutors rose up against us, we were nearly in as much danger of being destroyed by them, as we would of being swallowed up alive by the sea if thrown into it. The persecutors of the just are styled "men," by reason of their being guided by nothing but that reason they have from a corrupt nature; for man's reason, since the corruption of nature, has no taste for anything divine, spiritual, or elevated, and has no other object in view beyond the upholding and increasing its own temporal happiness: of such the apostle says, "for, whereas there is among you envying and contention, are you not carnal and walk according to man?" And a little further on, "are you not men?" From which it appears carnal and to be a man to walk according to the flesh, and to walk according to the flesh, and to walk according to man to be one and the same. The word "perhaps" requires some explanation. It would seem to imply that the grace of God had no part in their delivery, on that their destruction was possible. There is no room for fear on that head, for the word "perhaps" does not imply that we could resist the enemy in their charge without the aid of his auxiliary grace, but that it was possible we may not be swallowed up alive, because, perhaps, the fury of the enemy did not carry them so far. But as there was danger that the enemy might have carried their cruelty so far, he adds, "if it had not been that the Lord was with us, perhaps they had swallowed us up alive." The expressions "they had swallowed us up alive," is taken

from a sea or a river that swallows up everything that falls into it, for there are no beasts, no matter how fierce and cruel they may be, that swallow people up alive; they generally tear and mangle them first, and the next sentence, that expresses the same idea in other terms, as often occurs in the Psalms, requires such interpretation for thus it runs, "when their fury was enkindled against us, perhaps the water had swallowed us up;" that is to say, as the water would have swallowed us up, so would the rage of our enemies, like a mass of water, have overwhelmed us.

5. "Our soul hath passed through a torrent: perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable." He follows up the simile, comparing the persecution of his enemies to a deep and rapid torrent, impassable without very great help. Anyone reflecting on the persecutions of the martyrs by the pagans and heretics, and the temptations of the demons in regard of the holy anchorites and confessors, can compare them to nothing else but to a violent "torrent," and though many holy confessors breasted the torrent with success, still an immense number have been carried away by its fury. The Prophet, then, speaking in the person of the beatified, says, "our soul hath passed through a torrent" of persecution, for though the flesh succumbed, and yielded to the rage of the persecutor, still the soul has gloriously "passed through;" however, "if it had not been that the Lord was with us," "perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable," had got into a torrent too deep to expect getting out of it.
6. "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us to be a prey to their teeth."
7. "Our soul hath been delivered, as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are delivered." For the better understanding and the further illustration of God's goodness, the Prophet now proposes another simile. He compares persecutions or temptations to the snare of the fowler, and says, we should return thanks to and bless God for not suffering us to become a prey to the teeth of our enemies, that is to say, that he protected us from being taken, killed, and devoured; and he tells us how that was effected when he says, "our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers." No doubt, our soul fell into persecution and temptation, as would a sparrow or any other bird, when they are seduced into the snare set by the fowlers; but still it was loosed and delivered from the temptation before the tempter got hold of it to kill it; like a bird caught in a snare but enlarged before the fowler arrived to take it, kill it, and eat it. That was effected by "the snare being broken and thus we are delivered." God having by his grace, repressed the temptation before the soul either denied the faith or consented to sin in any other respect, just as the snare that held the bird would be broken, on which the bird flies off, and thus disappoints the fowler on his prey.
8. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." He concludes by praising God, humbly acknowledging that such a victory and such deliverance from those dangerous temptations should be ascribed not to himself, but to the help he got from Almighty God, a manifest proof of whose