

END OF PSALM 77

## 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: 77

**God's great benefits to the people of Israel, notwithstanding their ingratitude.**

1. Attend, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2. I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter propositions from the beginning.
3. How great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us.
4. They have not been hidden from their children, in another generation. Declaring the praises of the Lord, and his powers, and his wonders which he hath done.
5. And he set up a testimony in Jacob: and made a law in Israel. How great things he commanded our fathers, that they should make the same known to their children.
6. That another generation might know them. The children that should be born, and should rise up, and declare them to their children.
7. That they may put their hope in God, and may not forget the works of God: and may seek his commandments.
8. That they may not become like their fathers, a perverse and exasperating generation. A generation that set not their heart aright; and whose spirit was not faithful to God.
9. The sons of Ephraim who bend and shoot with the bow: they have turned back in the day of battle.
10. They kept not the covenant of God: and in his law they would not walk.
11. And they forgot his benefits, and his wonders that he had shown them.
12. Wonderful things did he do in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Tanis.
13. He divided the sea, and brought them through: and he made the waters to stand as in a vessel.
14. And he conducted them with a cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire.
15. He struck the rock in the wilderness: and gave them to drink, as out of the great deep.

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16. He brought forth waer out of the rock: and made streams run down as rivers.
17. And they added yet more sin against him: they provoked the Most High to wrath in the place without water.
18. And they tempted God in their hearts, by asking meat for their desires.
19. And they spoke ill of God: they said: Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
20. Because he struck the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he also give bread, or provide a table for his people?
21. Therefore the Lord heard, and was angry: and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel.
22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.
23. And he had commanded the clouds from above, and had opened the doors of heaven.
24. Ad had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the bread of heaven.
25. Man ate the bread of angels: he sent them provisions in abundance.
26. He removed the south wind from heaven; and by his power brought in the southwest wind.
27. And he rained upon them flesh as dust; and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea.
28. And they fell in the midst of their camp, round about their pavilions.
29. So they did eat, and were filled exceedingly, and he gave them their desire.
30. They were not defrauded of that which they craved. As yet their meat was in their mouth:
31. And the wrath of God came upon them. And he slew the fat ones amongst them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel.
32. In all these things they sinned still: and they believed not for his wondrous works.
33. And their days were consumed in vanity, and their years in haste.
34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and came to him early in the morning.
35. And they remembered that God was their helper; and the Most High god their Redeemer.
36. And they loved him with their mouth: and with their tongue they lied unto him.
37. But their heart was not right with him: nor were they counted faithful in his covenant.
38. But he is merciful, and will forgive their sins; and will not destroy them. And many a time did he turn away is anger; and did not kindle all his wrath.
39. And he remembered that they are flesh; a wind that goeth and returneth not.
40. How often did they provoke him in the desert; and move him to wrath in the place without water?
41. And they turned back and tempted God; and grieved the Holy One of Israel.
42. They remembered not his hand, in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them:
43. How he wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Tanis.
44. And he turned their rivers into blood, and their showers that they might not drink.
45. He sent amongst them diverse sorts of flies, which devoured them; and frogs which destroyed them.
46. And he gave up their fruits to the blast, and their labors to the locust.
47. Ad he destroyed their vineyards with hail, and their mulberry trees with hoar frost.
48. And he gave up their cattle to the hail, and their stock to the fire.
49. And he sent upon them the wrath of his indignation: indignation and wrath and trouble, which he sent by evil angels.
50. He made a way for a path to his anger: he spared not their souls from death; and their cattle he shut up in death.
51. And he killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt: the first fruits of all their labor in the tabernacles of Cham.
52. And he took away his own people as sheep: and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53. And he brought them out in hope, and they feared not: and the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54. And he brought them into the mountain of his sanctuary: the mountain which his right hand had purchased. And he cast out the Gentiles before them: and by lot divided to them their land by a line of distribution.
55. And he made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tabernacles.
56. Yet they tempted, and provoked the Most High God: and they kept not his testimonies.
57. And they turned away, and kept not the covenant: even like their fathers they were turned aside as a crooked bow.

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built this sanctuary as of unicorns in the land which he founded forever;” God built on Mount Zion, or in Jerusalem, which is to exist, his sanctuary, as firm as the horn of a unicorn. Here is the principle, or parable, or, rather, enigma, which the Prophet promised in the beginning of the Psalm; for the sanctuary of the Old Testament was not as firm as the horn of the unicorn, only inasmuch as it was the type of the sanctuary of the New Testament; nor was Mount Zion or Jerusalem founded, (for it was soon after destroyed,) only inasmuch as it was the type of the Church of Christ, “against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,” and whose worship and sacraments will suffer no change to the end of the world. “And he chose his servant David, and took him from the flocks of sheep; he brought him from following the ewes great with young.” He passes over the reign of Saul, for it was to be a short time, and, in a manner, extorted from God by the clamors of the people; but he mentions the kingdom of David, who was a type of Christ, and which through the pure will of God, was the last. He, therefore, “chose his servant David” from a humble position, for fear he should attribute his elevation to any merits of his own; “he took him from the flocks of sheep,” from being a shepherd, as he really was, “to feed Jacob his servant, and Israel his inheritance;” from feeding sheep, he took him to feed men; for he placed him over the kingdom of Israel and of Jacob, his people and his inheritance. “And he fed them in the innocence of his heart; and conducted them by the skillfulness of his hands.” The event proved the soundness of God’s judgment, for David fed and governed God’s people in the innocence of his heart, and the wisdom of his acts. In the innocence of his heart, because, with a pure and immaculate heart, he never sought his own glory, but that of God; not his own benefit, but that of the people; he was more anxious to serve than to rule; he fed the sheep, not as his own, but as belonging to his Master, as a servant, and not as an heir. In his wisdom, or, as he expresses it, “in the skillfulness of his hands,” he guided the people; because, whatever he did, he did it on due reflection, not rashly, not without taking counsel, or inconsiderately. All which perfections, however applicable they may be to David, are, absolutely speaking, to be found completely in Christ alone. Had David been so perfect in them, he would not have been so severely condemned for coveting the wife of another, for the commission of murder and adultery, for wantonly making a census of the people; for condemning Mephiboseth, and giving his property to the false informer, without any manner of trial. Christ, though, he was truly Innocent in heart, and wise in his works, “for he committed no sin, nor was there guile found in his mouth;” and he alone could boldly say, “which of you shall convict me of sin?”

forever.”

70. “And he chose his servant David, and took him from the flocks of sheep: he brought him from following the ewes great with young.”

71. “To feed Jacob his servant, and Israel his inheritance.”

72. “And he fed them in the innocence of his heart: and conducted them by the skillfulness of his hands.” In this, the latter part of the Psalm, David shows that God was pleased at his people being punished as they were, inasmuch as their sins called for such punishment; but that he was not pleased with the pride and malice of the Philistines, who so afflicted them; and, therefore, that he signally punished the Philistines, as we read in the same book of Kings, chapter 5. God often uses the wickedness of some to punish others, and then punishes the wicked for doing so, not looking to the good effected through them, but for the malicious motives that prompted them, in which he had no share. He then goes on to say that God would not have the tabernacle any longer in Silo, a city of the tribe of Ephraim, nor that the supreme power should be in the tribe of Joseph; but that he wished the tabernacle to be placed on Mount Zion, and that the supreme rule should belong to the tribe of Juda, for which tribe he had chosen David to be king over his people; a prophecy regarding Christ and his Church, as we said in the beginning of the Psalm. For, as St. Augustine well remarks, God did not reject Joseph, and select Juda by reason of their personal merits; had he done so, he would have chosen Joseph, who excelled very much, whether one regards his chastity, his patience, his wisdom, his prudence, or his love of his enemies; but he chose Juda on account of David, and David on account of Christ, and he destroyed the synagogue to build up the Church. We come now to the explanation of the text. “And the Lord was awaked as one out of sleep.” The Philistines had overpowered the Jews, not by their own strength, nor by reason of want of strength on the part of the Lord, but because he slept, and slept, too, “like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine;” wine makes one sleep. But when he was awaked from that sleep, he made a grand display of his power against the Philistines. God is said, figuratively, to sleep when he does not seem to notice the evil doings of the wicked; and he is said to sleep “like one surfeited with wine,” when he deals with the most grievous sinners as if he were in a profound sleep, and was insensible to the grievous injuries offered him, such as the taking away of the Ark. “And he smote his enemies on the hinder parts.” He afflicted them with a most painful disease, that of the emerods in their private parts; “he put them to an everlasting reproach;” for God, in his wisdom, caused them to make golden emerods, and hang them on the Ark, to their own everlasting shame, to hand down the disease with which God had inflicted them. “And he rejected the tabernacle of Joseph;” he would not have the tabernacle in which was kept the Ark, to remain any longer in Silo, a city in the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph “and chose not to tribe of Ephraim;” when about to establish a sovereignty in his people he did not choose a king from Ephraim, the most numerous and powerful of the tribes, “but he chose the tribe of Juda, Mount Zion which he loved.” He chose the tribe of Juda, for which his rulers were to be selected, and Mount Zion on which to place his tabernacle, and afterwards his temple, to hold his Ark, and to offer his sacrifices therein. “And he

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58. They provoked him to anger on their hills: and moved him to jealousy with their graven things.
59. God heard, and despised them: and he reduced Israel exceedingly as it were to nothing.
60. And he put away the tabernacle of Silo, his tabernacle where he dwelt among men.
61. And he delivered their strength into captivity, and their beauty into the hands of the enemy.
62. And he shut up his people under the sword: and he despised his inheritance.
63. Fire consumed their young men: and their maidens were not lamented.
64. Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows did not mourn.
65. And the Lord was awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine.
66. And he smote his enemies on the hinder parts: he put them to an everlasting reproach.
67. And he rejected the tabernacle of Joseph; and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
68. But he chose the tribe of Juda, Mount Zion which he loved.
69. And he built his sanctuary as of unicorns, in the land which he founded forever.
70. And he chose his servant David, and took him from the flocks of sheep: he brought him from following the ewes great with young.
71. To feed Jacob his servant, and Israel his inheritance.
72. And he fed them in the innocence of his heart: and conducted them by the skillfulness of his hands.

*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: 77**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. “Attend, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.” David, being about to exhort the people, in rather a long discourse, endeavors, at the outset, to arrest their attention by saying he is going to speak on matters of utility and importance. “Attend to my law;” to my precepts, which, like good and most wise laws, will direct you to happiness. And he repeats the same at greater length when he says, “incline your ears;” and what he expressed at first by the words, “my law,” he now expresses by the words, “to the words of my mouth;” thereby insinuating that when he mentioned the law, he did not mean the law of Moses, though often called simply the law, but his own words, with which he meant to instruct and to exhort his people; in which sense Christ himself uses the term when he said, John 15, “but that the word may be fulfilled, which is written in their Law, they have hated me without cause.” To incline the ear, when applied to the people, means to hear with humility and obedience, but, when applied to God, means to hear with clemency and mercy. Some will have this Psalm spoken in the person of God, others, of Christ; but verse 3, “and our fathers have told us” shows that David speaks in his own person, and no other.

2. "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter propositions from the beginning." The reason why David asks that what he says may be listened to with attention and humility is, that he is about to enter on difficult and obscure matters, that require attention and humility. By parables is understood here proverbs or similes that are usually short and figurative. Propositions mean enigmas that are most obscure, for such is the meaning of the word in Hebrew, as is clear from that passage in the book of Judges, where Samson's enigma, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," is called an enigma, and in Greek a problem. There our many proverbs and enigmas in this Psalm, as we shall see hereafter; but the one particularly alluded to here seems to be the kingdom of Christ, of which David's kingdom is the figure; and the Church, of which Mount Sion is the figure. The words, "from the beginning," looking at the text of the Psalm, would seem to apply to the date of the liberation of the people from the captivity of Egypt, when the people of Israel began to assume the form of a republic, and to be subject to laws and judges; and verse 5, "and he set up a testimony in Jacob; and made a law in Israel," favors that view; but Matt. 13, in quoting this passage, says that "the beginning" refers to the beginning of the world; for he says, "that the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." The meaning, then, is: I will lay before you ideas that were hidden, and like so many enigmas, from the beginning of the world; for, though the mysteries of Christ were at all times foretold and foreshadowed, still they were veiled, and openly revealed to very few. St. Paul, writing of them, says, Eph. 3, "to me, the least of all the saints, is given his grace to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God who created all things."

3. "How great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us."

4. "They have not been hidden from their children, in another generation. Declaring the praises of the Lord, and his powers, and his wonders which he hath done." Being about to write a history of matters that had within them mysteries hidden from the beginning of the world, he tells us he got the history of these from the fathers, who got them from their ancestors; I will, he says, utter propositions from the beginning. "What great things we have heard and known," because "our fathers have told us," both by their writings and word-of-mouth, for they did not wish them "to be hidden from their children" they were to leave after them "in another generation;" and what they had to tell was God's praises of virtues; that is, is wonderful power and his wonderful works, for which he deserves the highest meed of praise. "they have not been hidden." St. Matthew says, "I will utter things hidden," which would seem like a contradiction, but it is not, for the things that were done were not hidden from the children of those who related them, though their mystical signification was.

5. "And he set up a testimony in Jacob: and made a law in Israel. How great things he commanded our fathers, that they should make the same known to their children.

59. "God heard, and despised them: and he reduced Israel exceedingly as it were to nothing."

60. "And he put away the tabernacle of Silo, his tabernacle where he dwelt among men."

61. "And he delivered their strength into captivity, and their beauty into the hands of the enemy."

62. "And he shut up his people under the sword: and he despised his inheritance."

63. "Fire consumed their young men: and their maidens were not lamented."

64. "Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows did not mourn." The Prophet now enters into the vengeance inflicted by God on the sins of his people, making special mention of the time when the Philistines routed the Jewish army, and carried the Ark of the Lord away with them, after having slain the priests who were in charge of it, 1 Kings 4. "God heard," or rather he knew the sins of his people crying unto heaven, "and despised them," as an useless people, and deserving of death, "and he reduced Israel exceedingly," humbled them to nothing, allowing their enemies to triumph over them. "And he put away the tabernacle of Silo." He rejected the tabernacle containing the Ark, which was then in Silo, in which tabernacle, God, to a certain extent "dwelt among men;" because from thence he gave his answers to men. "And he delivered their strength into captivity, and their beauty into the hands of the enemy;" he allowed that people that he had chosen for his inheritance, as his own and favored people to be surrounded and circumvented by the swords of the enemy. "Fire consumed their young men;" the fire of war, or the fire of God's anger destroyed the flower of them, for such are always the young; "and their maidens were not lamented," because there was nobody left to deplore them. "Their priests fell by the sword," Ophni and Phinees, the sons of Heli, who was specially named among the dead; "and their widows did not mourn," for all were occupied in their own private and peculiar losses.

65. "And the Lord was awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine."

66. "And he smote his enemies and the hinder parts: he put them to an everlasting reproach."

67. "And he rejected the tabernacle of Joseph; and chose not the tribe of Ephraim."

68. "But he chose the tribe of Juda, Mount Sion which he loved."

69. "And he built the sanctuary as of unicorns, in the land which he founded

means, God's anger prompting him to revenge, was restrained by his mercy, urging him not to destroy them entirely, but at length he set aside his mercy, and "made a way for a path to his anger," and he did not spare them, for he killed all the firstborn of men and beasts, which were the first fruits of their labor; that is, of the Egyptians, for men generally labor in rearing their children and their cattle, but the first of their labor is directed to their firstborn, which thus get the appellation of the first fruits of their labor. "In the tabernacle of Cham;" means, in Egypt, which was so-called after Mizraim the son of Cham, the son of Noe, he having been the first to inhabit and possess Egypt. "And he took away his own people like sheep." Upon the slaughter of the firstborn of Egypt, Pharaoh allowed the Jews to go away, and then God brought them into the desert of Arabia. "And he brought them out in hope, and they feared not;" they went out with great confidence, "and the sea overwhelmed their enemies;" the last plague inflicted on the Egyptians, and the end of the captivity of the children of Israel.

54. "And he brought them into the mountain of his sanctuary: the mountain which his right-hand had purchased. And he cast out the Gentiles before them: and by lot divided to them their land by a line of distribution."

55. "And he made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tabernacles."

56. "Yet they tempted, and provoked the Most High God: and they kept not his testimonies."

57. "And they turned away, and kept not the covenant: even like the fathers they turned aside as a crooked bow."

58. "They provoked him to anger on their hills: and moved him to jealousy with their graven things." The Prophet now passes to the facts related in the books of Josue and Judges, and shows that the Jews were brought by God into the land of promise, which he calls "the mountain of his sanctuary," because it was a mountainous country, and one which God had sanctified and dedicated to himself to be worshiped there by his people; he also calls it "the mountain which his right-hand had purchased," because God caused the Israelites under Josue, to conquer the old inhabitants who were most devoted to idolatry, and to banish them by the aid of the most signal miracles. He adds, however, that the Jews so introduced by God into the land of promise, proved to be not a whit better than their fathers who had perished in the desert, for they too "tempted and provoked the Most High God," by abandoning his worship, and by the service of idols. The expression, they were turned aside as a crooked bow," means that they were like a bow out of shape, sending the arrows where they should not be sent; for the Jews promised to observe God's commandments, and apparently directed their arrows to the worship of the true God, while they were, meanwhile, offering sacrifices to false gods; which the Prophet expresses in plain language, when he says, "they provoked him to anger on their hills; and moved him to jealousy with a grave things:" for it was on lofty hills, especially wooded ones, that they erected altars to their idols, and sacrificed thereon to them.

6. "That another generation might know them. The children that should be born, and should rise up, and declare them to their children." He now begins to relate the things done by God, as you heard from the fathers, any places first the fact of God's having given the people of Israel the law and the commandments through Moses, and having ordered that law to be given by the parents to their children, and so to be handed down to posterity. The law of God is called a "testimony," because it testifies God's will to man, as we have explained at length in Psalm 77, "setting up a testimony and Jacob;" that is, God gave his law to the children of Jacob, who was also called Israel. The expression, "how great things he commanded," means no more than what he commanded, according to the Hebrew, from which we gather that "the law" does not simply mean here, the Decalogue, but all the commands, both moral, ceremonial, and judicial in the five books of Moses.

7. "That they may put their hopes in God, and may not forget the works of God: and may seek his commandments."

8. "That they may not become like their fathers a perverse and exasperating generation. A generation that set not their heart aright; and whose spirit was not faithful to God." He now explains why God gave the law to his people, and ordered the parents to teach it to children, and the children to hand it down to their prosperity. To make them put no trust in false gods, or the idols of the Gentiles, but to trust alone in the true God, who gave them a holy law from heaven, accompanied by great signs and prodigies; and also that they should not forget God wonderful doings in delivering them from the bondage of Pharaoh; furthermore, that they should anxiously seek to know, and studiously put into practice, God's wishes; and, finally, that they should not imitate the ingratitude and the infidelity of their fathers, who, after all the favors conferred on them through Moses, proved most ungrateful. For, while they were in Egypt, they could hardly be brought to trust Moses, and after having left Egypt, they several times rebelled against Moses and against God; were forever murmuring, and (what is much worse) adoring the golden calf: "a generation that set not their heart aright," did not keep their heart firmly directed to God, but rather regarded other help. "Whose spirit was not faithful to God," for it often fell away from faith and obedience.

9. "The sons of Ephraim who bend and shoot with the bow: they have turned back in the day of battle." Many suppose that some unsuccessful battle of the tribe of Ephraim is alluded to here; now, there is no trace of any such battle in Holy Writ, nor is it probable that the Prophet, in giving a general description of the vices of the people, miraculously brought out of Egypt, and freed from slavery, would digress to an isolated fact such as this. It is, therefore, much more probable that he explains, by a sort of simile, how inconstant the Hebrews were, in their faith and their obedience to God, making the meaning of the passage to be "the sons of Ephraim;" that is, the Israelites were like soldiers who began to fight with the enemy, and at once turned their backs and fled; so the Israelites, in the desert, more than once promised God they would obey him, and observe his

commandments, and in a minute they would change their minds, think of returning to Egypt, and murmur against Moses and against God. David specifies the sons, that is, the tribe of Ephraim, by it meaning the whole assembly of the Israelites; for, next to Juda, the tribe of Ephraim was most numerous and powerful, and thus a rival of Juda, and in the Scripture, Ephraim is generally censured, while Juda praised, and thus the calamities of the whole people were attributed to Ephraim rather than to any of the other tribes, and in the end of his very Psalm, he says, "and chose not to tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Juda." See Osee the prophet.

10. "They kept not the covenant of God: and in his law they would not walk."

11. "And they forgot his benefits, and his wonders that he had shown them."

12. "Wonderful things did he do in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Tanis." He now explains what he had figuratively expressed, that the children of Ephraim, the Israelites, were turned back; for when they undertook to obey God, they did not keep the compact, nor did they observe the law of God; and they at once forgot God's kindness to them, and the wonderful works he did for them in Egypt, which had been related to them by their fathers. The field of Tanis means Egypt, of which Tanis was the royal residence, to show that the wonderful things done by Moses were not done in a nook or corner, but in a most public place, up to the king's palace.

13. "He divided the sea and brought them through: and he made the waters to stand as in the vessel."

14. "And he conducted them with a cloud by day, and all the night with the light of fire."

15. "He struck the rock in the wilderness: and gave them to drink, as out of the great deep."

16. "He brought forth water out of the rock: and made streams run down as rivers."

17. "And they added yet more sin against him: they provoked the Most High to wrath in the place without waters." Having touched upon the wonderful things that were done in Egypt before Pharaoh; he now describes the other miracles that were performed in the departure of the Israelites, viz., the separation of the waters of the Red Sea, to afford them a dry passage through it; and, then, after their departure from Egypt, the miracles that were performed in the desert, viz., the pillar of cloud to precede, and show them the way by day, and the pillar of fire by night; and the abundance of water drawn from the rock to slake their thirst. And he adds, that, notwithstanding all those miracles, the incredulous people again provoked God to anger, when they found themselves without water in the desert, which had to be struck the second time for them from the rock; for the first apply of water was given them the year before, as we read in Num. 17, while mention is made of the second in Num. 20. "He made the waters to stand as in a vessel;" means, that God made the

48. "And he gave up their cattle to the hail, and their stock to the fire."

49. "And he sent upon them the wrath of his indignation: indignation and wrath and trouble, which he sent by evil angels."

50. "He made a way for a path to his anger: he spared not their souls from death; and their cattle he shut up in death."

51. "And he killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt: the firstfruits of all their labor in the Tabernacles of Cham."

52. "And he took away his own people as sheep; and guided them in the wilderness like the flock."

53. "And he brought them out in hope, and they feared not: and this sea overwhelmed their enemies." Having said, in verse 42, that the Jews forgot all the miracles God wrought in their favor, when he was bringing them out of the land of Egypt, he now describes, in the above verses, how God afflicted Pharaoh, until he ultimately overwhelmed him and his whole army in this sea, all of which is to be found in Exodus, from chapter 7 to 14. Now, David does not record all the miracles, he merely gives the principal ones, and that in a different order from that in which they happened. "They remembered not," meaning the Jews in the wilderness, "his hand," the power of the Lord that delivered them from Pharaoh in his persecution. "How he wrought his signs in Egypt." They did not remember the wonderful miracles, signs of his power, that he wrought in Egypt, especially those he did in the fairest part of it, Tanis, nigh the royal residence. "And he turned," for he turned "their rivers into blood, and their showers that they might not drink," Exodus 7. By the rivers of Egypt we understand the branches of the Nile that flow through it; by their showers we are not to understand the rain that falls, which seldom happens in Egypt, but the water itself, and it is not unusual with David to repeat the same idea, and thus, what he calls their rivers in the first part of the verse, he calls showers in the second. "He sent among them diverse sort of flies which devoured them, and flogs which destroyed them," Exod. 8. He goes on to enumerate the principal scourges inflicted on the Egyptians; and, finally, to include any he may have omitted, as, in fact, he did, he says in verse 49, "and he sent upon them the wrath of his indignation: indignation and wrath and troubles which he said by evil angels." Touching, in the latter part of it, on the most grievous of all the plagues, the slaughter of the firstborn by the destroying angel. From this, we infer, that the plagues of Egypt, especially the slaughter of the firstborn, was effected through the agency of the fallen angels, who cannot injure us, but as far as God will suffer them, they being his ministers. The holy angels even may be called evil angels from the punishments they inflict when God so employs them. The impure demons may also be called evil angels, they being so in reality, and hostile to man, and God employs both; for, through the former he punished the Sodomites, by fire from heaven; and through the latter, with similar fire, he chastised Job. "He made a way for a path to his anger." A beautiful figure. It

types of the elect, who will be saved; for, as the apostle says, “God hath not cast away his people, which he foreknew, but there is a remnant saved, according to the election of grace.” This verse, then, does not contradict the dispersion of the Jews that we daily see, for the promise was fulfilled in the apostles, who would Jews; and, so far from being disbursed, have gathered together a great multitude of people, elect in God, a fact foretold by Osee 1, and explained by 1 Peter 2, where he says, “who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: when had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” The Prophet goes on and says, “and many a time did he turn away his anger;” for he forgave a great share of the punishment due to their sins, and thus turned away his anger; because he “did not kindle all his wrath,” as he may justly have done. “And he remembered that they are flesh: a wind that goeth and returneth not.” In addition to his motives for mercy, man’s infirm nature, weakened by the fall of our first parents, mortal and subject to concupiscence, presented itself. For he knows what we are made of; “that they are flesh,” carnal, weak, and feeble; and that we are “a wind that goeth and returneth not;” that is, that our life is a passing one – passing from boyhood to youth, without ever coming back to boyhood; passing from youth to old age, without ever returning to youth, but quickly ending in death. Thus, it is like the flowers and other perishable things, and not like the sun, moon and stars that revolve in their orbits, and are always the same by reason of their being solid and eternal. By the word “wind” we are to understand that spirit or breath of life that quickens and enlivens us, which in its progress grows weaker, and is frail and changeable; and that such is the life of man, the Prophet proves in the following verse, “how often did they provoke him in the desert? And move him to wrath in the place without water?” By their want of purpose, promising faith and obedience at one time, and, in a moment after, by heaping obloquy on him, and by rebellion; for, “they turned back” from all their faithful promises, “and tempted God,” to try if he were truly omnipotent; and thus “grieved” God, who is “the Holy One of Israel.” The God of Israel is called “the Holy One,” not only by David, but by Isaias, in various places; for God alone is truly holy, that is, pure and inviolate; what the gods of the Gentiles are unclean demons. Finally, such was the fickleness and folly of the Jews so brought by God out of Egypt, that they at once forgot the countless and most wonderful signs and prodigies that God wrought in their favor while he was bringing them out from the bondage of Egypt.

43. “How he wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Tanis.”

44. “And he turned their rivers into blood, and their showers that they might not drink.”

45. “He sent amongst them diverse sorts of flies, which devoured them: and frogs which destroyed them.”

46. “And he gave up their fruits to the blast, and their labors to the locust.”

47. “And he destroyed their vineyards with hail, and their mulberry trees with hoarfrost.”

waters of the sea to stand up in a vessel, while the children of Israel were passing through. “And gave them to drink as out of the great deep;” means, that when the rock was struck, as great a quantity of water issued from it as if the rock had been turned into a deep lake or a great ocean of water.

18. “And they tempted God in their hearts, by asking meat for their desires.”

19. “And they spoke ill of God: they said: can God furnish a table in the wilderness?”

20. “Because he struck the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he also give bread, or provide a table for his people?”

21. “Therefore the Lord heard, and was angry: and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel.”

22. “Because they believe not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.”

23. “And he had commanded the clouds from above, and had opened the doors of heaven.”

24. “And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the bread of heaven.”

25. “Man ate the bread of angels: he sent them provisions in abundance.”

26. “He removed the south wind from heaven; and by his power brought in the southwest wind.”

27. “And he rained upon them flesh as dust; and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea.”

28. “And they fell in the midst of their camp, roundabout their pavilions.”

29. “So they did eat, and were filled exceedingly, and he gave them their desire.” The Prophet unites the miracles of the bread from heaven and the water from the rock; they being types of Christ’s Passion, and of the Eucharist, as the Lord himself explains John 6, and the apostle in 1 Cor. 10. Water from a rock, is the same as bringing wisdom from folly; for wisdom is no less opposed to folly than is a rock, a hard and solid substance to water, which is a fluid. The mystery of the Crucifixion is wisdom, it is the rock which was struck; a folly to the Gentiles, and a scandal to the Jews; but the height of wisdom to the faithful, as St. Paul writes 1 Cor. 1, “for seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” Now the real bread from heaven was not the manna that fell from the sky, but the flesh of Christ that comes from the heaven of heavens, and gives life to the world. The manna, however, was a type of this true bread, and

the Prophet had that in view when he said, in the beginning of the Psalm, that he was about to speak in parables and propositions. Now to explain the passage. Having alluded to the miracle of the water brought from the rock and the infidelity of the people, he comes to the miracle of the bread and the meat, another incredulity of theirs. We must bear in mind that the Israelites got meat in a miraculous manner twice, once along with manna, Exodus 16, and a second time without any manna, Num. 11; and that they got the meat and manna previous to the water from the rock, and the meat alone subsequent to the water. David, however, unites both miracles, and thus renders the matter somewhat confused; but, bearing what we said in mind, it will be easily understood. "And they tempted God in their hearts." They wished to try if God was really omnipotent and was concerned for his people; and, therefore, "they asked meat for their desires;" bread and meat were longing for, as we read in Exodus 16 and Num. 11. "And they spoke ill of God," doubting whether he could give them to eat as well as he gave them to drink in the desert; this alludes for the second time they murmured, for the first murmur was previous to striking water from the rock. "Therefore the Lord heard" their murmurs, proceeding from there incredulity, "and was angry;" so that he sent fire into their camp, and destroyed numbers of them. Yet, he wished to convince an unfaithful people, and to prove his power; and, therefore, "he commanded the clouds from above, and had opened the doors of heaven. And had rained down manna upon them to eat; and had given them the bread of heaven. Man ate the bread of angels." This refers to the first time they murmured; for they got the manna before they got the water. The manna is called bread from heaven, having fallen from thence; and it is called the bread of angels, being made and produced by them. The word manna is derived from two Hebrew words, that mean, "what is it?" Which the Jews said when they first saw.

30. "They were not defrauded of that which they craved. As yet their meat was in their mouth."

31. "And the wrath of God came upon them. And he slew the fat ones amongst them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel."

32. "In all of these things they sinned still: and they believed not for his wondrous works."

33. "And their days were consumed in vanity, and their years in haste."

34. "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and came to him early in the morning."

35. "And they remembered that God was there helper: and the Most High God their Redeemer."

36. "And they loved him with their mouth: and with their tongue they lied unto him."

37. "But their heart was not right with him: nor were they counted faithful in his covenant." The Prophet goes on to show in these verses that God, to satisfy the

Jews, showed his great power by great miracles; still, that he did not let their contumacy and infidelity go unpunished; and, that the Jews were brought to faith and to obedience, both by the miracles and the punishments inflicted on them, but still, without that perseverance, or that sincerity of heart that God required. "As yet their meat was in their mouth." They had scarcely finished the quails, "and the wrath of God came upon them," and destroyed such a number of them, that the place got the name of "the graves of lust." The Scripture does not tell us how God destroyed the, but, it is likely, through some disease arising from gluttony. And the Lord singled out "the fat ones," and "the chosen men of Israel;" those most devoted to pleasure, they who exulted in the youth in their strength; "and brought down," they them so prostrate by disease, that they could not possibly escape. All this came upon them by reason of their infidelity, for they did not believe that the quails were sent by Providence, but came by chance. They were, therefore, punished so quickly, that "their days were consumed in vanity," and "the years in haste;" for day passed away like a shadow or like smoke, without a trace after them. But they, "when he slew them," when they were scourged by God, and put to death by him, "they returned" to their senses, and asked God's help, and that "early in the morning;" as soon as ever they felt the scourge they came to implore God's mercy, converted, but through fear; and their conversion was feigned, for "with their mouth they called to mind God's previous goodness; but while they so professed their devotion to him, they lied in their heart; "for their heart was not right with him, nor were they counted faithful in his covenant." Would that we Christians would not imitate this inconsistency of the Jews. How many among us, when in danger of death, promised God and his Saints to amend our lives, and the moment they recover resume their old habits? But God will not be mocked; and such people will not escape his judgment.

38. "But he is merciful, and will forgive their sins; and will not destroy them. And many a time did he turn away his anger; and did not kindle all his wrath."

39. "And he remembered that they are flesh; a wind that goeth and returneth not."

40. "How often did they provoke him in the desert; and move him to wrath in the place without water?"

41. "And they turned back and tempted God; and grieved the Holy One of Israel."

42. "They remembered not his hand, in the day that he redeemed them from the hand that afflicted them." The Prophet now compares God's goodness with man's wickedness, and says, that though God scourged his people, he did not forget his mercy; and, therefore, that he did not chastise them as heavily as their sins deserved, for he had mercy on them, and did not utterly destroy them. They certainly deserved utter extermination, but, through the mercy of God, some were spared; as, in fact, of those that left Egypt, two, Josus and Caleb, survived,