

END OF PSALM 148

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: 148

All creatures are invited to praise their Creator.

1. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise ye him in the high places.
2. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.
3. Praise ye him, O sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars and light.
4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens: and let all the waters that are above the heavens,
5. Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.
6. He hath established them forever, and for ages of ages: he hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away.
7. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps.
8. Fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfill his word:
9. Mountains, and all hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10. Beasts, and all cattle: serpents, and feathered fowls:
11. Kings of the earth, and all people: princes and all judges of the earth:
12. Young men, and maidens: let the old with the younger praise the name of the Lord:
13. For his name alone is exalted.
14. The praise of him is above heaven and earth: and he hath exalted the horn of his people. A hymn to all his saints: to the children of Israel, a people approaching to him. Alleluia.

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: 148

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise ye him in the high places."
2. "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts." The Angels, as residing in the supreme heavens, as it were, in the very palace of the eternal King, get the first invitation. The words "praise ye" are not used in a spirit of command or exhortation, as if the Angels with deficient in their duty, and needed such; it is spoken in a spirit of invitation and strong affection by the Prophet, who is highly excited and inflamed with the love of God as if he said: oh that all created things would praise their Creator! and you, ye Angels, who hold the first place in creation, follow up the praise you daily offer him; "from the heavens," indicates with the Angels reside, which he repeats when he adds, "praise ye him in the high places." This he explains more clearly when he adds who they are that dwell there, saying, "praise ye him, all his hosts," meaning the heavenly powers, and not the sun, moon, and stars, as some will have it; first, because nothing is more usual than such repetitions with David; secondly, the holy fathers are unanimous that these words refer to the Cherubim, Seraphim, and the other Angels; thirdly, from Luke 2, where the Angels are called "the multitude of the heavenly host;" as fourthly, from Psalm 102, where the Angels are more clearly indicated, when he says, "bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; you ministers of his that do his will."
3. "Praise ye him, O sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars and light."
4. "Praise him, ye heavens of heavens: and let all the waters that above the heavens," from the Angels, who, as being endowed with reason and intelligence, praise God in the strict sense of the word, he descends to the heavenly bodies who do not offer that intellectual praise they are incapable of, but still praise him by reason of their greatness, grandeur, size, speed, efficacy, splendor, and beauty, just as every beautiful work redounds to the credit of its maker. He names the sun first, it being universally allowed to be the principal body in nature; next, the moon, it being apparently next in size to the sun; then he calls upon the stars, concluding with "the light," by which he means the light derived from the sun, moon, and stars. Having enumerated the heavenly bodies, he then calls upon "the heaven of heavens," that is, the superior heavens, beneath which lie the inferior heavens in which the clouds and

whom the Lord himself said, “if you be the children of Abraham do the works of Abraham – you are of your father the devil.” Finally, such are they, who, after having renounced the Lord, are scattered all over the world, without a king, a priesthood, and even without a God.

the birds move about; whence we read in the Scriptures, “the birds of heaven, the clouds of heaven.” To those upper heavens he adds the waters that lie above the heavens, thus leaving no one thing in the superior part of the world without an invitation. In regard of those waters men are at liberty to argue to a certain extent, but in other respects they are not. First, it is certain that the waters named here are material, not spiritual waters, an error into which Origen fell, and which was exposed by the holy fathers. Secondly, that these waters are above, and not in, the heavens, as some erroneously imagine, for the Prophet indicates it clearly here, by calling on the “heaven of heavens” to praise him, and at once adds, “all the waters that are above the heavens” those heavens, surely, that he had just quoted; and in Psalm 103, when speaking of the same heavens, he says, “who stretchest out the heavens like a pavilion, who coverest the higher rooms thereof with water;” and Moses, in the first chapter of Genesis, clearly places water over the firmament, in which firmament he shortly after places the stars; and more clearly in Daniel 3, where all the works of the Lord are enumerated, in order; first are placed the Angels, then the heavens, then the waters that are over the heavens, then the sun, moon, stars, and other inferior beings. Thirdly, these waters are incorruptible and eternal, for to them, as well as to the other things herein – before enumerated, applies when he subsequently adds, “he hath established them forever, as for ages of ages.”

5. “Praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.”

6. “He hath established them forever, and for ages of ages: he hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away.” The reason why all those things aforesaid should praise God is, because they were all made by him, and will remain forever incorrupt; and what is much more wonderful, they were made without any labor, without any loss of time, by one word or command brought from nonexistence to existence, and that for eternity. He merely said, “let there be light, and there was light.” He commanded a thing that had no existence to start into existence, and at once it, in obedience to his command, appeared. “He hath established them forever, and for ages of ages.” He endowed them with immortality, in order that, like the inferior bodies, they may not rise up and die again. “He hath made a decree,” passed a decree on this matter; “and it shall not pass away,” a decree that will not evaporate or become a dead letter, but will remain, and by remaining will preserve the very things it has reference to, so that they shall not pass away.

7. “Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps.” He now passes to the perishable elements and to the world below, which consists of the earth, the air, the water, the beasts, fishes, fowl, as also the thunder, lightning, hail, winds, and other such matters. And as he first said, “praise ye the Lord from the heavens,” he now says, “praise the Lord from the earth;” and as he classified all the superior beings under the head of the things belonging into heaven which is the seat of the Angels, so he deems it right now to bring all the inferior things under the head of those belonging to the earth, it being the seat of man. Hence,

his reason for not naming fire, or air, or water; in the first place, because the earth constitutes the second part of the world, and all other things, whether fire, air, or water, are subject to man, who inhabits it. "Praise the Lord from the earth," all you who live on the earth, or belong to it, and he mentions first the waters and the fishes who dive in the depths of the earth; for the dragons mean the sea monsters; and the deeps, the deep seas in which they reside; as we read in Psalm 103, "the sea dragon which thou hast formed to play therein," that is, the sea, and in Psalm 73, "thou didst crush the heads of the dragons in the waters."

8. "Fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfill his word." From the waters he passes to the air, where the fire exist; viz., lightning, thunderbolts, coruscations, as also hail, snow, ice, and the stormy winds, those furious winds that caused the storms and bring so much rain with them, all of which "fulfill his word;" that is, obey his commands, which last expression he adds with a view to let us see that all those accidents, that are looked upon by man as so many calamities, come from the hand of God, who makes use of them as so many instruments of his justice or of his mercy to punish the wicked or to deter the just from sin; and, therefore, that they do not come from chance, nor should they be called calamities but blessings, being the instruments of a good and gracious God.

9. "Mountains, and all hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars." From the air he now reverts to the earth, and first alludes to the more striking parts of it, the "mountains and hills," which, of course, include the plains and the valleys, for you cannot have one without the other. He then passes to the products of the earth, naming the trees first that produce fruit, and then those that do not, such as the cedar, which however, serves for house and shipbuilding. He then touches on the animals that are to be found on the earth, briefly enumerating the principal ones, the wild, the domestic, and the beasts of burden; and finally, the serpents that crawl along the ground, and the birds that fly aloft in the air. He calls upon and challenges them all to praise God, not that they are capable of any such thing, but that man, by reflecting on their use and benefit to him, may praise God, and return him due thanks for them. But what benefit do the wild beasts, the lions, serpents, even the gnats and the wasps confer on man? A great deal, for, whether they inspire us with terror, or annoy and torment us, they are calculated to remind us of our weakness and infirmity, and to what we have come through the disobedience of our first parents, by which we lost a great part of the dominion we previously had over all animals.

10. "Beasts, and all cattle: serpents, and feathered fowls."

11. "Kings of the earth, and all people: princes and all judges of the earth."

12. "Young men, and maidens: let the old with the younger praise the name of the Lord."

13. "For his name alone is exalted." He finally invites all mankind to praise God, and, in order to comprehend all manner of people, he mentions three different classes of people in respect of power, sex, and age. "Kings and people," they who command

and they who obey; and, as all those who do command are not equal in authority, he adds, "princes," having supreme power, "and all judges of the earth," having subordinate authority; and here is the difference of power. "Young men and maidens," which includes the sexes, "the old with the younger," to comprehend all ages. All, then, be they princes or subjects, men or women, old or young, are summoned to praise the Lord. "For his name alone is exalted;" for there is no other name truly sublime, and worthy of all praise, but the name of God. Created things, however great, when compared with God's greatness, sink into insignificance; and whatever greatness or excellence they may be possessed of have entirely from him, will alone is called, and justly is, the Most High.

14. "The praise of him is above heaven and earth: and he hath exalted the horn of his people. A hymn to all his saints; to the children of Israel, a people approaching to him. Alleluia." He assigns a reason for having said, "for his name alone is exalted," because, says he, "the praise of him is above heaven and earth;" that is, everything in heaven and on earth declare his praise so full of everything of his glory, or, as Habacuc has it, "his glory covered the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise;" therefore "his name alone is exalted." And "he hath exalted the horn of his people;" he, of himself, alone exalted and sublime, has exalted the power and glory of his people Israel, because he selected them as his own people, gave them divine laws, written with his own finger, and cared them with a special providence. "A hymn to all his saints; to the children of Israel, a people approaching to him, Alleluia." "This is the conclusion of the Psalm, as it were to say: the hymn, then, to be sung to God should be specially sung by all his saints; that is, by all those dedicated and consecrated to him, the children of Israel especially, inasmuch as they come nearer to God than any other people, through true knowledge and faith, true worship and adoration, true filial confidence and love. This, however, as St. Augustine properly observes, applies not to the children of Israel according to the flesh, but according to the spirit; for the former being stiff-necked never made any approach to God, as St. Stephen reproached them. "You always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain those who foretold of the coming of the Just One, of whom you have been the betrayers and murderers;" and the apostle, Romans 9, points out who are the true children of Israel when he says, "for all are not Israelites that are of Israel; neither are all they who are the seed of Abraham's children;" that is to say, not they who are the children of the flesh are the children of God, but they that are the children of the promise are counted for "the seed." And in the same Epistle, chapter 4, he tells them that they were the children of Abraham "who follow the steps of the faith that our father Abraham had," be they circumcised or not circumcised. Nor should we exclude all the children of Israel according to the flesh, for in such case we would exclude the prophets and the apostles; we exclude those only who are Israelites according to the flesh alone, of whom St. Stephen speaks as above, and to whom the Precursor said, "ye offspring of vipers, who hath shown you to flee from the wrath to come? do not begin to say: we have Abraham for our father," and to