

not like the just man, saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be for ever in my mouth;" or like Job, saying, "the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

19. "He shall go in to the generations of his fathers: and he shall never see light." The wicked man is often favored by God with innumerable blessings in this world, either to reward him for some good that is in him, or to soften his heart, and bring him to repentance; but, failing in that, "he shall go into the generations of his fathers," that as well as he shared in their crimes, he too may share in their punishment; "and he shall never see light:" having taken too much pleasure in the light of honors, and the glories of this world, and neglected looking for the light of the glories of heaven, by a just judgment he shall be consigned to eternal darkness.

20. "Man when he was in honor did not understand he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them." A repetition of verse 12, to show that want of sense is the principal cause of man's misery, and that the majority of mankind would be shut out from eternal light, and consigned to darkness, for not having followed the light of reason; as also to account for so few comprehending the parable contained in this Psalm, such ignorance arising from the fact that sin caused "man to be compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them."

### END OF PSALM 48

## 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: 48

The folly of worldlings who live on in sin, without thinking of death or hell.

1. Hear these things, all ye nations: give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.
2. All you that are earth born, a you sons of men: both rich and poor together.
3. My mouth shall speak wisdom; and the meditation of my heart understanding.
4. I will incline my ear to a parable; I will open my proposition on the psaltery.
5. Why shall I fear in the evil day? The iniquity of my heel shall encompass me.
6. They trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches.
7. No brother can redeem, nor shall man redeem: he shall not give to God his ransom.
8. Nor the price of the redemption of his soul: and shall labor forever.
9. And shall still live unto the end.
10. He shall not see destruction, when he shall see the wise dying: the senseless and the fool shall perish together and they shall leave their riches to strangers.

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11. **And there sepulchers shall be their houses forever. Their dwelling places to all generations: they have called their lands by their names.**
12. **And man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them.**
13. **This way of theirs is a stumbling block to them; and afterwards they shall delight in their mouth.**
14. **They are laid in hell like sheep: death shall read upon them. And that just shall have dominion over them in the morning: and their help shall decay in hell from their glory.**
15. **But God will redeem my soul from the hand of hell, when he shall receive me.**
16. **Be not thou afraid, when a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased.**
17. **For when he shall die he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him.**
18. **Four in his lifetime his soul will be blessed; and he will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him.**
19. **He shall go in to the generations of his fathers; and he shall never see light.**
20. **Man when he was in honor did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.**

*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: 48**

#### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "Hear these things, all ye nations: give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world."
2. "All you that are earthborn, and you sons of men: both rich and poor together." This preface to the Psalm is written with a view to arrest the attention of the reader, by informing him that the matter to be treated of concerns all mankind, both present and future. The whole human race is, therefore, summoned to hear it; and as no known place could contain such a multitude, nor could the voice of any speaker reach them, we must only take it for granted that the Prophet foresaw that his Psalms would be spread over the world, and to the end of time; and, therefore, that he was warranted in summoning all nations and people to hear him. "Hear these things, all

consume them, as the wolf would so many sheep. "And the just shall have no dominion over them in the morning." He continues relating the misery of the wicked consigned to hell, and says, that "in the morning," that is, in the beginning of the new world, that would date from the general Resurrection, the wicked will be entirely subject to the just, for the just will then sit in judgment on them, will lord it over them forever, and the wicked will let nothing whatever on that day to support them against the just, for all "their help," which lay in their strength and power, "shall decay," be of no avail and hell, "from their glory," after all the glory they had in this world, while they dwelt in its noble palaces.

15. "But God will redeem my soul from the hand of hell, when he shall receive me." He now tells us what is to become of the just, among whom he numbers himself. Such, he says, will be the lot of the wicked, but the reverse will be the case with me, and with all like me, for "God will redeem my soul from the hand of hell," will save me from hell, when he shall come and receive me. He seems here to allude to the redemption through Christ, and his descent into hell, for it was then truly, when he paid the price of the redemption of the just with his blood, and released them from the hand of hell, that he may be said to have taken those souls to himself.

16. "Be not thou afraid, when a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased."

17. "For when he shall die he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him." He concludes, by exhorting the just, however poor, and those oppressed by the rich, not to fear them, and their term of this life will be very brief. "Be thou not afraid when a man shall be made rich;" do not dread his power, or let it make you forget the everlasting power of your omnipotent Creator; and do not fear when you see your enemy, not only grown into riches, but even "the glory of his house increased" by a numerous family, and wealthy relatives. "For when he shall die," as die he must, be he rich or be the poor, "he shall take nothing away," he will carry with him none of the goods of this world, "nor shall his glory descend with him," neither his friends nor relations, nor his servants, much less his honors and dignities, will accompany him in his journey down. Thus, riches and the glory of the wicked are transient, their poverty and confusion are everlasting.

18. "For in his lifetime his soul will be blessed; and, he will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him." He assigns a reason why the wicked will not have the glory in hell that they had here. As they were wont to praise God only when he showered his favors on them, so God confines such favors to this world. "For in his lifetime his soul will be blessed." The blessing conferred on the wicked man will become confined to the term of this life, for it is only doing this life that God will confer temporal favors on him, or that man will praise, or rather flatter him. "And he will praise thee;" on the other hand, the wicked man will praise and extol God: "when thou shalt do well to him;" when the world shall thrive and prosper with him; but if any reverse should take place, he will blaspheme God,

to forget them they cannot help or assist them; like the rich man in hell, who had five brothers on earth, and could get no help from any of them, and thus, may be looked upon as quite strangers to him; the only one that could have helped was a stranger, Lazarus, who might have been a real friend and neighbor to him, had he been shown any mercy at the hands of the glutton.

11. "And there sepulchers shall be their houses forever. Their dwelling places to all generations: they have called their lands by their names." They left their riches to others, keeping nothing for themselves but the narrow grave in which they are to lie forever. This will be "their dwelling place to all generations;" to the end of the world. "There've called their lands by their names." No trace of them but the name; foolish mortals endeavor to perpetrate their memory, by calling their estates, or their houses, or books written by them, or by compelling others to keep up their name; thus, hoping to enroll their names in the records of this world, as they cannot expect it in the next.

12. "And man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." Digressing from the senseless and from those who put their trust in riches, the Prophet reproves the whole human race, saying, "and man when he was in honor did not understand;" man, in preference to all other animals, honored by God with intelligence, reason, and free will, stamped with his own image, gifted with an immortal soul, and dominion over all things on earth, did not understand the value of all this, but "is compared to senseless beasts," without understanding; "and is become like to them;" like cattle, is solely bent on the present, regardless of the future; a slave that beastly passions, whose master he should be; regardless of solid and everlasting happiness; seeking for empty and transient pleasures, which she should have thoroughly despised in the hope of thereby securing everlasting happiness.

13. "This way of theirs is a stumbling block to them and afterwards they shall delight in their mouth." He goes on in explaining, or rather deploring the misery of mankind. "This way of theirs is a stumbling block to them." The brutish life they lead, their habits, manners, and customs, are a "stumbling block" to them, it trips them up, utterly ruins them; and, to cap the climax of their misery, "they shall delight in their mouth;" they praise and applaud themselves and each other, for the crimes they commit, than which no folly can be greater.

14. "They are laid in hell like sheep: death shall feed upon them. And the just shall have dominion over them in the morning: and their help shall decay in hell from their glory." Having said that men become like senseless beasts, by reason of their sins, he now states that theirs would be similar to such beasts, indicating the number, as well as the helplessness of those, who, after death, will be consigned to hell. Sheep are driven in flocks into the fold, and are brought to the slaughter house, without being capable of offering any resistance. Thus, God has less trouble in consigning the wicked, however rich and powerful they may have been, to everlasting punishment in hell, than would a shepherd to shut in his sheep, or hand them over to the butcher. "Death shall feed upon them;" death, like the wolf, will seize upon the wicked and

ye nations," because what I have to say concerns you all; "give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world," an explanation of the preceding sentence, as if he said: don't hear in a cursory way, in an ordinary way, but take it in carefully, keep it there for future reflection. "Ye inhabitants of the world" is an explanation of "all ye nations," which latter expression may lead one to think he referred only to the Gentiles, to guard against which he adds, "all ye inhabitants of the world," to show that he addressed Jews as well as Gentiles, whether assembled in cities or scattered on hillside and in valleys. Furthermore, to embrace future as well as the present generations, he speaks more generally, saying, "all you that are earthborn and sons of men, "hear ye all, all you sprung from the earth; for all past, present, and future men have one common mother, earth, one common father, Adam; "both rich and poor together," to show that what he has to say applies to all, rich and poor, for there shall be no more regard of persons in the assembly now about to be addressed, than there will be on the last day, when we will need all called up for judgment.

3. "My mouth shall speak wisdom; and the meditation of my heart understanding."

4. "I will incline my ear to a parable; I will open my proposition on the psaltery." The second part of the preface, in which she seeks to arrest the attention of his audience from two sources, from the dignity of the matter, and the dignity of the teachers. The dignity of the matter arises from its consisting of wisdom and prudence, and the language being plain and simple, but metaphorical and abstruse, such as becomes important subjects, in order that it may not be despised, and that it may not be understood save by the attentive and the intelligent. "My mouth shall speak wisdom," will teach what is that makes a man wise; and the meditation of my heart, understanding;" what I think of in my heart, we given expression to, will teach what is calculated to make men understand; is being an explanation of the first part of the verse, for, having said at first, "my mouth shall speak," for fear we should suppose his mouth would speak at random, he adds, "and the meditation of my heart;" that is to say, my mouth shall utter what my heart shall have seriously reflected on. Having said that he would "speak wisdom," for fear anyone may suppose he intended the wisdom of the world, he adds, "understanding," or prudence. He, therefore, gives us to understand that his discourse is about to be on matters full of wisdom and prudence; the former contributing to make man wise in the contemplation of first causes, and the latter prudent in the direction of his path through life. He now comes to the dignity of the teacher, saying, "I will incline my ear to a parable," I will listen to the Spirit speaking to me, and implicitly obey him; and then, "I will open my proposition on the psaltery," the proposition revealed to me and inspired by God. By parable is meant something obscure, that requires attention and study to understand it; such is the force of the word in Hebrew, and the word is applied, in Judges 14, to the riddle by Samson, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness;" "on the psaltery;" to prepare his audience, he will unite music with his discourse,

in order to soothe their minds, that they may apply, with the greater attention, to his most important communications.

5. “Why shall I fear in the evil day? The iniquity of my heel shall encompass me.” Now comes the parable, introduced by so elaborate a preface, proposed by the Prophet to the whole human race, and explained also by him. The explanation, one would think, is as mysterious as is the parable, especially to worldlings, but not so to the true servants of God; “why shall I fear in the evil day?” As if he said: what can frighten me on the day of judgment, which is called in Soph. 1, “a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of the trumpet and alarm.” In other words, what will make me secure on that dreadful day of judgment, when my final lot, for good or for evil, will be cast? A great question certainly, and intimately affecting all. He explains his own parable, however, by adding at once, “the iniquity of my heel shall encompass me.” What will terrify me on that day will not be my poverty, for the Judge is incorruptible; will not be my lowness of birth, for he has no regard of persons; the malice of my advocate or witnesses will not harm, because all is known to the Judge; nor will the rank of power of my accusers, because the Judge has no fear of anyone; no sort of iniquity will harm me, save and except the “iniquity of my heel;” that is, the iniquities of my old age, the iniquity persevered into the end of my life, which, if found in me on that awful day, “will encompass me,” like a mound or a wall, leaving me no possible opening for escape, for then there will be no room for penance or for pardon. On the other hand, what would render me secure and fearless on the same evil day, will not be riches, or nobility, the talent of my advocates or the power of my friends, but justice alone, and not every sort of justice, but the justice “of my heel;” that is, of the end of my life, whether I may have kept it from my youth, or obtained it by real and sincere penance.

6. “They did trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches.” The Prophet having laid down, that for one to be secure in the evil day he has nothing but sin the fear, now adds, that many who do not understand the matter confide in their own strength, and thus glory in the riches they have acquired with great trouble, thinking there could be no fear of them in the evil day; and he proves that they utterly mistaken, and that his parable and its explanation is most true. “They that trust in their own strength,” they who, relying on their own strength and power, as many of the children of the present day do, and fear not the evil day, consequently “glory in the multitude of their riches,” thinking that all things can be overcome and conquered by them. In fact, this word attaches great importance to wealth and riches, so that the wise man truly said, “all things obey money.” But in the evil day there will be no such thing as money, nor, if there were, would it be of any help or value; and therefore, the Prophet adds,

7. “No brother can redeem nor shall man redeem: he shall not give to God his ransom.” He shows how idle is any trust or confidence in money, for “no brother can redeem,” however great his riches may be, nobody will be able to redeem his brother by riches on the evil day; and if one’s brother cannot do it, can anyone else do it?

“He shall not give to God his ransom;” however rich or opulent he maybe, and though he may offer all in mitigation of God’s anger on the evil day, they will neither avail for himself nor for anyone else. For, as the Lord asks in the gospel, “what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” For the value of a human soul is beyond all the wealth of the world and thus blood of the only begotten of God, as being of infinite value, could alone purchase it, and thus he who, in contempt of this great favor, chooses to remain captive to the evil one, will come to the evil day and “will not give to God his ransom.”

8. “Nor the price of the redemption of his soul: and shall labor forever,”

9. “And shall still live unto the end.” “The price of the redemption of the soul” is an explanation of the last expression, “you shall not give to God his ransom,” a price the Son of God alone could pay; and the meaning of the passage, according to St. Augustine is he that “trusted in the multitude of his riches” will “labor forever,” because his labor will be endless: and his life will be short, because it will be to the end, and no longer. Thus they who trust in their riches will not only neglect paying the price of their redemption, but they will labor for all eternity with the rich man in his torments; and they will lead a life of voluptuousness, which alone seems life to them, “unto the end” appointed and ordained by God.

10. “You shall not see destruction, when he shall see the wise dying: the senseless and the fool shall perish together; and they shall leave their riches to strangers.” Having said that the wicked man would so live on to the end of his natural life, he adds, in continuation of it, “he shall not see destruction when he shall see the wise dying.” He will continue the same career to his very old-age, even though he may see that just and the wise cut off, and hurried away prematurely. For it often happens, that God gives length of days to those who are not to enjoy eternal life; as we see in the case of Lazarus, who did before the rich glutton. But, however prolonged the life of the wicked may be, it will ultimately have an end; and then is realized, “the senseless and the fool shall perish together;” and, thus, the meaning of the verse is: “he shall not see destruction;” though the fool, who trusts in his riches, may see many dying before him, he, too will ultimately come to the end of his natural life. St. Basil says the difference between the senseless and the fool is, that the former lacks sense to go through the ordinary business of life; while the latter, by no means lacks such worldly sense, but is sadly deficient as regards spirituals. “And they shall leave their riches to strangers.” He called those who trust in their riches “senseless and fools,” as did our Lord in the Gospel, when he said to a certain rich man, “thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? He, therefore, proves them to be real fools, because they know not how to make use of their riches, and they leave them to people of whom they have no knowledge whatever. “The senseless and the fool shall perish,” and, to heighten their folly, their riches will pass to strangers. St. Augustine justly observes, that even though the riches may pass to children or to nephews, they too, may be often called strangers, for they readily forget those gone before them; and even though they should chance not