

said, "but that the word may be fulfilled, which is written in their law; they have hated me without cause."

END OF PSALM 119

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.

PSALMS *(SONGS OF PRAISE)*

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 119

A prayer in tribulation.

1. In my trouble I cried to the Lord: and he heard me.
2. O Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips, and a deceitful tongue.
3. What shall be given to thee, or what shall be added to thee, to a deceitful tongue.
4. The sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals that lay waste.
5. Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar:
6. My soul hath been long a sojourner.
7. With them that hated peace I was peaceable: when I spoke to them, they fought against me without cause.

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: 119

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "In my trouble I cried to the Lord; and he heard me." Among the various calamities of this our exile, one is specially to be deplored, and that is the deceitful tongue of those among whom we are obliged to mix; and the Prophet, in order to instruct his fellow exiles by his example, sings in this Psalm of his having asked for and obtained deliverance from such an evil. "In my trouble," I did not look for help from man, but "I cried," in prayer, "to the Lord," and he, in his mercy, "heard me."

2. "O Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips, and a deceitful tongue." He tells what he prayed for when he cried to the Lord. It was, "O Lord, deliver my soul from wicked lips and a deceitful tongue," one of the greatest and most numerous evils of this our pilgrimage. "Wicked lips" give expression to detraction, railing, calumny, false testimony, and similar expressions against the law of justice; "a deceitful tongue sends forth words of deceit, flattery, pretense, and fraud. We may meet with "wicked lips" without "the deceitful tongue," as when one openly reproaches or calumniates; but when the wicked lips and the deceitful tongue are united, the evil exceeds comprehension, so as scarce to admit of any addition to it, as the next verse will inform us.

3. "What shall be given to thee, or what shall be added to thee, to a deceitful tongue?" He assigns a reason for having asked to be delivered from a deceitful tongue, because it is such a calumny as to admit of no addition to it. For what evil can be given to or added to a deceitful tongue?

4. "The sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals that lay waste." By an elegant metaphor, he explains the enormity of the evil of a deceitful tongue; he says that the words issuing from such a tongue are like arrows that shoot from afar, and with great rapidity, so that they can scarcely be guarded against; and, in order to give greater force and expression to the idea, he adds, that they are not like the arrows shot by an ordinary person, but "by the mighty;" that is, by a strong and robust hand; and, furthermore, that they are "sharp," well steeled and pointed by the maker; and, finally, that they are so full of fire that, like the lightning's of heaven that are discharged from the hands of the Almighty, and are truly both sharp and fiery, they can lay everything waste and desolate. Such are words of deceit, especially when used by the devil to ruin souls, and are called by the apostle "the fiery darts of the most wicked one."

5. "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar." In consequence of so great and so frequent an evil in this our place of peregrination, he sighs for his country, and thus, truly and from his heart, sings the "canticle of ascent," as these fifteen Psalms are called. "Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged;" for the true pilgrim desires rather to be shut out from his body than from his Lord, and therefore, looks upon the present life as entirely too long, inasmuch as it keeps him the longer away from the Lord. "I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar." No wonder I should complain of being detained too long here below, for hitherto "I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar;" with wild and barbarous tribes, that live in tents instead of houses, and are black and swarthy. The word Cedar in Hebrew signifies blackness; and hence, in Canticles, we have the "tents of Cedar" put in opposition to "the curtains of Solomon;" that is, black and rustic tents, to splendid and valuable curtains. And, truly, the cities and palaces of the kings of this world, when compared to the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem, are but so many rustic tents; and, therefore, the holy pilgrim again mourns, saying –

6. "My soul hath been long a sojourner." My exile in a foreign land has been entirely too long. Hence we may infer how few are to be found in those days who chant this gradual Psalm from their heart; whereas most people are so attached to the exile and the tents of Cedar that there is nothing they hear with greater pain than any illusion to their leaving it.

7. "With them that hated peace I was peaceable: when I spoke to them they fought against me without cause." He concludes by assigning a reason for its being a loss to him to have his exile extended, and at the same time explains the expression, "the inhabitants of Cedar;" he there said, "I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar," which he now explained by saying, I have dwelt "with them that hated peace." There is nothing I love more than peace; I have dwelt with people of quite different habits, with the wicked, so wicked that they fought equally with friend and foe; and if, perchance, I ever "spoke to them" about peace it only caused them the more "the fight against me without cause." This Psalm is applicable to all the elect, and especially the Christ, the head of the elect, so far as his human nature is concerned. For he cried to some purpose to his Father, on the night he spent in prayer, and afterwards in the garden, and, finally, on the cross, when God exalted him "and gave him a name above every name." He also truly suffered from "the wicked lips and the deceitful tongue," even to the hour of his death, as can be clearly seen throughout the Gospels. He could say with the greatest truth, "my sojourning is prolonged," whereas, he said in the Gospel, "O incredulous generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" Truly "did he dwell with the inhabitants of Cedar," for though he was light, and, therefore, did not dwell in Cedar, that is, in darkness, still he was seen by the inhabitants of Cedar, and conversed with them. Finally, "he was truly peaceable with them that hated peace," because "when he was reviled he reviled not, when he suffered he threatened not," "and when he spoke to them" on peace, love, on the kingdom of God, they, on the contrary, "fought against him without cause," as our Savior himself remarked, when he