

END OF PSALM 83

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: 83

**The soul aspireth after heaven; rejoicing in the meantime,
in being in the communion of God's church upon earth.**

1. How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!
2. My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.
3. For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones: thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.
4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee forever and ever.
5. Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps,
6. In the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set.
7. For the lawgiver shall give a blessing; they shall go from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.
8. O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob.
9. Behold, O God, our protector; and look on the face of thy Christ.
10. For better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.
11. For God loveth mercy and truth: the Lord will give grace and glory.
12. He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence: O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

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: 83

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"
2. "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." Such are the effusions of a pious soul making for its country, and expressing its desires of coming to its journey's end; such desires proceeding from the happiness to be found in its home, as well as from the troubles to be encountered in its pilgrimage. For the pious soul, whatever may be the amount of its happiness here below, always looks upon itself as miserable and "suffering persecution." For the prosperity of this world is a great temptation, and a persecution. He exclaims, then and that in admiration, "how lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" Oh, what an amount of love have not the pious for your tabernacles, those heavenly mansions of yours, O Lord of Hosts! "Lord of Hosts," what can make your tabernacles more beautiful, or more delightful than the innumerable hosts of angels, endowed with all wisdom, perfection, power, and beauty, the least glimpse of one of whom would suffice to gladden one's whole pilgrimage here below; while the combined brightness and splendor of the entire is but as darkness when compared to the brightness of Him whom we hope there to behold face-to-face. In the Jerusalem of the Jews there was only one tabernacle; and therefore, as he speaks here of many, he cannot possibly be supposed to refer to that one of timber, gilded over and made by the hands of man; but to those heavenly "tabernacles not made by human hands," of which the Lord speaks when he says, "there are many mansions in my Father's house." My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." Having said that the tabernacle of the Lord were an object of great affection to the pious in their exile, he now ranks himself amongst them, saying, "my soul longeth and fainteth," when I reflect on the courts of the Lord, they considered their beauty; I so long for them, that I languish, decline, and faint away. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." The give us an idea of the extent of his longings and of his love, he tells the effects produced by them, for when one is stricken by a vehement love or desire, they not only turn over in their mind, but they express their admiration of the object of their love. "My heart and my flesh;" that is, my mind and my tongue have united in the praise of the living God, the increate and infinite beauty, for whom I sigh. This latter part of the verse by no means contradicts the first: though he speaks of his soul fainting there, rejoicing here, for various are the feelings of those in love; they one-time deplore the absence of the one beloved, and faint away; and soon again they rejoice when they have got back

“loves mercy” shows mercy, and that mercy makes him confer grace; and he that loves truth, or, in other words, justice, will faithfully render what he has promised to those that love them.

12. “He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence: O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” He repeats his assertion, but restricts the promise of grace and glory to those who tread the path of innocence; as if he said: God, who abounds in mercy and justice, will not deprive those who, once justify, tread the path of innocence, and who persevere in advance in faith, hope, and charity, of those blessings of grace and glory which alone deserve the name of blessings. If they do not, if they retrograde in tread the path of iniquity, they will fall from grace, they come to confusion instead of glory. He concludes the Psalm by turning to God, saying, “Lord of Hosts,” of armies, “Blessed is the man who trusteth in thee,” with that true, solid confidence that usually springs from true faith and a good conscience.

their beloved, and burst forth in praise of it or him. He calls them “the living God,” not only to distinguish him from the idols, “that have eyes, and see not; who have ears and hear not,” by reason of their being inanimate things; but also because God alone can be said, strictly speaking, to live; for, to live is to have the power motion from one’s self, and not from another; but created things are said to live, because they have in them a certain principle of motion, yet without God they have none; for, “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” His life, then, is such as to require no impulse from any other being, that is to say, he has from himself alone the power of understanding and willing; being himself the source of life, not deriving it from anyone, but bestowing it on all. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

3. “For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones: thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.” The holy pilgrim’s anxious wish was for a home in heaven; but, as he will have to wait a while for that, he consoles himself with having found a little nest on earth, the altars of his Lord; for we have nothing in this world so calculated to give us an idea of the tabernacle above as thy holy altar. It brings before the memory a host of heavenly recollections. There is daily offered that Lamb of God, who, by his blood, opened the kingdom of heaven to believers. There a pledge of the glory to come is given us. There we stand nearer to God, and I pray to him with more earnestness. There we pour forth our whole hearts, and chant his praises more devoutly and more attentively than in any other place, or at any other time. He therefore says, “the sparrow hath found herself a house.” All animals look for some place of rest for themselves, and even the little sparrow has found a house for itself; its little nest, “and the turtle, a nest for itself;” not only have those animals, such as the sparrow, accustomed to the society of man, got a dwelling for themselves, but even the turtle, a solitary animal, has too her nest, in which to place your young ones, and rest in security with them. “Thy altars,” as for my part, whether my life be an active one, like that of the sparrow, or contemplative like that of the turtle, “thy altars” are my rest, where I may securely rest for a while, and lay up my vows, my chaste desires and pious meditations, my prayers and hymns of praise, as so many young ones. “My God and my King,” you who direct me while I stray here and there, like a sparrow, and who consoles me, while I mourn like the solitary turtle.

4. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee forever and ever.” He said he found a nest wherein to rest for a while, but being admonished from that very nest, of the superiority of the house of eternity to any temporary rest, he exclaims, “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord.” However happy I may be for a brief moment in this little nest of mine, they alone are truly happy, they alone enjoy perfect rest, “who dwell in that house of yours,” where alone are to be found riches, glory, many mansions, and everlasting rest and peace.

5. "Blessed is the man whose help is from thee; in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps"

6. "In the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set." Having spoken of the happiness of him who dwells in the house of the Lord, he adds, that he, too, is happy, if not actually so, at least, by reason of the hope that is in him, when, depending on the divine assistance, he firmly resolves in his heart not to remain in this valley here below, but to be always ascending higher and higher, through successive grades of virtue, until he shall have arrived at the place which God has marked out as the end of his labor, eternal happiness. "Blessed is the man whose help" is not a reliance on his own strength, but "from thee," O Lord. "In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears" made up his mind while a mortal in this valley of tears, to seek daily to arrive at a higher degree of perfection "in the place which he hath set" in this valley of tears in which he set himself by sin; for God set him in Paradise, but he set himself in the valley of tears by sin.

7. "For the lawgiver shall give a blessing; they shall go from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion." The Prophet now explains how the just man, in ascending through the valley of tears, will arrive at that place of rest that is established by God, and points out the beginning, the means and the end of such ascension. Justification is the beginning, for without it the law cannot be fulfilled, the observance of the law is the means, and the beatific vision the end. "For the lawgiver shall give a blessing;" God, who gave the law, and made it the way to life, for he said, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments:" he will also "give a blessing," an abundance of grace through the Holy Ghost, by justifying us from sin, pouring his love into us, and expelling all fear. "They should go from virtue to virtue." Having received his grace and his blessing, they will make daily advances in virtue, and acquire more strength to resist every temptation and overcome every difficulty; for virtue is to be understood here as strength or power. "The God of gods shall be seen in Sion," and thus they will, at length, arrive at the heavenly Mountain Sion, where they shall see, face-to-face, the one true God, who is not only that God of heaven and earth, but also of the Angels, of the Blessed, who, to a certain extent, are gods.

8. "O Lord, God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob." He now returns to his original longings to form one of those who ascend from the valley of tears, and happily proceed on their road, going from virtue to virtue. "O Lord, God of Hosts," who aboundest in power, strength, and virtue, "hear my prayer," in which I ask you for the grace of going from virtue to virtue, and by such virtue to be strengthened in the interior man. "Give ear, O God of Jacob," you that are the God of your faithful, the children of Jacob, hear one who is in spirit one of the children of Jacob.

9. "Behold, O God, our protector; and look on the face of thy Christ." He had already implored the divine assistance, on the grounds of God's power being boundless, and his being most concerned for the welfare of his people; he now repeats the prayer in a different form, but with greater emphasis. Instead of "God of Hosts," he now calls him "our protector," or, as it is in the Hebrew, "our shield," indicating that God is all powerful to protect his people, and that he is like a shield to defend them. Instead

of "hear my prayer," he says here, "behold," as much as to say, not only hear me, but look on me, and see the dangers by which I am surrounded. In the previous verse he said, "give ear, O God of Jacob;" for which he now says, "look on the face of thy Christ," look for the true Prince of your people, the Messiah, the Lamb without Spot, who taketh away the sins of the world, and, for his sake, protect us. How could David thus refer to Christ, who was not then incarnate? He had not then, as "mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, given himself a redemption for all," 1 Timothy 2. Christ's merits were before God from eternity, hence he is called in the Apocalypse, "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," because, from the very beginning of the world, God grant many favors, especially spiritual ones, to his servants, through the previous merits of the passion of Christ. "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," Ephesians 1.

10. "For better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." The holy soul, in his exile from God, in order to show that he did not ask for protection against the evils of this world, but against the temptations and spiritual dangers that beset us on our journey to the house of God, now adds, that such is the happiness of that heavenly country, that one day in it would be preferable to thousand days elsewhere, and that he would prefer the last day in it, to the first in any other place; two reflections that cannot, if seriously considered, fail to produce the most lively affections in a pure heart. The word "for" assigns a reason for his having expressed with so much affection, "behold, O God, our protector," as if he said: I am so extremely anxious for your protection in this my journey to my country; for, should I fail in getting there, the loss would be too great, "for better is one day" in those heavenly courts, than days without end elsewhere. "I have chosen to be an object in the house of my God." So sublime and grand is the everlasting house prepared for us in heaven, that I would prefer the last place in it, even at the very door of it, "rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners," in the palaces of the great, because while no iniquity will find a place in one house, it abounds in the other, and, when we compare all these grand mansions to the everlasting house of heaven, they may truly be called tents or tabernacles, without a sure foundation, without permanence, for these are not the tabernacles alluded to in the first verse of the Psalm, the Hebrew for both being quite different.

11. "For God loveth mercy and truth: the Lord will give grace and glory." In this and the following verse the Prophet consoles the just man in his journey up through the valley of tears, and longing for his true country; for he promises him grace and glory from God; grace through which he will be justified, and an advance in justice, as he ascends from virtue to virtue; and glory, through which he will be glorified, when he shall have arrived at Mount Sion, where he shall behold God face-to-face, and no longer through faith; and he proves that God will give such grace and glory, because "he loves mercy and truth." For he that