

END OF PSALM 84

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: 84

The coming of Christ to bring peace and salvation to man.

1. Lord, thou has blessed thy land: thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.
2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people: thou hast covered all their sins.
3. Thou hast mitigated all thy anger: thou hast turned away from the wrath of indignation.
4. Convert us, O God our Savior: and turn off thy anger from us.
5. Wilt thou be angry with us: or wilt thou extend thy wrath from generation to generation?
6. Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life: and thy people shall rejoice in thee.
7. Show us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation.
8. I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me: for he will speak peace unto his people: And unto his saints: and unto them that are converted to the heart.
9. Surely his salvation is near to them that fear him: that glory may dwell in our land.
10. Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed.
11. Truth is sprung out of the earth: and justice hath lookdown from heaven.
12. For the Lord will give goodness; and our earth shall yield her fruit.
13. Justice shall walk before him; and shall set his steps in the way.

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: 84

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Lord, thou hast blessed thy land: thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob." The Prophet, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, discloses the eternal decree of God regarding the future salvation of man, in the beginning of the Psalm, telling us the first cause and ultimate effect of such salvation. Love was the first cause and from that love through which God loved mankind. For no reason can be assigned why "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," John 3, through whom we may be redeemed, "and blessed with all spiritual blessings," Ephesians 1, but the will of God alone, or, rather, his good pleasure and mercy. The ultimate effect of such salvation will consist in complete delivery from captivity, which will be thoroughly accomplished in the Resurrection only, when we shall arrive at the liberty of the glory of the children of God. We are at present only partially free; but we are in expectation of the redemption of our bodies that is to set us free from all corruption and necessity. He, therefore, begins by saying, "Lord, thou hast blessed thy land;" you cursed the land you created and gave to man to inhabit, on account of the sin of the first man; but I know, from revelation, that you also, in your own mind, by your own decree, "Blessed thy land;" decreed in your own good pleasure to visit and bless it with all manner of blessings and graces, by sending your only begotten, "full of grace and truth," into that land which you created. "Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob." In the same eternal decree, having been appeased by the death of your Son, which you foresaw, thou hast turned away, or put an end to the captivity of Jacob, your people, so that they may thenceforth enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God. By Jacob the Prophet means, not only the people of Israel, but the whole human race, "who are, like the branches of the wild olive tree, engrafted into the good olive tree;" and, like "living stones, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

2. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people: thou hast covered all their sins." He now explains the manner in which God, by his blessing the land, put an end to the captivity of Jacob, his says it was by remitting the sins of his people. For, as sin was the cause of their being held in bondage, the remission of the sin procured their liberty. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people." In your own mind, and by your own decree, thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, for which iniquity you had given them up to the devil, as you would to the minister of justice. "Thou hast covered all their sins;" the same idea repeated; "thou has covered;" hidden them, wrapt them up, so that you may not see and punished them: but, as nothing can be

wisdom before him, as it is in Psalm 88, "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face;" as in Isaias 58, "and thy justice shall go before thy face;" and thus "shall set his steps in the way," shall enter on his pilgrimage to bring many pilgrims back to their country.

if the salvation of the body be near to them that fear him, and God's glory be thereby greatly augmented, with much more reason will the salvation of the soul be near to those that fear him. "For to those who will receive him, he will give power to become sons of God," John 1, and thence his glory will be made manifest, "as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

10. "Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed." He now reveals another mystery that will be accomplished on the come of the Messiah; that is, the union of mercy and justice, which seems so opposed to each other; the one prompting to punish, the other to forgive; for Christ's passion and suffering was meant to deliver the human race in mercy, while it made the fullest satisfaction to the divine justice. "Mercy and truth have met each other." They met in the time of the Messiah, whereas at other times they seemed to move in contrary directions. "Justice and peace have kissed;" the justice that inflicts punishment, previously called truth and peace, which then was called mercy, will be joined in the bonds of the strictest friendship; and, as it were, kiss each other.

11. "Truth is sprung out of the earth: and justice hath looked down from heaven." He now touches on the mystery of the Incarnation, making use of the past for the future tense, as is usual with the prophets. "Truth is sprung out of the earth." Christ, who is the truth, will be born of the Virgin Mary, "and justice hath looked down from heaven." Then also justice from heaven will be made manifest, because, on the birth of Christ, true justice began to come down from heaven, and man began to be justified by faith in Christ; as also, because of the coming of Christ, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and injustice," for the extent of God's anger and hatred of sin would never have been thoroughly known, had not God decreed that it should be expiated by the death of his only Son: and, even, we should never have known the extent of God's anger to the sinner on the day of judgment, had we not seen the amount and the extent of God's sufferings in atoning for the sins of others, "for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" Says our Lord, Luke 23.

12. "For the Lord will give goodness: and our earth shall yield her fruit." He still treats of the mystery of the Incarnation, showing that truth could spring out of the earth; not in the manner of the seed that we sow and cultivate, but in the manner of the natural flowers that grow spontaneously, with no other culture than the beams of the sun, and the rains of heaven. "For the Lord will give goodness," he will send his Holy Spirit from heaven, who will overshadow a virgin, and thus our land, which was never ploughed nor sown, and was altogether an untouched virgin, will yield her fruit. Hence, he says, in the Canticle of canticles, "I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys."

13. "Justice shall walk before him; and shall set his steps in the way." The Prophet concludes by showing that Christ will be so replete with justice and sanctity, that the rays of his justice would go before him, and by their light shed the way to complete progress in this gloomy valley of our mortality. "Justice shall walk before him." Christ, the sun and true light of the world, will send the rays of his justice and

hid or concealed from God, when he, therefore, forgives sin, he extinguishes it altogether; so that it has no longer any existence whatever, and when God is said to have cover sin, he does so, not as one would cover a sore with a plaster, thereby merely hiding it only; but he covers it with a plaster that effectually cures and removes it altogether. "All their sins;" to show it was not one sin, such as original sin, common to all, that was forgiven, but that the personal and peculiar sins of each individual were indicated.

3. "Thou hast mitigated all thy anger: thou hast turned away from the wrath of thy indignation." He now assigns a reason for God's having forgiven the iniquity of his people, and says it arose from his having been appeased, and having laid aside his anger. For, as it was anger that prompted God thus to revenge himself, so, when he was appeased, he was led to forgive us; and that was effected "by the lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world;" and that immaculate Lamb was given to us through the good pleasure and mercy of him "who so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son for it." Here, then, is the order of our redemption. The benediction, or the good pleasure of God, gave us his Son as a Savior; the Son, by his death, appeased God's anger, and made satisfaction to his justice for the sins of the whole world; God, having been thus appeased, forgave the sins, and the remission of the sins put an end to the captivity; and the Holy Ghost revealed the whole of this mystery, so concealed in the mind of God, to his Prophet; and he describes it to us in those three verses. The expression, "all thy anger," signifies that the redemption effected by our Savior was all sufficient and most effectual, and it also conveys that the liberty we shall enjoy hereafter will be most full, complete, and entire, leaving not a trace of punishment or misery, for such proceed from God's anger. "Thou hast turned away from the wrath of thy indignation," is a repetition of the same idea.

4. "Convert us, O God our Savior: and turn off thy anger from us." The Prophet, speaking in the person of God's people, begins now to pray for the execution and completion of the divine decree, and first begs of God to mitigate his anger; the first effect of which would be the beginning of our salvation; that is to say, his divine assistance, through which our conversion to God commences; for we cannot be converted to God, unless his grace go before us, and by calling, enlightening, assisting, and moving, convert us. He, therefore, says, "convert us, O God our Savior." O God our Savior, begin the work of our salvation, by inspiring us with the holy desire of conversion. And that, in your mercy, you may commence it, "turn off thy anger from us." Be reconciled to us, and forget the offenses that have estranged us from you.

5. "Wilt thou be angry with us forever: or wilt thou extend thy wrath from generation to generation?" He perseveres in the petition, saying, we have borne your anger long enough; do not defer the gift of your mercy, and the restoration of your peace. "Wilt thou be angry with us?" Will your enmity to the human race be everlasting? "Or wilt thou extend the wrath from generation to generation?" A thing that does not accord with your infinite clemency.

6. "Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life: and thy people shall rejoice in thee." He tells us the effects that will follow from being reconciled with God; to man will come life, to God praise. "Thou wilt turn, O God;" by laying aside your anger, and on being reconciled, will "bring us to life;" for "the wages of sin is death; but the grace of God everlasting life, in Christ Jesus our Lord;" "and thy people," come to life and strength through so great a favor, "show rejoice in thee," and joyously chant your praise.

7. "Show us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation." Having asked that the divine wrath may be mitigated; and having asked for that reconciliation and regeneration that always accompanies remission of sin, he now asks for the coming of the Savior, through whom we will be brought clearly to see and to behold God's kindness and mercy to us, of which the apostle says, "the grace of God hath appeared to all men;" and again, "the goodness and kindness of our Savior God appeared." For who can for a moment doubt the care that God has for mankind, and the extent of his warmest love, when he sent his only begotten Son to redeem us by his precious blood from the captivity of the devil? "Show us, O Lord, thy mercy;" make us plainly see and feel by experience, that mercy through which you determined in your mind, from eternity, to bless thy land; "and grant us thy salvation." Send us your son for a Savior, for then you will clearly show unto all the extent of your mercy, goodness, and grace. St. Augustine, taken a moral view of this passage, says that God shows us his mercy when he persuades us, and makes us see and understand that we are nothing, and can do nothing, of ourselves; but that it is through his mercy we exist at all, or can do anything we go through; we thus are neither proud nor puffed up, but are humble in our own eyes; and it is to such people the Savior gives his grace.

8. "I will hear what the Lord God will speak to me: for he will speak peace unto his people: and to his Saints: and unto them that are converted to the heart." To convince us of the truth of what he now means to express, the Prophet here reminds us that he speaks not from himself, but what has been revealed to him, and that he is only announcing what he has heard from the Lord. "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me;" that is, I will tell whatever I shall hear; and, therefore, having laid my petition before him, I will hear his answer to make it known to others. "What he will speak to me;" to give us to understand that when God speaks to the Prophet, he does it interiorly, and spiritually. For the Holy Ghost, who abides in the prophets, speaks to them through their heart, and then, through their tongues, to the ears of mankind. The expression, "I will hear," besides attention, signifies a desire to hear as it were, to say, I will most willingly and attentively hear; for God usually says nothing but what is good and useful; "for he will speak peace unto his people." The reason I have for hearing him with pleasure and with attention is, because I know he will speak peace to his people. The summary, then, of God's message to his people is the announcement and promise of peace through the coming of the Messiah, for which the Prophet asked when he said, "show us, O Lord, thy mercy, and grant us thy salvation." God, then, will grant a Savior, and through him, will announce and establish a most perfect peace; hence he is styled "the Prince of Peace;" and, as the apostle says, "making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven." Now peace comprehends all God's

favors; and we shall never be in perfect possession of it until we shall have arrived at the heavenly Jerusalem, which is interpreted the vision of peace. Peace is opposed to war, in which we shall be mixed up, until "death is swallowed up in victory, and this mortal shall have put on immortality." Then there will be an end to that war with our vices and concupiscence's, with the princes of darkness, with all our difficulties and necessities. For, while we live here below, "the life of man is a warfare upon earth," however we may desire, as far as in ourselves lies, to be at peace when all men. "And unto his Saints, and unto them that are converted to the heart." He now explains the expression, "to his people;" God promised peace to his people, but not the whole of them; for they are composed of good and bad, and the bad can have no peace. For, "much peace have they that love thy law;" while, "the wicked have no peace, saith the Lord;" and, when he says, "unto them that are converted to the heart," he tells us who the saints are to whom peace is promised. For sanctity, and consequently peace, then begins when man turns from exterior to interior matters; and, therefore, Isaias says, "return ye transgressors to the heart;" and of the prodigal son is said, "and returning to himself, he said." Man begins to return to himself, or to return, if you will, to his heart, when he begins to reflect within himself on the vanity of all things here below, and how trifling and how short-lived is the pleasure to be derived from sin; and on the contrary, how noble virtue is, and of what value are the goods of eternity. In a little while man begins to advance by degrees, when he comes to consider and judge of externals, not by the aid of his own sense, or the discourses of the children of the world; but, "returning to his heart," he consults sound reason on everything, consults the faith that has been divinely inspired, consults the truth itself, which is God. Finally, that man is truly converted to the heart, and begins to taste that peace "that surpasses all understanding," who raises a tabernacle in his heart to God, and, on the wings of contemplation, rises from the image, the soul of man, to the reality; God himself; and beholding the infinite beauty of his Creator, is so inflamed and carried away by his love as to despise the whole world beside, and unite himself to God exclusively in the bonds of love, totally indifferent to, and forgetful of, the whole world. No pressure from abroad can disturb one so disposed.

9. "Surely his salvation is near to them that fear him: that glory may dwell in our land." On the coming of the Messiah peace will be preached, but the establishment will be delayed for some time. However, salvation, which means the power of healing and performing other miracles, will be always at hand, and available to those who believe in him, and have a pious and reverential fear of him. Hence, great glory will accrue to God, for all who see his wonderful works will praise and magnify him; many proofs of which can be read in the Gospels; and it is to it the Prophet alludes when he says, "surely his salvation is near to them that fear him;" that is to say, the salvation of God, of Christ himself, the Savior, will be at hand to save, through his power, all that fear him; all that worship him with a holy fear; "thy glory may dwell in our land;" those numerous miracles will be performed with a view to making God's glory known, and to dwelling in that land of promise to which the Savior will be sent specially. And