

praising God for his providence, he again exhorts them to praise at to sing to him, "sing ye to the Lord with praise;" begin your praise by singing a hymn and then "sing on the harp;" follow it up by playing on the harp. In a spiritual point of view it means, that, after praising God with our lips, we should follow it up by our good works, so that there should be no discordance between the tongue and the hands, and that it may not be said of us, as of the Pharisees, "they say and do not."

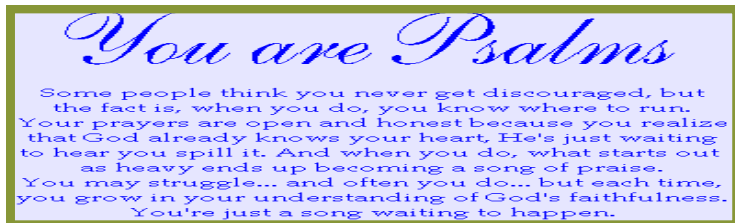
8. "Who covereth the heaven with clouds and prepareth rain for the earth. Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men." He tells that the subject of his praise now will be God's providence, that sometimes obscures the whole firmament with clouds, not for the purpose of shutting out the light of the sun from us, but in order to prepare the rain necessary for the earth, without which the earth would yield no fruit. In a spiritual sense, God "covers the heavens with clouds" when he shortens the days of our prosperity, in order that the rain of the grace of God may descend upon us in our trouble, through patience and humility. "Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of man." He now explains the use of such rain, it making the grass to grow on the mountains, and the herbs that main uses for food. The expression, "who maketh to grow," implies that both earth and rain would be of no use without God's cooperation; nay more, that, as the rain could not be had but from the clouds, and that through God, so the rain itself would not produce the herbs but through God. The expression, "on the mountains," means the necessity they are under of having much rain, but the plains and the valleys may be irradiated, while the mountains cannot.

9. "Who giveth to beasts their food; and to the young ravens that call upon him." He proceeds in recording God's providence in regard of the beasts and of the birds, with a view to let man see that he will never be forsaken by God in his providence. The same argument is made use of in the Gospel; thus giving us to understand that the God who so bounteously feeds the wild beasts and the young ravens will never desert those made in his own image and likeness.

10. "He shall not delight in the strength of the horse: nor take pleasure in the legs of a man."

11. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; and in them that hope in his mercy." Having said that God provides for the young ravens that call on him, he concludes this Psalm by telling God that it is not the proud, who confide in their own strength, that are grateful to him, but the humble, who fear him and confide in him; who may be compared to the young ravens, who, conscious of their own infirmity, seek, by croaking, the get help from others. "He shall not delight in the strength of the horse." God has no regard for, takes no delight in, the pleasure of the horse, when men take so much pride in it. "Nor take pleasure in the legs of a man;" not does it please him to look at the handsome legs of a robust man, when men seem to confide in them to the extent of excluding God's providence from having any share in protecting them; but "the Lord hath pleasure in them that fear him;" what the humble, who tremble at his commands, and put their hope, not in their own strength, but in God's mercy.

END OF PSALM 146



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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: 146

An exhortation to praise God for His benefits.

1. Praise ye the Lord, because psalm is good: to our God be joyful and comely praise.
2. The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem: he will gather together the dispersed of Israel.
3. Who health the broken of heart, and bindeth up their bruises.
4. Who telleth the number of the stars; and calleth them all by their names.
5. Great is our Lord, and great is his power and of his wisdom there is no number.
6. The Lord lifteth up the meek; and bringeth the wicked down even to the ground.
7. Sing ye to the Lord with praise: sing to our God upon the harp.
8. Who covereth the heaven with clouds; and prepareth rain for the earth. Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men.
9. Who giveth to beasts their food; and to the young ravens that call upon him.
10. He shall not delight in the strength of the horse: nor take pleasure in the legs of a man.
11. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; and in them that hope in his mercy.

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: 146

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Praise ye the Lord, because Psalm is good: to our God be joyful and comely praise." The Prophet exhorts all to praise God; because it is most agreeable to him, and of the greatest advantage to us. "To our God be joyful and comely praise." See that the praise be in a joyful strain, and "comely," yet still in a becoming, decent manner, befitting the majesty of that God to whom it is offered. There can be no doubt of the benefits the chanting of God's praise confers on us; because, if he who prays to God derives much benefit therefrom, why should he not, too, who praises him. Secondly, such praise tends to raise the soul from the things of this world to those of the world above. Thirdly, it becomes a sort of foretaste of the bliss of heaven, and unites us with the Angels and Saints. Fourthly, it is most agreeable by reason of its proceeding from love; but nothing is sweeter to the lover than to praise his beloved. Fifthly, it is of much benefit to us; because we thereby pay the tribute that is due of us; for it is only but just that we should praise the source of all good, and return thanks to our supreme benefactor. Hence, in the holy Sacrifice, when the priest says, "let us return thanks to the Lord our God," he is answered, "it is meet and just;" and then the priest says, in addition, "it is truly meet, just, right, and conducive to salvation that we always and in all places give thanks to the Lord." Of the fact of our praise being agreeable and pleasing to God there can be no doubt, from the fact of his having created men and Angels for no other purpose, but that they may know, serve, and praise him; hence we read in Isaias 43, "and anyone that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my own glory;" and that cannot be called ambition, being purely justice. Now "God is just, and hath loved justice; his countenance hath beheld righteousness." With that, God is delighted with sacrifice as with a most sweet and agreeable odor; and the sacrifice of praise is the most excellent of all, according to Psalm 49. "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me."

Finally, becoming praise is most pleasing to God; because he is delighted with our blessings, especially with those of much value, such as our virtues, all of which, such as faith, hope, charity, religion, devotion, humility, are brought into play when we offer him our tribute of praise.

2. "The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem: he will gather together the dispersed of Israel." He now commences pointing out the matter from which we are to praise God, and says God should be praised, in the first place, for his kindness towards his people; as if he were to say: praise the Lord, because he built Jerusalem; and "he will gather together the dispersed of Israel;" meaning the children of Israel, scattered through the world. This may apply to the rebuilding of the temple, which had been destroyed by Nabuchodonosor, and which the Jews, upon regaining their liberty from Cyrus and Darius, set out at once about rebuilding, and which David then, in the spirit of prophecy, foresaw. Or it may be understood of the building of the Church, through the apostles, and the gathering the dispersed children of God together; as we read in John 11, "that Jesus should die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed." Finally, it may be understood of the heavenly Jerusalem, that is daily being built up like a city, by the accession of living stones, to

which all the pilgrims, who are now scattered through the plains of Babylon, will be gathered.

3. "Who healeth the broken heart, and bindeth up their bruises." He now tells how the dispersed of Israel will be gathered together. As regards the Babylonian captivity, it means that God would heal the Jews, now nigh brokenhearted, overwhelmed and depressed by innumerable calamities, and would "bind up their bruises," by inspiring Cyrus to harass them no longer, but to restore them to their country. In a more spiritual view of it, God collects the dispersed of Israel when he heals those who are contrite of heart; that is, when despising not the humble and contrite, he heals them from the disease of sin; as David himself explains in Psalm 102, "who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." The expression, "and bindeth up all their bruises," explains the mode in which God deals with such bruises, by binding them up, as the surgeons do. Now, the sacraments are the visible ligatures that God makes use of to bind up our wounds; and as such ligatures are removed when the cure is effected, so, on the Resurrection, when all our diseases shall have been cured, there will be no further need for sacraments.

4. "Who telleth the number of the stars; and calleth them all by their names." He asserts, secondly, that God should be praised by reason of his wisdom. This appears in the infinite number of the stars created by him, that appear countless to us, but of which he has such intimate knowledge that he can call them individually by name, a proof of his great wisdom; and if it did not require great wisdom, God would not have said to Abraham, "number the stars if thou canst;" nor would he have compared the number of the stars to the sand on the seashore, of which Eccles. says, "who hath numbered the sand of the sea." With that he adds, "and calleth them all by their names;" to let us see what a distinct, separate, and intimate knowledge he has of the nature and properties of everyone of them. It also implies their obedience, when from nonexistence they started into existence, at a call. For God, by a call, endows with existence things that previously had no existence; as, in Baruch, "the stars were called, and they said: here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him who made them." Finally, it implies that the stars are like a body of soldiers, who, on being called upon to advance, do so as quickly as possible; as in Isaias 40, "lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these things; who bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names." With great justice, then, does the Prophet add,

5. "Great is our Lord, and great is his power: and of his wisdom there is no number." Here we have not only God's wisdom, but also his power, praised, by reason of his not knowing the number, nature, and properties of the stars, but also by his naming them, and giving them the existence and the power of motion. The expression, "of his wisdom there is no number," means that the things God, in his wisdom knows, are countless. For God's wisdom knows all things past, present, future, and possible; all words, our thoughts, our desires, past, present, future, even to eternity.

6. "The Lord lifteth up the meek; and bringeth the wicked down even to the ground." The third source of God's praise is taken from his justice and his mercy; for the Lord being both pious and merciful, protects the humble and the meek, and exalts them to the very heavens; and, on the contrary, in his justice, humbles and lays low the proud sinners, who would, in imitation of their king, Satan, raise themselves above the stars, leaving them to grovel on the ground in wretchedness and misery.

7. "Sing ye to the Lord with praise: sing to our God upon the harp." Previous to his