

END OF PSALM 80

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: 80

An invitation to a solemn praising of God.

1. Rejoice to God our helper: sing aloud to the God of Jacob.
2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel: the pleasant psaltery with the harp.
3. Blow up the trumpet on the new moon, on the noted day of your solemnity.
4. For it is a commandment in Israel, and a judgment to the God of Jacob.
5. He ordained it for a testimony in Joseph, when he came out of the land of Egypt; he heard a tongue which he knew not.
6. He removed his back from the burdens: his hands had served in baskets.
7. Thou callest upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee: I heard thee in the secret place of tempest: I proved thee at the waters of contradiction.
8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify to thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken to me.
9. There shall be no new god in thee: neither shalt thou adore a strange god.
10. For I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
11. But my people heard not my voice: and Israel hearkened not to me.
12. So let them go according to the desires of their heart: they shall walk in their own inventions.
13. If my people had heard me; if Israel had walked in my ways:
14. I should soon have humbled their enemies, and laid my hand on them that troubled them.
15. The enemies of the Lord have lied to him: and their time shall be.
16. And he fed them with the fat of wheat, and filled them with honey out of the rock.

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: 80

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Rejoice to God our helper: sing aloud to the God of Jacob." The Prophet exhorts us, when we praise God, that we should do it with great interior joy; "for God loveth a cheerful giver;" and if he loves the one who gives cheerfully, much more does he love him who praises cheerfully. Cheerfulness comes from love and from desire; and, therefore, he who sings moodily, and looks upon the divine office as an intolerable burden, rather than a sweet canticle, gives to understand that he has very little affection for him whose praises he chants. "Rejoice to God our helper." Praise God in great exultation, for it is he who can help us on all occasions. "Sing aloud to the God of Jacob;" give your mind to it, and sing his praises with a loud voice.
2. "Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel: the pleasant psaltery with a harp."
3. "Blow up the trumpet on the new moon, and the noted day of your solemnity." He tells them when they are especially to sing their hymns of praise, at the time of new moon; for then the Jews began the month, and held their festivals. "And the noted day of your solemnity," which some will have to be the new moon of September, the most solemn feast of the Jews, while others will have it to be the first of each month, but it matters little which, as the sense is the same.
4. "For it is a commandment in Israel, and a judgment to the God of Jacob."
5. "He ordained it for a testimony in Joseph, when he came out of the land of Egypt; he heard a tongue which he knew not." He assigns a reason for singing with such joy, and bringing in the aid of musical instruments, and that is, because God himself commanded it, when he brought the people out of Egypt. For God, who needs nothing, still wishes for such tribute of praise, and that we should keep up the memory of his benefits. "For it is a command in Israel." We must sing and play or musical instruments, as a mark of joy and thanksgiving, because it has been commanded by God, and the commandment is kept in Israel by God's people, who are so-called from their parent Israel. "And a judgment to the God of Israel;" a repetition of the same idea, for judgment and commandment, and Israel and Jacob, are frequently used in the Scriptures, to express the same idea. He ordained it for a testimony in Joseph, "when he came out of the land of Egypt;" another repetition,

testimony, commandment, and judgment, signifying the same thing, as is also the case with Israel, Jacob, and Joseph. "He heard a tongue which he knew not;" for, up to the delivery of the commandments on Mount Sinai, the people never heard the voice of God speaking to them.

6. "He removed his back from the burdens: his hands had served in baskets." Another favor conferred by God on the Jews in their departure from Egypt. They had been compelled by the Egyptians to the severest labor, in making and burning brick; that was "removed from their backs," they were no longer obliged to bear the heavy loads they had been subjected to in brick making. "His hands had served in baskets," fetching the clay, from which slavery God delivered them.

7. "Thou callest upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee: I heard thee in the secret place of tempest: I proved thee at the waters of contradiction." From this verse to the end, God alternately puts before them his own kindness in their ingratitude. "Thou callest upon me in affliction; and I delivered thee;" when you were laboring under most grievous persecutions in Egypt you called upon me, and I heard you, and I delivered you from such slavery, and brought you out of the country. "I heard thee in the secret place of tempest." I heard you, not only when you dreaded Pharaoh's anger; but also when you dreaded the tempests and plagues you saw inflicted on the Egyptians, for then I put you in a secret place, and protected you, so that the plagues did not harm you. Others will apply it to the invisible protection afforded by God in their passage through the Red Sea, and afterwards in the desert. "I prove thee at the waters of contradiction." After such great favors I tried you, in order to prove your patience and fidelity, by depriving you of water, and I found you impatient and unfaithful, see Numbers 17 and 20, where God deprived them of water for a short time, and, when they murmured and became seditious, brought an abundance of it from the rock for them. The place was called "the waters of contradiction," the people having rebelled against Moses, and contradicted him there.

8. "Hear, O my people, and I will testify to thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken to me."

9. "There shall be no new God in thee: neither shalt thou adore a strange god."

10. "For I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The Prophet, speaking in the person of God, relates what fair conditions he offered, and what ample promises he made his people, if they would adhere to their promises, from which we can judge of the unspeakable goodness of God. "Hear," you Jews, who are "my people," and I will tell you plainly, "I will testify to thee" what I require of you, and what I will give you in return. This much I require of you, and beyond and above all things command, "there shall be no new God in thee," no god who was not worshiped by your fathers. "Neither shalt thou adore a strange god;" a repetition of the

same thing. "For I am the Lord God who bought thee out of the land of Egypt." No better reason could be assigned for the Jewish people not worshiping strange gods, for it was he who redeemed them from captivity, and transferred them from the bondage of Pharaoh, to be his own servants. A consideration that should weigh much more powerfully with Christians and attach them to that God which delivered them from the slavery of the devil, and brought them into the kingdom of his beloved Son. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." A most ample promise, on the part of God, to those who serve him. "Open your mouth" as wide as you can, and the jaws of your desires, and I will satisfy the cravings of your hunger with most delicious food. God alone could make such promise, for nothing created can satisfy the cravings of man's heart. The sight and enjoyment of God, who is the infinite good, and comprehends all good, can thoroughly satisfy us.

11. "But my people heard not my voice: and Israel hearkened not to me." God now complains of the ingratitude of his people, in not excepting such favorable offers. And how truly wonderful it is not, that slaves in this world will fawn to such an extent upon their masters, and think it great condensation on his part to speak to them, or even to look upon them; and yet, Israel, dust and ashes, will not condescend to hear or to attend to the Lord of lords? How truly, then, he said, in Luke 16, "for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

12. "So I let them go according to the desires of their heart: they shall walk in their own inventions." A dreadful, but most just, scourge is here held out by God, to those who despise him; and that is, that sin shall be the punishment of sin to them, that means, they will be suffered continually to lapse into greater sins, until they shall have, at length, come to the lowest depths of misery, of which the apostle thus speaks, Romans 1, "wherefore, God gave them up to the desires of their hearts;" and immediately after he adds, "for this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections;" and again, "God delivered them up to a reprobate sense to do those things which are not convenient." This is the hardness of heart, of which Ecclesiastical 7, speaks, "consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom he hath despised." "So I let them go according to the desires of their own hearts." I let them walk and work, in accordance with their own concupiscence; gave them no discipline, as I would to a child; but, as strangers, I allowed them to tumble down the precipice and be destroyed. "They shall walk in their own inventions." They will not follow the paths of their fathers, nor the straight ways of my law, but they will follow whatever their own inventions or human curiosity may suggest, in the worship of false gods, and will thus fall into all the vices that disgrace human nature, when they are not directed by God's light, supported by his hand, or assisted by his efficacious grace.

13. "If my people heard me; if Israel had walked in my ways."

14. "I should soon have humbled their enemies, and laid my hand on them that troubled them." To show the abundance of the innate mercy of God, he returns now to the promises he made them, which, in the Hebrew, are accomplished by a wish,

as if he said: Oh, that my people had heard me; for truly God is "the father of mercies, and the God of all consolation." Had they heard me, I would have humbled and cast down all those that now afflict her, in such a way that they would never be able to raise their heads again.

15. "The enemies of the Lord have lied to him: and their time shall be forever." The Prophet speaks here, and confirms what God had asserted, "but my people heard not my voice." By his enemies he means the Jews, who from children became enemies, especially when they denied, in presence of Pilate, that Christ was there king; on which Daniel distinctly says, chapter 9, "and the people that shall deny him shall not be his." – "The enemies of the Lord (the rebellious, incredulous Jews) have lied to him;" for they promised, at the foot of Mount Sinai, that they would carry out all his commands; for "the people answered with one voice: we will do all the words of the Lord, which he hath spoken," Exodus 24; and yet they did not do one of them; "and their time shall be;" their punishment will be everlasting, for the fire of hell will never be extinguished.

16. "And he fed them with the fat of wheat, and filled them with honey out of the rock." Behold the great ingratitude of the Jews, who had received so many favors from God, and still "have lied to him." These words may have reference, to the manna that rained down to them in the desert, and the water that gushed from the rock; for that food might have been properly called "the fat of wheat;" because it was the bread of angels, as it is called in Psalm 77; and it had, as we read in Wisdom 16, "the sweetness of every taste;" the honey out of the rock may have been the water; which, to the thirsty Hebrews, was then sweeter than any honey. The whole verse may refer to the land of promise, which, though rocky and mountainous, abounded in wheat, wine, and oil; so Moses writes, Deut. 32, "he sat him upon the high land, that he might eat the fruits of the fields, that he might suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone." The fat of wheat and the honey out of the rock are, however, in much more esteem with Christians, who have, under the appearance of bread, the Body of the Redeemer, and the honey of heavenly wisdom from the rock, no other than the same Christ; and yet, how many, after renouncing the devil, his works, and his pomp's in Baptism, prove false to God, by returning and those very things they renounced; and, after partaking of bread from heaven, and honey from the rock, returns like unclean dogs, to their vomit. They ought to fear the eternity of the punishment in store for them, of the fire that will never be extinguished, of the worm that will never die.