

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: 32

An exhortation to praise God, and to trust in Him.

1. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just: praise becometh the upright.
2. Give praise to the Lord on the harp; sing to him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings.
3. Sing to him a new canticle, sing well unto him with a loud noise.
4. For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done with faithfulness.
5. He loveth mercy and judgment; the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord.
6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were established: and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth:
7. Gathering together the waters of the sea, as in a vessel; laying up the depths in storehouses.
8. Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him.
9. For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.
10. The Lord bringeth to naught the counsels of nations; and he rejecteth the devices of people, and casteth away the counsels of princes.
11. But the counsel of the Lord standeth forever: the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance.
13. The Lord hath looked from heaven: he hath beheld all the sons of men.

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14. From his habitation which he hath prepared, he hath looked upon all that dwell on the earth.
15. He who hath made the hearts of every one of them: who understandeth all their works.
16. The king is not saved by a great army: nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength.
17. Vain is the horse for safety: neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength.
18. Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy.
19. To deliver their souls from death: and feed them in famine.
20. Our soul waiteth for the Lord; for he is our helper and protector.
21. For in him our heart shall rejoice: and in his holy name we have trusted.
22. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped 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: 32

Explanation of the Psalm

1. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just: praise becometh the upright." The rejoicing asked for here, includes the praising of God in joy; that is, praise him in rejoicing, not against your will, or in a sad or negligent manner, but with great affection, rejoicing and exulting in your hearts; and praise him not only internally but externally; because, "praise becometh the upright;" in other words, I specially invite you, ye just, to praise God, because it is the special duty of the just, who are called here the upright, as naturally they are; and with whom God, as being all righteousness, is always pleased. God is never pleased with the crooked or distorted; because his judgments and his actions are always straight and direct, and by no means square with the crookedness of the wicked; and hence, instead of freely praising God, they rather offend and blaspheme him.

2. "Give praise to the Lord on the harp; sing to him with the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings." He again exhorts the just to give God his tribute of praise, not only with their voice, but also with the musical instruments then used by the Jews; in which there is a mystical meaning, that we should praise God, not only by our words, but by our conduct; and especially by the strict observance of the Decalogue, signified by the instrument of ten strings; "That men, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven." Matt. 5.

21. "For in him our heart shall rejoice: and in his holy name we have trusted." The just having responded to the first desire of the Holy Spirit, they now spawned to thee second, viz., that they should "rejoice in the Lord," as has been explained in the first verse of the Psalm. They say they will do so most willingly. "In him our heart shall rejoice;" having hoped in the Lord, they have been assisted and protected by him, and, therefore, having learned from experience, how good and how powerful he is, they "rejoice in him," and "trusting his name."

22. "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee." The Psalm, as is frequently the case, concludes with a prayer, one quite opposite to the last verses, and to the entire Psalm, because it having been repeated that God has mercy on those that confide in him, and the just assert they did confide in him, and by reason of continuous danger, always need continuous mercy, they therefore conclude by, "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us;" let it not cease, but continue; nay, even let new mercies be poured upon us, "as we have hoped in thee," as your goodness led us to expect, and we promised to ourselves.

END OF PSALM 32

3. "Sing to him a new canticle, sing well unto him with a loud noise." By way of epilogue he joins the substance of the two preceding verses in this one. He had said that we should praise him with our voice, and sing to him with our instruments, and reminded us that we should do everything accurately and carefully. "Sing to him a new canticle;" that is a repetition of "rejoice in the Lord, O ye just;" and we are ordered to sing to him, not in one of the old chants, but in "a new canticle;" composed expressly for the occasion. "Sing well unto him with a loud noise," is a repetition of "Give praise to the Lord on the harp," and he orders it to be done, not in the ordinary way, not carelessly, or coldly, but with great music and effect, to show the importance of the occasion; thus, the word, loud voice, does not refer to the human voice, but to the noise of the instrument. The holy fathers justly direct our attention to the difference between the old and the new chant of praise. The old canticle was the one sung by the old man, "who born of the flesh, is flesh," has a taste for things of the world, and is delighted with them; he praises God when fortune smiles on him; but the new man, who, renewed in the spirit of his mind, longs after the things of the other world, and takes pleasure in those things alone that appertain to heaven; he, too, praises God, praises him always, even in his persecutions, knowing as he does that they tend to his good. We are also warned by the words, "Sing well to him with a loud voice," that when we do sing to him, we must do it with great care, attentively, devoutly, and with great affection, and interior joy. Saint Benedict, in his Rule, lays down that Psalmody is a divine work, and should be preferred to any other work. Saint Bernard has: "My dearly beloved, I advise you to assist at the Divine Office, with a pure intention and an active mind; I say active, because I wish you to be active, as well as reverent; neither lazy, nor drowsy, nor nodding; nor sparing your voice, or clipping the words, not skipping sentences, nor in a weak and tremulous voice, full of sloth and effeminacy, but in an open and manly tone, vigorous, as well as affectionate, give out the language of the Holy Spirit."

4. "For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done with faithfulness." He now assigns the reasons why God should be praised with so much affection, taken from his goodness, his power, and his wisdom. Of his goodness he says, "For the word of the Lord is right;" that is, both words and acts of the Lord are most just, most faithful, and most holy, as he expresses in different language, in Psalm 144, "The Lord is faithful in all his words; and holy in all his works." By the "word of the Lord," is meant what he commands, prohibits, promises, or threatens; and all these are most "right and done with faithfulness." For, he commands nothing but what is good, prohibits nothing but what is bad; and, whatever he promises or threatens, he will most faithfully carry out. Therefore, "The word of the Lord is right," and he is "faithful in all his words." And his acts agree with his words; and therefore, are said to be done in faithfulness, that is, they are faithful, just, and holy; and God is said to be holy in all his works.

5. "He loveth mercy and judgment; the earth is full of the mercy of the Lord." The sanctity of the Lord in respect of words and actions, arises from his sanctity of will or of purpose, for "He loveth mercy and judgment; that means, he wishes first to give us the gifts of his grace, and then, according to the use we have made of them, to reward, or to punish us; and thus, all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth. In the first part of this verse we are informed of the goodness of God, arising from his mercy and justice; in the second, we are told that his mercy exceeds his justice, and is, as we have it in Psalm 118, "above all his works;" for his mercy belongs the removal of every defect and misery; and, as there are no created things that do not suffer some defect, there is nothing that does not need the mercy of God. Corruptible things of this world, however, suffer more and greater defects than the incorruptible things, that do not belong to this world; so that when compared to them they seem to have no defects; therefore, the Prophets says, "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord;" for by the earth he means all corruptible things, for the earth is the dwelling place, not only of all mankind, all animals and plants, but also of birds and fishes; for though the former fly through the air, and the latter "perambulate the paths of the sea," yet, both one and the other, rest on the earth. Now all corruptible things need the manifold mercy of God, to create, uphold, move, nourish, and repair them; but man, in addition, needs his mercy to go before him, to accompany him, to follow him, to forgive his sins, to arm, direct, and protect him, against the devil; and, therefore, he most justly says, "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord." We are to consider here also, that the perfect mercy that can remove all defects, belongs to God alone, for no one, having any defect whatever, can remove those of others, and thus, God is a pure, everlasting, all-powerful, impersonation of infinite perfection; with Justice, then, doth the Church sing, "O God whose province it is to have mercy."

6. "By the word of the Lord, the heavens were established: and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth." From praising his goodness, he comes now to praise his power, the principal and most conspicuous effect of which is the creation of heaven; the magnitude of which is increased by the reflection of its having been made by God without labor; in no time, without men or machinery, by his single word, and forever. He evidently alludes to the creation of the world, in Gen. 1, where "God said: let the firmament be, and the firmament was made, and He called the firmament heaven." The second part of the verse, "and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth," would seem to be a mere repetition of the first part. For "the word," and "the spirit of his mouth," would seem to be much the same. By "The power of them," is meant the stars, which, like a heavenly host, or celestial army, ornament the heavens to a wonderful degree, and shed their influence on things below. And though, by the "Word of the Lord," and "the spirit of his mouth," God's orders are clearly understood, such is the meaning of both; there is no doubt but the Holy Ghost meant to glance at the mystery of the Holy Trinity to be revealed in the New Testament. We are not to notice the objection, that the Prophet attributes the creation of heaven to the Word, and the creation of the stars to the Holy Ghost, as if God the Father made the heavens through the Son, and the stars through the Holy Ghost; because the acts of the Trinity cannot be separated, by reason of the unity of essence, which is the working power: and, therefore, when God the Father is said

everlasting happiness. "He delivers their souls from death." Our corporal salvation is looked after, since God, by the singular providence, delivers us from the various dangers of death, we could never escape of ourselves, or through any human agency. And after thus delivering us, he provides us with all the necessaries of life, especially in time of famine, when so many others are in extremes. In a spiritual sense, he "delivers their souls from death," when he either prevents their falling into sin, which is a spiritual death, or, if they have sinned, brings them back by wholesome penance to grace, which is the spiritual life of the soul; and thus, in both ways, he delivers their souls from everlasting death. And those who are living to God, by means of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, "he feeds in famine;" while, in this desert, "a desert barren and without water," on our journey to the land of promise, he feeds us with manna raining from heaven, and with water bursting from the rock; that is, while he supports and refreshes us by his heavenly consolations, he feeds, without satiating; he cools, without quenching our thirst; because the one and the other are reserved for the day when the glory of the Lord shall appear, when "we shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure."

20. "Our soul waited for the Lord: for he is our helper and protector." Hitherto he had addressed the just, the servants of God, exhorting them to "exult in the Lord," and to praise God as a most indulgent and most merciful father. He now gives the reply of the just, who say, "Our soul waiteth for the Lord." The just understand what the Holy Spirit wants when he invites them to exult and praise; that he wants them to do so, that they may thereby be encouraged to persevere in justice; to cling to God Almighty, not to turn from him through any amount of persecution; and, finally, to praise God more through their actions, than with their lips; and they reply that, marked as they have been by so many of God's signal favors, they will most steadily remain in his fear and his love. "Our soul (say they) waiteth for the Lord." Whatever may happen, it will not separate us from the love of God, nor will we look for any other to console us; but will patiently expect consolation from heaven, knowing it has been written, Hab. 2, "If it make any delay, wait for it; for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." The soul is said to wait, by a Hebraism, by which the soul is used for the entire man, especially in spiritual matters. Thus, in Isaias 26, "Thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul. My soul hath desired thee in the night;" and, Samuel 3, "The Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him;" and the most Blessed Virgin says, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." The just herein assign a reason for their having determined to wait for the Lord so long; because they know, from experience, that he always help them in their prosperity, and protected them most faithfully and effectually in their adversity.

16. "The king is not saved by a great army: nor shall the giant be saved by his own strength." He explains what the all-seeing eye really saw, and that was, that no one, by his own merits or exertions, could be delivered from the evils that surround us on all sides; and that we all need the mercy of God. He gives as an instance, that of the one most likely to boast of and confide in his own strength, the king. God saw that "the king is not saved by a great army;" great power, a great army, a great deal of money will not save or protect the king. "Nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength;" his own strength will be as unserviceable to the strong, brave man, as is the great army to the king.

17. "Vain is the horse for safety: neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength." There are three things to rescue one from imminent danger; the strength of others, such as guards of soldiers; one's own strength; a swift horse; the two former to meet the danger, the latter to fly from it. The psalmist had already said that the two former were insufficient, he says now that the third is equally so; and we have examples of all in Book of Kings. An immense military force was unable to protect Saul; Goliath, the great giant, was slain by the youth David; Joram, the son of Achab, flying away in a swift chariot, was killed by a swifter arrow. "Vain is the horse for safety." The man who depends on the velocity of his horses is greatly deceived; because such velocity may be impeded or overcome in a variety of ways, and is, therefore, very deceitful. "Neither shall he be saved by abundance of His strength." The horse, whose power is principally in his swiftness, will not save himself and his rider by means of it.

18. "Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy."

19. "To deliver their souls from death: and feed them in famine." The conclusion of the argument, whereby the Prophet undertook to prove the happiness of the nation who had God for their Lord. For God sees all men, and sees what little they can do of themselves, without his assistance. He has, however, peculiar regard to the just, to help them, to deliver them from the danger of death, and to find fair support for them in this world. "Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him." The truly just and the friends of God are beautifully described, as those who fear him and trust in him. For fear, without hope, is servile fear; hope, without fear, is presumption. Fear, combined with hope, is the mark of real love; that is, the generous love whereby God is loved, as a friend, a father, a spouse; such love, while it greatly fears doing anything that may possibly offend the beloved, still securely hopes and trusts that the mercy of the beloved will never be wanting. "To deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine." God's reason for regarding with the eye of a father those who so fear him, while they trust in him, is to confer those two blessings on them, viz., to free them from the fear of death, and to support them while they live. As the just are afraid to offend God, he delivers them from the fear of being offended, that is, of their lives being endangered, which is a great blessing. To those who trust in his mercy, he shows perpetual mercy, "while he feeds them in famine;" and those two blessings can be understood of our corporal and temporal salvation, as well as of our spiritual and

to have made the heavens through the Son, the Holy Ghost is not excluded; and when the power, or the celestial host, is said to have proceeded from the spirit of the mouth of the Lord, they are understood also to have proceeded from the Word, who proceeded from the mouth of the same Father, and from which Word the Spirit himself proceeded.

7. "Gathering together the waters of the sea, as in a vessel; laying up the depths in storehouses." He goes on explaining God's power, who not only created the heavens and the stars by one word, but collected all the waters that at the creation covered the whole globe, and shut them up in the deepest caverns and recesses of the earth; just as easy as one would fill a vessel with water, or shut up his money in a chest. "Laying up the depths in storehouses." Shutting up the immense depths of waters that were on the earth and reached to the very heavens, with as much ease as one would shut up a sum of money in a safe. That the "depths" mean the mass of water that covered the earth is clear from Gen. 1, where it is said, "Darkness was over the depths," By "treasures" is sometimes meant an abundance of gold, silver, or precious stones, as, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field." Sometimes it means the place in which such things are kept, as, "Every learned scribe produces from his treasure the new and the old;" and we read of the Magi, that "They opened their treasures, and offered unto him gold, frankincense, and myrrh," in which latter sense the word "treasure" is to be understood here.

8. "Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him." From what he has said of God's power, he takes the occasion of exhorting all men to fear him, and have a horror of breaking his commandments.

9. "For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created." The very best reason that could be offered for fearing God alone; because anything but God cannot harm us without God's permission; and, on the other hand, there is nothing outside God that can defend us from his anger; because all things depend upon him for existence. God made everything by one word; for this reason, that his word is all powerful, full of authority, and cannot be resisted; and he, therefore, adds, "He commanded, and they were created."

10. "The Lord bringeth to naught the counsels of nations; and he rejecteth the devices of people, and casteth away the counsels of princes." The Prophet now comes to wisdom, to show that God deserves our praise in every respect. "He brings to naught the counsels of nations." The wisdom of God is so far beyond and above the wisdom of mankind that God, in one moment, blasts, blights, renders null and void all the plans and plots of men, however wisely and deliberately they may seem to have been laid. He repeats that in the

words, "He rejecteth the devices of people;" he rejects all their devices as if they were so many fools, and deals in like manner with their princes, whose counsels, however wise they may seem to be, and framed by counselors abounding in wisdom and learning, are still "cast away" as of no value or importance. Truly wonderful is the wisdom of God, that catches the wise in their own cunning, and by some inexplicable dealing, so infatuates them, that what they judge will be of the highest importance and value to them, turns out to be the readiest road to their injury and destruction.

11. "But the counsel of the Lord standeth forever: the thoughts of his heart to all generations." By an inscrutable wisdom, God mars the counsels of man, and does not allow them to accomplish what they purpose. Whereas, on the contrary, the wisdom of man is quite powerless against that of God, for, once he has decreed anything it is fixed to eternity. "Every counsel of mine will stand, and every will of mine shall be done, saith the Lord," Isaias 46. Now, by "counsel," regards God, we are not to understand a consultation previous to election, for God has not to think a matter over, but, by one simple act of his will, he decreed from eternity all he should ever do or carry out. The Scripture merely accommodates itself to our weakness and our usual manner of speaking, when it says, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever;" that means what God in his wisdom has once decreed, cannot be disturbed nor be prevented being put into execution. He repeats that when he says, "The thoughts of his heart to all generations;" that means that whatever God once thought of doing can never be prevented, but will certainly be carried out, and in the way he intended. The Scripture, however, does not go so far in accommodating itself to our weakness as to exclude truth altogether, for, though there is no counsel with God previous to election, there is in his counsel what is most perfect, that is, the knowledge of all the means necessary to accomplish the most useful end; and though there may be in God one only, and that a most simple thought, that one, however, is equivalent to numberless ones.

12. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance." From what he had said of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, the Prophet concludes that blessed must the people be, whose God is not an empty idol, but a Lord, most powerful, most wise, and most benevolent, on whose praises he had just been descanting; and then are we truly and perfectly happy, and blessed, when we have that great Lord for our God, and he has us for His peculiar people; the Prophet then unites both when he says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord;" that is, blessed are they who acknowledge no God but the one Lord, "by whose word the heavens were established;" and in like manner, "blessed are the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance;" that means, blessed are they whom the same great Lord hath chosen to be his own peculiar people, and as it were his own property and inheritance. These two things are so united that they cannot be separated, for they alone have the true God for their God, who worship him through faith, hope, and charity; and they only, whom he has chosen for his inheritance, whom he has preordained by his grace, called, and justified, and who worship him through faith, hope, and charity, are his people: a thing we should never lose sight of, for, whatever man may have, even though he may gain the entire world,

he is still poor and wretched if he want God, who alone can fill up the bosom of his soul; and, on the other hand, he who possesses God, however poor he may be, is still happy and rich because, with God he has everything. Besides, man is God's image; now, the beauty and great perfection of an image is to be as like the original as possible; and then he will be really like to God, and therefore most happy, "when we shall see him as he is," John 3; for God's happiness consists in seeing himself as he is, and thus, those who will never see him will be always most unlike him, and, therefore, truly miserable. Finally, anything beneath God is either meaner than man, as all corporal things, or equal to man, as the angels are, for in the Resurrection we will be equal to them. Now, nothing can make us more perfect, blessed, or happy, but something better and more perfect than ourselves; they, then, alone who cling to God, who become one spirit with him, are the only really happy; that is, they who love God, and are loved by him; who are happy here in hope, and are, in point of fact, happy when they cling to God by so happy a tie that can never be broken.

13. "The Lord hath looked from heaven: he hath beheld all the sons of men."

14. "From his habitation which he hath prepared, he hath looked upon all that dwell on the earth." He proves what he said, namely, that blessed is that people that have for their God the Lord, who made the heavens; because when God, looking down from heaven, as he would from an observatory, and seeing man, and knowing that no man, however brave or powerful he may appear to be, could be saved by his own merits; he looks upon his own people with the eye of the father, helps him and saves him, so that the just were deservedly called upon in the beginning of the Psalm to "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye just." He, therefore, says, "The Lord hath looked down from heaven; he hath beheld all the sons of men;" that means, the Lord in heaven, from whom nothing can be concealed, sees not only his own people, but all mankind, and their various capabilities. The following verse has the same meaning.

15. "He who hath made the hearts of every one of them: who understandeth all their works." He tells us now, that when God saw the "sons of men" from Heaven, it was not in the dim, confused, and uncertain way that we see objects placed at a great distance, but that he saw most distinctly and minutely all their actions; that is, what they were doing, or might do, in mind or body; and thus, he saw all the thoughts, desires, words, acts, past, present, and future, of all men in general, and of each in particular; and he proves God's power to see them thus, because "he made the heart of every one of them;" that is, he created their souls, and, therefore, their hearts; that is, their minds and will, from which all human actions spring; for he that could make the heart, could certainly search it. "Of every one of them;" that is, of every one of them separately, and, therefore he ought to understand all their works.