

END OF PSALM 110

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: 110

God is to be praised for His graces and benefits to His church.

1. I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; in the council of the just, and in the congregation.
2. Great are the works of the Lord; sought out according to all his wills.
3. His work is praise and magnificence: and his justice continueth forever and ever.
4. He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord:
5. He hath given food to them that fear him. He will be mindful forever of his covenant:
6. He will show forth to his people the power of his works:
7. That he may give them the inheritance of the Gentiles: the works of his hands are truth and judgment.
8. All his commandments are faithful: confirmed forever and ever, made in truth and equity.
9. He hath sent redemption to his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever. Holy and terrible is his name:
10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding to all that do it: his praise continueth forever and ever.

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: 110

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: in the council of the just, and in the congregation." Holy David begins the hymn by an invocation, and tells us at the same time how God should be praised with advantage to ourselves. "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." Praise, in order to be of any value, must spring from the heart, and not only from the heart, but from the entire heart; that is, with all the affections of the heart, that praises nothing, loves nothing, so much as the thing in question. "With my whole heart;" also implies the greatest attention, thinking of nothing else, for it does not become one who is praising that God whom the Cherubim and Seraphim adore in fear, to let his mind down to unworthy matters; "and the council of the just, as in the congregation," that is to say, I will chant thy praises both in the council of the just, who are few in number, and in the congregation of the sinners, who are numerous enough.

2. "Great are the works of the Lord; sought out according to all of his wills." He praises him first for his works in general, all his works being great, and still so perfect that they carry out God's will in everything. The workman who never makes a small article, an inferior article, but makes all his articles both great and valuable, deserves much praise; and anyone that will study God's works, that we think so little of by reason of their being so constantly before us, cannot fail to behold God's infinite power and wisdom in everyone of them, even though we cannot comprehend them. Truly did Ecclesiastes say, "all things are hard, man cannot explain them by word," chapter 1; and in chapter 8, "and I understood that man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun." And not only are his works great, but "they are sought out according to all his wills;" prepared and settled previously, to be applied to any purpose he may choose, according to Psalm 118, "for all things serve thee;" for, as St. Augustine most properly observes, nothing seems to be more repugnant to the will of God, than free will, through which sins, forbidden by God, are committed; and yet, God deals as he wills with free will, for he reforms it through grace, or he punishes it in justice; and had he not given free will, there would have been no sin. It is, then, God's peculiar province and his peculiar praise, to be able to produce things that may be adapted and accommodated to all circumstances, and turned to any account.

3. “His work is praise and magnificence: and his justice continueth forever and ever.” From the work of creation, he now passes to that of government, and he shows him to be worthy of all praise for that too. “His work is praise and magnificence;” his direction and government of the world created by him is a subject of praise and thanksgiving, and also a fit subject for declaring his magnificence to all. The wise man speaks similarly when he says, “the glory of children are their fathers;” and, “a father without honor is the disgrace of the son;” for glory or disgrace is here used for the subject of either; “and his justice continueth forever and never;” that is to say, God, in his government, acts with magnificence in providing most abundantly for all, but he acts with the strictest justice, so that it is always united with his magnificence, and never found without it; for God always keeps his promise, and does no injury to anyone; and it seems to be specially mentioned here, in order to refute a common complaint of God suffering the wicked to prosper, and the just to suffer and to be oppressed. God’s judgments may be severe, but they cannot be unjust, and whatever opinion we may form of them they are always just and worthy of all praise.

4. “He hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord.” He now discusses a special work of divine Providence, the raining of manna from heaven, which was a work of great mercy, not only to those who were then fed by it in the desert, but also to those who succeeded them, to whom he left an urn full of it as a memorial of the miracles he performed in the desert, see Exodus 16, and Hebrews 9. The manna was a type of the Eucharist, that he gave Christians for their spiritual food, and in memory of the wonderful things Christ did while on earth, the most wonderful of which was his glorious passion, that destroyed death itself by death, and triumphed over the prince of this world; and he, therefore, says, “he hath made a remembrance of his wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord.”

5. “He hath given food to them that fear him. He will be mindful forever of his covenant.” The food named here is the manna that God rained from heaven, and gave, “to them that fear him;” to the Jews who worship him; for, though there were many sinners among them, still they worshipped the true God, and fearing and worshiping signify the same thing in the Scriptures. And as he wished the people to bear in mind the wonderful things he did when he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the desert to the land of promise, so he, in turn, promises that he will bear in mind the bargain he made with them; and, therefore, he adds, “he will be mindful forever of his covenant;” that is, by his constant providence and protection, he will show that he is mindful of his covenant and his promises.

6. “He will show forth to his people the power of his works.”

7. “That he may give them the inheritance of the Gentiles: the works of his hands are truth and judgment.” The principal point in the treaty that God made with Abraham was, that he should give his posterity the land of the Chanaanians, which was, consequently, afterwards called the land of promise.

He, therefore, shows how “he is mindful of his covenant,” when he says, “he will show forth to his people the power of his works;” that is to say, bearing his promise in mind, he will display his power to his people, by turning back the waters of the Jordan, by leveling the walls of Jericho with the sound of the trumpet, by stopping the sun and moon at the command of Joshua, by raining down stones from heaven on the enemies of the Jews, and by many other similar miracles. “That he may give them the inheritance of the Gentiles,” that he may give his faithful the country of Palestine, which the Gentiles, the Chanaanians, held as their inheritance and their prosperity. And, for fear anyone may suspect him of injustice in taking the land of Palestine from the Chanaanians and giving it to the Jews, he adds, “the works of his hands are truth and judgment;” that is, all the works of the Lord, and especially the expulsion of the Chanaanians from, and the introduction of the Jews into, the land of promise, have been done with great fidelity and justice, for truth here, as it does in many other passages in the Psalms, signifies faithfulness or fidelity. As God promised Abraham, then, that he would give that country to his prosperity, he acted in truth or faithfulness; and as he did not expel the Chanaanians until “the measure of their sins was filled up,” for which they deserved to be expelled, he also acted in justice; and, therefore, “the works of his hands are truth and justice.” That the Chanaanians deserved to be punished, and to be expelled from the land of promise, the Prophet proves, by reason of their not having observed the natural law, that is common to all, binding all and immutable, for they contain the first principles of justice; for, when God, in Lev. 18, prohibits incest, adultery, sins against nature, idolatry, and the like, he adds – “for all these detestable things the inhabitants of the land have done that were before you, and have defiled it. Beware, then, lest in like manner it vomit you also out if you do the like things, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.”

8. “All his commandments are faithful: confirmed forever and ever, made in truth and equity.” All God’s precepts, especially those of the natural law, are faithful, for being most right and just they deceive nobody, and thus they cause the good to be rewarded and the wicked to be punished. And they are not only faithful, but they are also immutable, admitting of no dispensation, for in no case can they be found unjust; and, therefore, he adds, “confirmed forever and ever, made in truth and equity;” that is, firmly established from eternity, for they have based “on truth,” that is, on righteousness “and equity;” that is, on justice.

9. “He hath sent redemption to his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever. Holy and terrible is his name.” Having recorded the favors that were conferred on the fathers of the Old Testament, he now comes to the far superior favors of the new dispensation, consisting, as it does, of real and everlasting redemption. “He hath sent redemption to his people;” sent them the Redeemer so often promised and so long expected, of which Zachary prophesied, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel because he had visited and wrought the redemption of his people.” Now, Christ redeemed his people from the captivity and the slavery of sin and from the powers of darkness, by the price of his blood, and in such manner he really and truly “hath commanded his covenant forever;” that is, he ordered and settled it finally, that his covenant or his compact regarding true, real salvation, and the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven, should be everlasting, and not like that of the

possession of Palestine, which was only temporary, as we know from experience, and therefore, Jeremiah 31 has, “behold, the days will come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda. Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void, and I had dominion over them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: “I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” – “Holy and terrible is his name.” He now tells us, in consequence, how we are to adhere to his covenant, so as to come at what he promises, and he says, “holy and terrible is his name;” that is to say, “he that commanded his covenant forever” is holy and terrible, and he, therefore, hates the pollution and uncleanness of sin, by reason of his Holiness, and he says, “be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy;” and he punishes the polluted and the unclean by reason of his being terrible, and “it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Therefore,

10. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding to all that doth it: his praise continueth forever and ever.” They really begin to be wise who fear the Lord, and through such fear guard against sin, observe the law, and do good, that so they may by degree advance from fear to love, and begin to hate evil, more through a love of virtue, than the fear of punishment. “A good understanding to all that do it.” An explanation of the preceding sentence, as if he said: understanding, which is a part of wisdom, is good, but “to all that do it;” that is, those who, influenced by a holy fear, do what their understanding tells them they ought to do; otherwise, it is not only useless but injurious, as St. James says, “to him, therefore, who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.” “His praise continueth forever and ever;” he will, in consequence, be one of those who will dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, praising God forever and ever.