

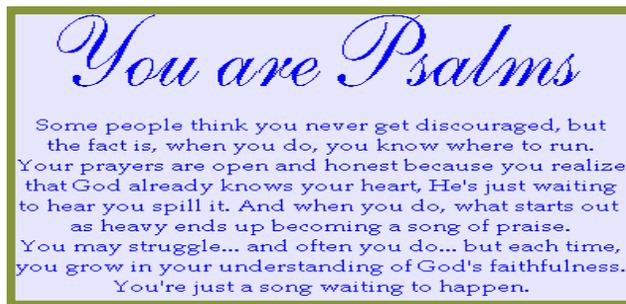
say his happiness must need to be everlasting; nevertheless, scarcely "I passed by, and lo, he was not;" that is, in my way, I saw that man raised and rooted like the cedars of Libanus; I had scarcely passed him, when I looked back, and he had disappeared. "I sought him," asked where he was, looked for some traces of his greatness, "and his place was not found," as if he had never been there. These things are now of daily experience. To say nothing of petty kings and princes, where are those most powerful monarchs of the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans? Had history not recorded them, we would be in ignorance of their very existence. Thus, while the merest traces of such powers have disappeared, yet such is human pride, and so does it blind men up, that they cannot see what they actually touch; and will not acknowledge what they must want, in spite of themselves, or, feel and experience.

37. "Keep innocence, and behold justice; for there are remnants for the peaceable man."

38. "But the unjust shall be destroyed together: the remnants of the wicked shall perish." A continuation of the exhortation. "Keep innocence," by keeping yourself so, and "behold justice," judge what is right towards your neighbor; "for there are remnants for the peaceable man, because God will reward him, so that he will leave children after him. Or, in a higher meaning, because many good things are in store for the just after death. "For their good works follow those who die in the Lord," Apoc. 14; on the contrary, "the unjust shall be destroyed together," without any exception, and "the remnants of the wicked shall perish;" they will neither leave any property nor children to enjoy it, when they shall have consumed everything in their crimes and concupiscence.

39. "But the salvation of the just is from the Lord: and he is their protector in the time of trouble."

40. "And the Lord will help them and deliver them: and he will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in him." A recapitulation of the whole Psalm sufficiently clear and perspicuous.



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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: 36

***An exhortation to despise this world,  
and the short prosperity of the wicked; and to trust in providence.***

1. Be not emulous of evil doers; not envy them that work iniquity.
2. For they shall shortly wither away as grass: and as the green herbs shall quickly fall.
3. Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with riches.
4. Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.
5. Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him and he will do it.
6. And he will bring forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day.
7. Be subject to the Lord, and pray to him. Envy not the man who prospereth in his way: the man who doth unjust things.
8. Cease from anger, and leave rage; have no emulation to do evil.
9. For evil doers shall be cut off: but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land.
10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it.
11. But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.
12. The sinner shall watch the just man; and shall gnash upon him with his teeth.
13. But the Lord shall laugh at him: for he foreseeeth that his day shall come.
14. The wicked have drawn out the sword: they have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to kill the upright of heart.
15. Let their sword enter into their own hearts; and let their bow be broken.
16. Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked.
17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken in pieces; but the Lord strengtheneth the just.

*(continued >)*

*(continued from preceding page)*

18. The Lord knoweth the days of the undefiled; and their inheritance shall be forever.
19. They shall not be confounded in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be filled:
20. Because the wicked shall perish. And the enemies of the Lord, presently after they shall be honored and exalted, shall come to nothing, and vanish like smoke.
21. The sinner shall borrow, and not pay again: but the just showeth mercy, and shall give.
22. For such as bless him shall inherit the land: but such as curse him shall perish.
23. With the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed, and he shall like well his way.
24. When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised; for the Lord putteth his hand under him.
25. I have been young, and now am old: and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread.
26. He showeth mercy, and lendeth all the day long: and his seed shall be in blessing.
27. Decline from evil, and do good, and dwell forever and ever.
28. For the Lord loveth judgment, and will not forsake his saints: they shall be preserved forever. The unjust shall be punished, and the seed of the wicked shall perish.
29. But the just shall inherit the land, and shall dwell therein forevermore.
30. The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom; and his tongue shall speak judgment.
31. The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted.
32. The wicked watcheth the just man, and seeketh to put him to death.
33. But the Lord will not leave him in his hands; nor condemn him when he shall be Judged.
34. Expect the Lord, and keep his way: and he will exalt thee to inherit the land: when the sinners shall perish thou shalt see.
35. I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus.
36. And I passed by, and lo, he was not, and I sought him and his place was not found.
37. Keep innocence, and behold justice; for there are remnants for the peaceable man.
38. But the unjust shall be destroyed together: the remnants of the wicked shall perish.
39. But the salvation of the just is from the Lord: and he is their protector in the time of trouble.
40. And the Lord will help them and deliver them: and he will rescue them from the wicked and save them, because they have hoped in him.

*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: 36**

### **Explanation of the Psalm**

1. "Be not emulous of evil doers; nor envy them that work iniquity."
2. "For they shall shortly wither away as grass: and as the green herbs shall quickly fall." The Prophet, in the character of a spiritual physician, admonishes the faithful, when they see the wicked prospering, not to be tempted to imitate them, or to be indignant or angry with God, as if he were treating them unjustly; because the prosperity of the evildoer will not be of long duration; nay it will even have but a very brief existence; and then will God's justice and providence, in not allowing them to exult and rejoice for any length of time, be made manifest to all. "Be not emulous of evildoers." Do not imitate them; do not seek to do as they do. If they do wrong, do not the same. "Nor envy them that work iniquity." When you see the wicked

The just man's conversation is naturally seasoned with wisdom, because he has "the law of God in his heart;" and, therefore, while he is speaking he has the Commandments of God before him then he may not offend by his tongue; and, besides, "the law is a light," Prov. 6; and, the same David says, Psalm 18, "the law of the Lord enlighteneth the heart, giving wisdom to the little ones;" and it is, therefore, no wonder if the just man, who has in his heart, who loves to think on it should speak with wisdom "and his steps shall not be supplanted." To supplant means to tumble another by tripping him, and that more by cunning and dexterity than by strength; but, as the just man always thinks wisely and acts wisely, he is always on his guard, and, therefore, his "steps shall not be supplanted."

32. "The wicked watcheth the just man, and seeketh to put him to death."

33. "But the Lord will not leave him in his hands; nor condemn him when he shall be judged." These two verses are an explanation of the two preceding. "The wicked watcheth the just man and seeketh to put him to death," carefully observes what he says and what he does, in order "to supplant him," "and seeketh to put him to death;" first to trip him up, then to kill him, a thing that very often happens in unjust prosecutions, when the judge or a false accuser seeks first to entrap an innocent person, and then put him to death. "But the Lord will not leave him in his hands." The Lord will not allow the sinner so to keep the just man in his power, but will inspire him with wisdom, to detect the machinations of his enemies, and to speak with such wisdom as will enable him to elude them; "nor condemn him when he shall be judged." The judge will not condemn the just man, when he shall come before him, for God will not permit justice to be so perverted.

34. "Expect the Lord, and keep his way: and he will exalt thee to inherit the land: when the sinners shall perish thou shalt see." An exhortation to the just to hope in God, and persevere in justice. "Expect the Lord." Hope in God, even though he may seem to be tardy in his promise; "and keep his way," observe his law, and turn not from the path of holiness and justice in which you have set out; "and he will exalt thee to inherit the land," when his promises shall be fulfilled, that you may obtain the land of the living as your inhabitants of right; "when the sinners shall perish, thou shalt see." When all sinners, condemned by the judgment of God, shall have perished you will see what you now hope for.

35. "I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus."

36. "And I passed by, and lo, he was not: and I sought him, and his place was not found." Having said that "when the sinners shall perish, thou shalt see;" the just man may naturally ask, when that will happen? And he therefore now says it will be immediately, for "I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus," and placed in the highest degree of dignity and power, so abounding in wealth, subjects, friends, and the like, that one would

his descendants, not only shall feel no want, but they “shall be in blessing;” that is, blessed by God, they will abound in the goods of this world, or they will be blessed by all, as the children of the best of parents. Observe that the mendicant religions do not come under the sentence so pronouns here, because there mendicancy is voluntary, done through a love of poverty; nor can they be said to be forsaken by God, when he supports them by a wonderful providence. Other mendicants, generally speaking, are not the children of those who were wont “to show mercy and to lend;” to whom the promise was specially made. Very often they are neither just themselves nor the children of the just. Lastly, as we have already said, the truly just, and they who trust in God, though they may seem to be deserted by God, seeking a morsel of bread, like Lazarus, they have got something better than the goods of this world; nor would they give the virtue of patience they have got in exchange of all the riches of this world.

27. “Decline from evil, and do good, and dwell forever and ever.”

28. “For the Lord loveth judgment, and will not forsake his saints: they shall be preserved forever. The unjust shall be punished, and deceit of the wicked shall perish.” From what he had said of his experience from his youth to his old age, he concludes by an exhortation to “decline from evil and do good,” which are the two primary precepts of justice – “and dwell forever and ever;” be just, and you will, is security, “dwell in the land” forever. He assigns a reason why. Because “the Lord loveth judgment;” his just and holy servants; and I, therefore, assert that “they shall be reserved forever.” This promise, to a certain extent, applies to this world, where the just, through various successions, are wont to “dwell in the land for a long time; but, properly and absolutely speaking, it applies the future life, which, in the land of the living, will be everlasting.

29. “But the just shall inhabit the land, and shall dwell therein forevermore.” This verse, as well as the latter part of the preceding verse, are so clear as to need no explanation.

30. “The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom; and his tongue shall speak judgment.”

31. “The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted.” Having previously said that divine providence was on the watch to see that the just should not be oppressed by the wicked, he now adds, that the just themselves, by their own wisdom, which, too, is a gift of God, would enable them to save themselves from “their steps being supplanted” by the wicked. “The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom.” The just man will speak with so much wisdom, that he will not be caught in his language. To “meditate wisdom” means to be discreet in our conversation, as we have explained before; which he repeats when he adds, “and his tongue shall speak judgment;” that is, the tongue of the just man will not scatter words at random, but will speak what is right, and at the right time, which is the essence of speaking with wisdom; and he assigns a reason for it, saying, “the law of God is in his heart.”

prosper, be not troubled, nor be angry with God for allowing them so to thrive in the world, as it is more clearly expressed in Psalm 72, “how good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart! But my feet were almost moved; my steps had well nigh slipped, because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked seeing the prosperity of sinners;” that means, God seems good to those who know and love him; but, poor creature as I am, I fell into doubt and misgivings, burning with zeal, as I thought, for justice sake, and with anger at seeing the prosperity of the wicked, who, while more deserving of torments and punishment, abound in all the temporal blessings of this world. “For they shall shortly wither away as grass.” A most appropriate idea for showing how short will be there prosperity. Grass and green herbs do not send their roots very deep into the earth, like the cedar and the palm tree, to which the just are usually compared. “The just shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus.” Hence, the grass and green herbs wither and rot in a short time; the cedar and the palm tree come to an immense age. And the Prophet does not confine himself to their prosperity, which, he says, will be very brief in this world; but, he goes further, and says, themselves will be very quickly destroyed; and when they are gone, their happiness and prosperity is gone with them. And though they may enjoy many and prosperous years here, they are nothing compared to the lengthened, the everlasting happiness of the just. For “the just shall live forever,” Wisd. 5; and “the just shall be in everlasting remembrance.” Any one that wishes to see the brevity and the velocity of all things temporal, painted to the life, let him refer to Wisd. 5, “all those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves; whereof when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters: or as when a bird flieth through the air; of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air, and parting it by the force of her flight; she moved her wings, and hath flown through; and there is no mark found afterwards of her way; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known: so we also being born, forthwith ceased to be; and have been unable to show no mark of virtue; but are consumed in our wickedness.”

3. “Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches.”

4. “Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.” After seeking to frighten us out of our evil ways, David now tries to encourage us to do good. If you wish to be happy and blessed, understand who is the author of all happiness, look to him for it, and to no one else. “Trust in the Lord,” he, being master of all things, can alone give us what we want; but that our hope may be certain, and that we may not be confounded, “do good;” do what God’s commandments direct you; for he cannot put his trust in him he knows to be incensed against him; and then in perfect security you will “dwell in the land,” for who can turn you out when you are known to be the friend of him to whom the earth, and “the fullness thereof” belongs? Nay, more, “you will be fed with its riches,” for it will throw up its fruits in abundance to feed you. But to work,

to be in God's peace, so that one may securely confide in him, they must have love; and, therefore, he says, "delight in the Lord;" love God from your heart, let him be your delight, and then you will be safe, because, "he will give thee the requests of thy heart," whatever your heart shall desire. An objection – we know many who "trusted in the Lord," who "did good," and who, "delighted in the Lord," and still were not allowed "to dwell in the land," nor "to be fed with its riches," nor to get "the requests of their heart:" to say nothing of the countless multitudes of holy souls who are in extreme want. Certainly St. Paul "trusted in the Lord," and "did good;" and yet, according to himself, 1 Cor. 4, "he was hungry and thirsty, and was naked, and was cast out as the refuse and the off scouring of this world:" and though "he delighted in the Lord," the Lord did not grant him "the request of his heart;" for, though he asked three times to "be delivered from the sting of his flesh," yet he was not heard. The answer is: the greater part of those who are in extreme want do not "trust in the Lord" as they ought, do not observe his commandments as he requires, much less are they "delighted in the Lord;" for, to say nothing of the promises contained in this Psalm, Christ himself most clearly says to you, "behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all those things shall be added unto you." There can be no doubt, then, but that God will provide all necessaries for his own, if they really put their trust in him, and keep his commandments. If the contrary sometimes happens, as was the case with St. Paul, the reason is, because God chose to give them something better, with which they are more contented, and that is the great merit of patience; for the very same Paul, who so described his want and his other tribulations, wrote in another place, "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation;" and thus, though God did not grant "the requests of his heart," by removing "the sting of his flesh," he gave him an abundance of grace to convert that sting into a powerful source of triumph. He, therefore, withheld a thing of trifling value, that he may confer one of immense value, which he knew was the real "request of his heart."

5. "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it."

6. "And he will bring forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day." The Prophet, in the capacity of skillful physician, had prescribed a remedy for the internal disease of hunger, thirst, and the like; he now prescribes for the external disease of persecutions and calumnies. When such things happen, we are not forbidden to defend ourselves, and to repel the calumnies; but prayer to God, confidence in God, should be our principal resource and remedy, as was the case with Susanna, who, when condemned to death, through swearing of false witnesses, with tears in her eyes looked up to heaven, "for her heart had confidence in the Lord." "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it." In prayer before God disclose all your actions to him, confide in him, commit your whole case to him, "and he will do it." He will do justice to you. He will find out a means of detecting the falsehood of the witnesses who swore against you, so as to establish your innocence. That is more clearly expressed in the following, "and he will bring forth thy justice as a light."

21. "The sinner shall borrow, and not pay again: but the just showeth mercy, and shall give."

22. "For such as bless him shall inherit the land: but such as curse him shall perish." He confirms what he had stated in verse 16, viz., "better is a little to the just then the great riches of the wicked." It frequently happens that the sinner, however rich, may borrow money without returning it, because they want to live, to be dressed, or to have finer houses than they can afford; hence, they are always in debt; while the just man, however limited in his fortune, knows how to make use of that little; and hence, can afford to "have mercy on the poor," and "shall give without expecting to get it back." "For such as bless him," that is God, "shall inherit the land;" and thus will always have something to give "but such as curse him;" the ungrateful, the blasphemer, "shall perish," so that even if they wish to give, they won't be able to do so.

23. "With the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed, and he shall like well his way."

24. "When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised; for the Lord putteth his hand under him." He now begins to relate God's singular providence in regard of the just, in order to confirm them, for fear the prosperity of the wicked may induce them to commit sin. He states, then that the life of the just is guided and guarded by God. "With the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed." The Lord, who made the just man, will direct his words and actions. "And he shall like well his way;" that is, either the just man shall like well and follow God's way, or God shall like his, that is, the path he is pursuing. "When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised." This may be referred to the disasters of the body as well as of the soul. For, should the just man meet any corporal affliction or trouble, such as the falling down a precipice or into a pit, "he shall not be bruised;" he will not be entirely destroyed; for the "Lord putteth his hand under him," assists him through his providence. Should he fall into the temptation of sin, "he shall not be bruised;" that is, he will not give full consent to mortal sin, nor will he lose his patience, his faith, or any other virtue, because God, by the assistance of his grace, will "put his hand under him."

25. "I have been young, and now am old: and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."

26. "He showeth mercy and lendeth all the day long: and his seed shall be in blessing." He proves, from his own experience, that the just "shall not be confounded in the evil time;" and also, that "in the days of famine they shall be filled." I have been young, and now am old;" and in all that space of time "have not seen the just forsaken;" so as to be pinched by want; nor have I seen "his seed seeking bread;" that is, his children begging or seeking bread. On the contrary, I have seen the just man "showing mercy and lending;" so abounding in the riches of the world as to be able either to bestow altogether, or certainly to lend to his neighbors in their necessities; and therefore, "his seed,"

proper account: he is not avaricious, nor is he prodigal, and he is, therefore, neither needy, nor is he in want; he is not in debt, neither is he burdened with useless riches, to stimulate his pride or excite his passions. On the other hand, the sinner is both proud and prodigal, and knows not the use of money; hence he is always in want, always in debt, and cannot hold his position long, as appears from what follows, “for the arms of the wicked shall be broken into pieces; but the Lord strengtheneth the just;” that means, the power and the strength of the sinner will easily fail, because he depends on the arm of the flesh, and his riches can afford him no help; but the strength and power of the just cannot fail, because he depends on the arm of God, who, being the friend of the just, confirms and supports him. Finally, the sinner, in spite of all his riches, will not escape everlasting death; because, when he shall die, he will carry nothing with him, nor will his glory descend with him, while the just man, who, instead of trusting in the riches of this world, trusted in God, shall live forever.

18. “The Lord knoweth the days of the undefiled; and their inheritance shall be forever.”

19. “They shall not be confounded in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be filled.” The Prophet now confirms what he said a while ago, as to the happiness of the just, however scanty their fortune may be. “The Lord knoweth the days of the undefiled.” God approves of their life, favors and blesses them; and, therefore, their days will be prolonged, and their inheritance shall be protected for a long time. “They shall not be confounded in the evil time.” In the time of want and penury they will not be in confusion, because they will not be forced to beg; “and in the days of famine they shall be filled.” So far from there being any fear of their dying of hunger in time of famine, they will be so supplied that they may eat to satiety; things that often happen in this life, but most certainly will in the next. For, after this life, a most unheard of season of sterility will set in, when no one can either sow or reap; and the rich man in hell will thirst for one drop of water even, without getting it. Then, indeed, the immaculate, who stored nothing on earth, but put up everything in heaven, shall find their everlasting inheritance, and will not be confounded with the begging of the foolish virgins, “give us of your oil,” but will be fully satiated when the glory of the Lord shall have appeared.

20. “Because the wicked shall perish. And the enemies of the Lord presently after they have been honored and exalted, shall come to nothing, and vanish like smoke.” A reason why “the inhabitants of the just should be forever;” and why “they shall be filled in the days of famine.” That will be the case, “because the wicked,” who were wont to harass them, and deprive them of their property; “shall perish.” The remainder of the verse corresponds with the two last verses, and the meaning is: holy souls, as being friends of God, shall have the “eternal inheritance,” and in the “evil day will not be confounded;” but the enemies of the Lord, as all sinners are, on the contrary, shall enjoy a very brief felicity; for, so soon as ever they come to be exalted, they will vanish like smoke, which the more it is exalted, the more it is scattered, leaving not even a track of itself behind.

God, in his wonderful providence, will cause your justice that was, as it were, buried in darkness, by the calumnies of your persecutors, to emerge and be refulgent in great brightness, as light is seen when enkindled, or brought out from a closed and darkened lantern. He repeats it saying, “and thy judgment as the noon day.” He will establish your innocence as clearly, and make it to be seen as conspicuously as the sun is seen at noon. A thing literally carried out in the case of Susannah. At first her justice and her innocence were in darkness, she was convicted on the testimony not only of two witnesses, but even of two who professed to be together when they saw the thing, and whose character put them beyond suspicion; however, God at once raised up the spirit of Daniel, who, from the very lips of the same witnesses, so clearly establishes their own infamy, and the innocence of Susanna, that she was at once set at liberty, and they were consigned to an ignominious death.

7. “Be subject to the Lord, and pray to him. Envy not the man who prospereth in his way: the man who doth unjust things.” The meaning of this passage, which may be considered as the fourth general spiritual rule, is: take care, and be always obedient to God; pray to him constantly, for fear the idea of seeing an unjust man successful in the world may tempt you and lead you to injustice. In fact, the success of the bad is a great temptation; but easily overcome by having God constantly before us, and clinging to him through prayer and obedience. Whoever will so unite himself to God stands, as it were, on an eminence; and, seeing the happiness of the sinner to be transient and temporary, has no difficulty in spurning and despising it. He therefore, says, “be subject to the Lord, and pray to him.” Be obedient to God in all simplicity and honesty, and through prayer frequently converse and commune with him. “Envy not the man who prospereth in his way.” Do not seek to rival the man who is prosperous in life; that is, that man who is dishonestly so.

8. “Cease from anger, and leave rage; have no emulation to do evil.”

9. “For evil doers shall be cut off; but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land.” This verse is a repetition and explanation of the first verse. Throughout the whole Psalm the same idea is frequently repeated and inculcated, to explain it more clearly, and thereby to fix it more firmly on the memory. In the first verse he said, “be not emulous of evildoers.” He now repeats, in clearer language, “cease from anger, and leave rage;” that is, when you see a bad man thriving, don’t get vexed or angry, don’t say, why does this villain so prosper? Where is God’s justice? Where is his providence? In the eighth verse he said, “have no emulation to do evil.” Do not seek to rival the wicked in their evil ways; do not imitate the enormities of whose happiness you so envy, and adds, “for the evildoers shall be cut off,” to confirm what he had said before, “for they shall wither away as grass.” He then adds, “but they that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the land,” to repeat and confirm what he had said before, “trust in the Lord, and dwell in the land.” They wait on the Lord who patiently expect his promises, and expect them confidently, knowing

the Lord, who made the promise, being both able and sure to carry it out; and thus, there is no doubt that the evildoers, though they may seem to flourish for a while, will not long flourish, but will be “cut off” from the land, and shoved into hell for eternal punishment; while those who keep themselves from sin, and expect their reward from God, “they shall inhabit the land,” for they shall get permanent hold of the land, of which they will never be deprived. In truth, when holy souls go to God, instead of losing possession of the land, they acquire both it and heaven along with it, when it is said of them, “that he will put them over all his property.”

10. “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it.”

11. “But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.” Having said that “the evildoers shall be cut off,” he now adds, that it will soon happen. “For yet a little while” and that “wicked” man, who seemed so happy, “shall not be,” cannot be found; “and thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it.” There will be no trace of him, like a barren tree torn up from the roots. “But the meek,” they who are neither indignant nor angry with God when they see the wicked prosper; but, on the contrary, patiently bear and take from God’s hand what it may please him to send, they will “inherit the land,” not only this land of exile, but that land that only deserves the name, that fixed and firm land, of which the Lord speaks in Matt. 5, “Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land;” and as that land is called the Jerusalem, which means the vision of peace, and whereas all its enemies are far removed from it, therefore “they shall delight in the multitude of peace;” they shall have great peace, because the number of inhabitants will be great to enjoy it; and the peace will be of long duration, or rather forever; and thus they shall enjoy the pleasure that peace always brings with it.

12. “The sinner shall watch the just man, and shall gnash upon him with his teeth.”

13. “But the Lord shall laugh at him: for he foreseeth that his day shall come.” The just man is here advised to be in no great fear of the wicked, as God is guarding him. “The sinner shall watch the just man;” shall attentively look after everything he does, to see if could find any opening for destroying him;” and shall gnash upon them with his teeth;” like a dog, shall howl for his destruction, and through anger and fury expose his teeth, like a dog. “But the Lord shall laugh at him.” God, who beholds everything, in whose hand are all things, so that even a leaf does not fall to the ground without his order or permission, “shall laugh at him, for he foreseeth that his day shall come;” he will laugh at him, because he sees the end of the wicked man is just at hand; and that he will be taken off before he can put any of his designs against the just man into execution. Though God may sometimes allow the wicked to slay the just, the wicked, however, kills himself first, for he kills his own soul; and since the death of the just is precious in the sight of the Lord, his death, instead of being a loss, is to him a gain; on the other hand, the death of the sinner is the very reverse-is the commencement of his eternal punishment; and thus the sinner is always hurried off before he can injure the just. He is, therefore, justly “to be laughed at,” who, while he lies in wait for another, sees not his own impending destruction.

14. “The wicked have drawn out the sword: they have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy; to kill the upright of heart.”

15. “Let their sword enter into their own hearts; and let their bow be broken.” The Prophet explains here, what he had more obscurely expressed in the twelfth verse. He said there, “the sinner shall watch the just man,” which he explains here, by saying, “the wicked have drawn out the sword, they have bent their bow.” The wicked stand with drawn swords, and bended bow, biding their time to shoot with the arrow, and slay with the sword the just man, “who is poor and needy,” but “upright of heart.” But God, who from on high beholds everything, causes their “swords to enter into their own hearts,” and “their bows to be broken,” and to injure themselves alone; and thus, “he will laugh at them.” What is said here of the real sword and quiver, may be also applied to the sword and quiver of the tongue, that sinners, perhaps oftener, make use of against the just. The just man is here designated as “the upright of heart,” because his heart is most conformable to the law of God, which is most upright; and as that law is the right way in which we must need to walk, the “upright of heart” is said to be right in his way, because he never departs from the right path, which is the law of the Lord. Observe also that the just man is called “the poor and needful,” because all the just are poor in spirit, and though they sometimes possess the riches of this world, they understand them not to be their own, since they have to render an account of them to God; or certainly David does not speak of all the just, but only of the poor and the needy; who are oppressed by the rich. Between the “poor” and “needy,” there is this difference, that the former signifies the humbler, the afflicted, the meek; while “needy” signifies, properly speaking, that one in want, who wishes for everything, because he is thoroughly destitute. Finally, the expression, “let this sword enter into their own hearts, and let their bow be broken,” is more a prophecy than an imprecation. The sword of the sinner, drawn against the just, then enters into his own heart; when, while seeking to destroy the just, he really destroys himself. While he despoils the just man perhaps of his clothes, he robs himself of faith and charity; and while he deprives the just of his life, he deprives himself of the grace of God, which is the life of the soul; and while, by calumny, he shuts the just man up in prison, he precipitates himself into hell.

16. “Better is a little to the just, then the great riches of the wicked.”

17. “For the arms of the wicked shall be broken in pieces; but the Lord strengtheneth the just.” For fear the just should envy the wicked rich, and should, therefore, forsake justice to do evil, David encourages them in these two verses. “Better is a little to the just, then the great riches of the wicked;” that means, a trifling income will be of more value to the just man than an immense fortune to the sinner; and, therefore, the just man, with small means, is much happier than the sinner with a large revenue; and, therefore, justice, with little wealth, is more to be sought after than much wealth with justice. The reason is, because the just man, being guided by God, knows how to turn his riches to