

22. "Bless the Lord, all his works, in every place of his dominion, O my soul, bless thou the Lord." Having invited men and the Angels, who, from their knowledge of God, know best how to do it, to praise God, he now summons all created things, however mute and insensible, to praise their Maker in their own way. And for fear any exception should be made, or that it may be thought the Prophet did not include all created things, whether in sky, earth, or sea, he says, "in every place of his dominion;" that is to say, bless him, all ye his works, every one of you, wherever you may be; for he made all things, governs all things, is with them everywhere, filling, bearing, preserving, moving everything. And you, my soul, who have thus invited them, bless you the Lord at all times, and let his praise be forever in thy mouth.

**END OF PSALM 102**

## 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: 102**

**Thanksgiving to God for His mercies.**

1. Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me, bless his holy name.
2. Bless the Lord, O my soul: and never forget all he hath done for thee.
3. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases:
4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion.
5. Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.
6. The Lord doth mercies, and judgment for all that suffer wrong.
7. He hath made his ways known to Moses; his wills to the children of Israel.
8. The Lord is compassionate and merciful; long suffering and plenteous in mercy.
9. He will not always be angry: nor will he threaten forever.
10. He hath not dealt with us according to our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11. For according to the height of the heaven above the earth; he hath strengthened his mercy toward them that fear him.
12. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our iniquities from us.
13. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him:
14. For he knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust:

*(continued) >*

*(continued from preceding page)*

15. Man's days are as grass, as the flower of the field so shall he flourish.
16. For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not see: and he shall know his place no more.
17. But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear him: and his justice unto children's children.
18. To such as keep his covenant, and are mindful of his commandments to do them.
19. The Lord hath prepared his throne in heavens and his kingdom shall rule over all.
20. Bless the Lord, all ye his angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute his word, hearkening to the voice of his orders.
21. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts: you ministers of his that do his will.
22. Bless the Lord, all his works: in every place of his dominion, O my soul, bless thou the Lord.

*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: 102**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name." David piously believing himself to be one of the elect, stirs himself up, in the person of all the elect, the bless the Lord, "bless the Lord, O my soul;" reflect on his favors and praise him who conferred them on you; you, my soul, who through God's gift have not only deserved to get such favors, but also to acknowledge them. And let not you alone, my soul, praise the Lord, but, "let all that is within me" be turned into so many tongues, "to bless the Lord." St. Augustine considers the second part of this verse to be a mere repetition, or perhaps, an explanation of the first part, as much as to say, let all my thoughts and affections, the very deepest within me, bless his holy name. That may be very true; but there is nothing to prevent our applying the words, "all that is within me," to all that is in man, and enclosed in this outward skin of ours; in the same sense as we have, in Psalm 83, "my heart and flesh have rejoiced in the living God;" and in Psalm 34, "all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like to thee?" Inanimate and senseless things contribute to God's praise, just as a piece of work, does to its maker; or through the affection of our soul, that should wish all creation, if it were possible, should know and praise God.

2. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee." He repeats the question, to shed the intensity of his affection, as also from a consciousness of human infirmity, that is very apt to cool in matters that do not come under cognizance of the senses, especially such as God, "and never forget all he hath done for thee;" meaning all his gifts, which are not simply gifts, but gifts (to use the

pious steps of their parents and ancestors. "And his justice;" his veracity and fidelity, by virtue of which he always carries out what he promises, will be observed towards the "children's children, to such as keep his covenant;" who observe the covenant entered into by God, that they should be his people, and he their God: "and are mindful of his commandments;" not only to turn them in their mind and to think on them, but also "to do them."

18. "To such as keep his covenant, and are mindful of his commandments to do them."

19. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven: and his kingdom shall rule over all." He now proves that God is able to carry out all he has promised to those that fear him, and to their children's children, because he is the supreme Judge of all; and therefore, "he prepared his throne in heaven," his judgment seat, on an elevated spot, in the highest heaven, whence he can see everything and judge everything; and for fear we should suspect him to be a judge delegated by another, he adds, "and his kingdom shall reign over all;" that is, he sits in heaven, not as a judge appointed by a king, but as a Judge supreme, a King over all kings, for his kingdom, that is, his power as a king, extends to all created things.

20. "Bless the Lord, all ye his angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute his word, hearkening to the voice of his orders." In the end of the Psalm the Prophet, finding himself quite unable to return adequate thanks to God for all his favors, invites other creatures to bless him and give him praise; and he first invites the Angels, as being creatures of the highest order; and, therefore, most suited to praise God. We are less suited by reason of our weakness and frailty, and by reason of our frequent lapses into sin, and "praise is not seemingly in the mouth of a sinner;" while the Angels are always untiring, endowed with great vigor, are always obedient to God, and thus, never fall into sin, but are agreeable and fair in the sight of God. "Bless the Lord, all ye his angels;" all you his Angels who surround him, and thus have a more thorough knowledge and conception of his greatness, praise our common Lord; and let it not be confined to one or two, but let the whole of you, however innumerable you may be, unite in his praise. "You that are mighty in strength," you that have been endowed with super excellent strength, in order to execute all God's commands, who have, therefore, nothing to fear, and can be prevented by nobody from praising God. "And execute his word;" carry out his commands to the letter; "hearkening to the voice of his orders," and thus proving themselves most faithful and diligent servants.

21. "Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts: you ministers of his that do his will." For fear we should suppose that the invitation addressed to the Angels included those only in the lower grade, he now summons "all his hosts," every one of them, Archangels, Principalities, Dominions, and the other superior orders, who all are God's servants, and carefully and diligently carry out his behests.

15. "Man's days are as grass, as the flower of the field so shall he flourish."

16. "For the spirit shall pass in him; and he shall not be: and he shall know his place no more." God's great mercy arises from the fact of his knowing of what we are composed, of earth, of flesh that is corruptible and exposed to all manner of concupiscences, and that we are, therefore, a pitiable set indeed. He remembereth that we are dust, composed of and formed from it, and, therefore, from our frailty, deserving of all mercy and compassion; and, when he did "remember," it does not imply that he ever forgot it, (for that he could not,) but that he sometimes acted as if he had forgotten it. In further elucidation of our frailty, he draws another comparison, "men's days are as grass;" most brief, as brief as those of the grass that never remains an entire year on the ground, for it grows up in the spring, and in the following summer is cut down and gathered up; and as the grass is not in flower even all that time, but flowers in the morning, and withers in the evening; so it is with man, who lives for a short time, and is still a shorter time in the flower of his youth when he withers into old age. "For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be;" that is, this spirit of life, or his corporeal life, will not be permanent in him, will be always transient, and never remain in the same state; for it will be always changing; from infancy to childhood; from childhood to puberty; from puberty to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old-age, from old-age the death. "And he shall know his place no more;" he will not return to the place from whence he set out, and will never again see the age he has passed. In this respect a great difference exists between things corruptible and things incorruptible, celestial and terrestrial bodies; for the sun, moon, the stars rise in the morning, is set in the west in the evening, but return again in the morning to the spot from whence they set out, without appearing to have undergone the slightest change, but the terrestrial, or the things of this earth, perform their course, undergo various changes therein, and never return to the starting points but grow old and decay. By the spirit here we are not to understand the soul of man, which is immortal, and will return to the body it inhabited on the last day, but the spirit of life, or corporeal existence.

17. "But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear him: and his justice unto children's children." We now come to the fourth epithet in verse 8, "and plenteous in mercy," which applies to the gift of glorification, which is the last and the greatest. "The mercy of the Lord," then, which is the beginning, extended by predestination to those that fear him, "is from eternity "with them in their glory, and thus, God will be "plenteous in mercy," whether we consider the number, the greatness or the duration of his favors. Where is the man, then, that will seriously reflect on himself, and on the Lord of the universe, who does not want us, having resolved in his mercy, to take pity on a handful of dust, to raise it to a level with the Angels and to attach it to himself, the supreme good, in the enjoyment of the most perfect happiness for all eternity? We certainly should not forget such mercy for even one moment and we should return thanks for it forever. "And his justice unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant." This is a sort of appendix to God's mercy, in regard to those that fear him. The Prophet adds, that they who fear God will not only be exalted and protected by the eternal mercy of God, but that the same mercy will be extended to their posterity, if they follow in the

expression) on the double. A great gift is his not exacting from us the punishment our daily sins deserve; and a double gift is the bestowal of so many favors on us for all our wickedness. He that can recount the sins of mankind, by which we daily offend God, can form a remote idea of the extent of God's love for us in daily conferring so many favors on us; "for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil," Luke 6.

3. "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases." He now proceeds to enumerate God's favors, beginning in order from the first to the last. The first is remission of sin, through which he makes us just, from being sinners; friends, from enemies; children, from slaves, "who forgiveth all thy iniquities," pardoning them gratuitously, however innumerable they may be; and not only that, but "who healeth all thy diseases," to cut off the root of sin; "for covetousness is the root of all evils," 1 Timothy 6; or, as St. John expresses it, "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." This weakness or infirmity, attached to man by the fall of our first parents, to a certain extent, cured and relieved by God in this world; but the complete cure will be effected in the world to come only. Everyone, then, should ask himself if he feels a diminution to his own infirmity – if he bears the touch of the heaven physician patiently; for they who refuse the physicians prescriptions, and suffer the language of concupiscence to rest in them, cannot apply those words, "who healeth all thy diseases," to themselves; and they who are not in a position to do that cannot possibly expect the following gifts of God.

4. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: crowneth thee with mercy and compassion." From the gifts of grace he passes to those of glory. "Who Redeemeth thy life from destruction," who, through the redemption that is, in Christ, delivers you from eternal death, and transfers you into his own kingdom, crowning you with a crown of glory, "with mercy and compassion." Because, in order to merit that crown of glory, mercy had to go before you, justifying you gratuitously, and compassion had to direct and protect you on the way; for otherwise you would not have persevered in the grace so conferred on you.

5. "Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like eagle's." He tells us here what that crown of glory contains. Two things, the satisfaction of all our desires and the immortality of our bodies, or, in other words, perfect happiness, as regards body and soul; for the soul ceases to desire, and the heart to hunger, once it gets possession of the supreme happiness, which is so comprehensive of everything good that it has nothing further to seek or desire. To this glorious resurrection will be added a thorough renovation of the body itself, a happy and never decaying youth. This renovation is compared to that of the eagle, not that the eagle can possibly be supposed to renew its youth forever, but because it in some degree represents the Resurrection of the just, by reason of its soaring so high, its acuteness of ken, and its length of life, correspondent to the happiness of the just, who will soar above the heavens, will behold light inaccessible, and behold it forever. How the eagle is renewed is quite uncertain; St. Jerome says that they frequently get new wings, and are thus

renewed; St. Augustine says it alludes to the renewal of their beak, that grow so hooked by age that they cannot take up their food, until they rub it and grind it against a stone, and by thus wearing it away form themselves a new one.

6. “The Lord doth mercies, and judgment for all that suffer wrong.” Having told us of all the blessings in store for the just, he now tells us that God’s mercy is the source of them all, and that for fear anyone should be mad enough to attribute to himself what belongs to God, and lose, through his pride, what he should have received in all humility. “The Lord doth mercies.” It is the Lord himself who behaves kindly to us, pours down his favors on us, liberally sharing every blessing he has with us, and also in his goodness delivering us from every trouble, and from the hands of the unjust; and one of his peculiar mercies is, that he shows “judgment to all that suffer wrong,” for he delivers those that suffer it, and punishes those that inflict it.

7. “He hath made his ways known to Moses; his wills to the children of Israel.” A proof of what he said in the preceding verse; for God made his ways, which are mercy and truth, according to the Psalm, “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,” according to Moses his special servant; for he gave him a most holy law, through which we made known his will, not only to Moses but to all the people of Israel; the essence of which was, that as well as he himself was merciful and just, we should be so too; and the very fact of God’s so deigning to instruct us was a great mercy. He also “made his way known to Moses,” when in his mercy he delivered the people from the captivity of Pharaoh, and slew him and his army in his justice; and thus gave a clear proof of his mercy and his justice.

8. “The Lord is compassionate and merciful; long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.” These epithets, so applied by that Scripture that cannot deceive us to the Almighty, should prove a great source of consolation to all pious souls. He is called “compassionate,” which, in Hebrew, signifies the tender and the intimate love a parent feels for its own children; “merciful,” which in the same language implies a giver of all grace and favors, which is a consequence of the paternal love one feels for his children. And such was the case with God. Having taken delight in his elect from eternity, and having foreseen and predestined them to be agreeable to the image of his Son, he, at the fitting time, poured down innumerable blessings on them, both of nature and of grace. He is also styled “long-suffering” – patient, tolerant, not easily provoked; for God bears with our infirmity and our imperfections in this our journey to our country as a parent, especially a mother, would bear with the folly and trifling, the insults and the ingratitude of the infancy and the childhood of those who call her mother. Who can enumerate the distractions that seize on us while we are speaking to God in prayer? Who can form a proper estimate of our unsteadiness, our various desires, concupiscences, ingratitude, lapses and crimes? And yet God, in his goodness, bears with us, for which we should most constantly and heartfully thank him. Finally, he is “plenteous in mercy,” which seems to have reference to that great and unspeakable mercy, through which God will raise us to a level with the Angels, and to his own likeness, which will happen when we shall see him as he is. Those four epithets, then, include all God’s favors from first to last. The first is the grace of predestination, or the eternal love of God; then follow the gifts of justification and

the remission of various sins into which, finally, is added a crown of glory.

9. “He will not always be angry: nor will he threaten forever.” He now explains in detail the epithets he applied to God in the preceding verse. First, the tender affection God has for those that fear him. “He will not always be angry.” God, to be sure, is sometimes angry with his elect, when they fall into sin, and he will scourge them for it, but he will not be long without being reconciled to them. The affection of the parent remains in that very heart that prompts him to scourge them, which he repeats when he says, “nor will he threaten forever.” He will not always threaten in his anger, but will in due time administer his sweet consolations. This is not to be quoted in favor of the heresy that would make Hell’s pains to be but temporary, because there is question here solely of the elect.

10. “He hath not dealt with us according to our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” He comes now that the second epithet, and says that God, in his infinite mercy, instead of visiting us with the punishment we deserved for our sins, overwhelmed us with gifts we did not deserve. For what did the sinner and the unjust deserve but death? “For the wages of sin is death.” Now God not only withheld such wages from us, but he even gave us the life of grace, promised us eternal life, and meanwhile furnished us with a liberal supply of all necessaries in this our pilgrimage.

11. “For according to the height of the heaven above the earth; he hath strengthened his mercy toward them that fear him.”

12. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our iniquities from us.” These verses also apply to the second epithet, (merciful,) for the Prophet proves that God did not deal with the elect according to their sins; for “he strengthened his mercy,” in pouring down all manner of grace on them, and removing all manner of harm from them. He compares his mercy to the distance between the earth and the sky, the far east and far west, to show how boundless it is; and, therefore, that the remission of sin and the infusion of grace is real and substantial, and not imputative, as some heretics will have it.

13. “As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.” The Prophet enters into the third application (long suffering) in this and the two following verses, making use of a happy comparison. No people are more patient or “long-suffering” than parents, in bearing with the follies and frivolities of their younger children. Parental or maternal love brings them to labor severely and incessantly for them, and to bear up against their ingratitude and even their violence in a most extraordinary manner. Such is the meaning of God’s mercy to “them that fear him,” in regarding their daily transgressions not as so many offenses against himself, but as so many filial wanderings.

14. “For the crowneth our frame. The remembereth that we are dust.”