

5. "They have not called upon the Lord: there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear." A reason assigned for such wickedness, namely: "They have not called upon the Lord:" they put their trust not in God, but in things created; and, therefore, "There have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear;" and, therefore, not knowing in whom to hope, or whom to fear, they tremble at encountering adversity, or going back in their prosperity; things of small moment, and transitory, which should have been above their consideration: whereas, had they put their trust in God, "And sought the kingdom of God and his justice, all these things shall be added unto you."

6. "For the Lord is in the just generation: you have confounded the counsel of the poor man, but the Lord is his hope." Another reason for the wicked being seized with fear, when there is no ground for fear, "For the Lord is in the just generation;" which means, as the wicked neither invoked nor trusted in God, he deserts them, and takes up with "The just generation:" and once deserted by God, the true light, truth itself they walk in darkness, and therefore fear when they have no cause for fear. He then appeals to the wicked themselves, "You have confounded the counsel of the poor man, but the Lord is his hope." Are you so blind as not to abandon God yourselves, but even to mock those who have not? For you "Have confounded;" that is, derided, made the poor man blush, for doing what you call a foolish thing, the putting his hope in God, whereas he entirely depends on him. For to the worldly it seems a foolish thing to put our trust in God whom we do not see: and not to trust in the riches of this world and other things we do see.

7. "Who shall give out of Zion the salvation of Israel? When the Lord shall have turned away the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." This last verse is a prayer to God for the speedy coming of the Savior, to deliver mankind from that captivity of the devil, in which all the wicked and perverse, whose sins and enormities he had just described, were bound. "Who shall give out of Zion the salvation of Israel?" That is, would that salvation to Israel should quickly come from Zion; "For salvation is from the Jews;" as the Lord said to the Samaritan woman, John 4; and not only from the Jews, that is, from the tribe of Juda, but from the family of David, whose city was named Zion. Salvation, therefore, or the promised Savior, was promised and expected from Zion, the city of David; that is, from the stock of David, who was to save Israel; that is, his people. Christ is called "Savior of Israel his people;" because, though in reality he came to save the whole world, he did not actually save beyond a certain number, who are called the people of God and spiritual Israel. "When the Lord shall have turned away the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." As much as to say, I beseech and pray for "salvation from Zion;" and, therefore, for the Savior "to free us from captivity;" because, when that shall be effected, then truly and perfectly, "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad;" that is, the people of God, who are spiritually called Jacob and Israel, for both names belong to one person. And that such promises, and similar ones, belong not exclusively to the carnal Jews, but to God's people, composed of Jews and Gentiles, is clearly established by Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans. **END OF PSALM 13**

PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 13

The general corruption of man before our redemption by Christ.

1. The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no not one.
2. The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God.
3. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.
4. Shall not all they know that work iniquity, who devour my people as they eat bread?
5. They have not called upon the Lord: there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear.
6. For the Lord is in the just generation: you have confounded the counsel of the poor man, but the Lord is his hope.
7. Who shall give out of Zion the salvation of Israel? When the Lord shall have turned away the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

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: 13

Explanation of the Psalm

1. "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no not one." To such a pitch of folly has human nature, corrupted in our first parent, arrived, that one can be found, without daring to express it, yet to "say in his heart there is no God." David does not convey here, that one particular person said so, but that men in general, through the corruption of their intellect, had come to such a pitch of blindness, as to become entirely without regard of their last end, and to think there was no God who regarded mankind, or to whom they would be accountable. "The fool," that is, the man bereft of all sense, "said in his heart, There is no God;" that is, began to think God had no existence, and not only was the mind become corrupt and foolish, but also, so was the will; so that men, in general, leaned to sin, never to good; for the avoiding of sin, and the doing good are very different things, when we speak of an act absolutely and perfectly good. For men without faith or grace, acting on the strength of corrupt nature alone, generally fall into sin; yet sometimes produce certain moral good works, which cannot be called sin; yet are not perfectly and absolutely good, when they do not bring man to the chief good. David, therefore, says, "They are corrupt and become abominable in their ways;" that is, on their desires or affections: hence themselves are corrupted and abominable. "There is none that doth good; no not one." Mankind is so corrupted in desire and in iniquity, but still not so generally that all their desires and actions should be considered corrupt and unjust. For surely when an infidel, moved by compassion, has mercy on the poor or cares for their children, he doth no evil. But nobody depending on the strength of corrupt nature alone, can perfectly and absolutely produce a good action. Hence, we see, that this passage, when properly understood, proves nothing for the heretics who abuse it, to prove that all the acts of a sinner, or of a non-regenerated man, are sins.
2. "The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God."
3. "They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before

their eyes." Having said that human nature was corrupt in mind and in will, he shows now whence he had such knowledge: namely, from revelation. For God, who knows everything, saw it, and revealed it to his prophets. He describes God looking down from heaven, as if he were a mortal from his lofty lookout, to see "If there be any that understood;" that is, not corrupted in his mind; "Or seeking God;" that is, not corrupted in his will, who could understand and love, and thus seek God, who is the supreme good. What God knew, that is, made us know, he explains in these words: "They are all gone aside;" that is, he saw they had all become useless to God, inasmuch as they neither serve, worship, nor render him any tribute of praise; and finally, that he saw none to do a work perfectly and absolutely good. "Their throat is an open sepulcher." The remainder of this verse is not in the Hebrew, nor in the Septuagint (Greek), nor in the Latin edition of Psalm 52, where the same passage occurs; but, whereas Saint Paul, in Rom. 3, quotes all these expressions consecutively, as if they belonged to one Psalm, we may consider they did originally belong to it, and were accidentally lost or omitted from it. These verses give us an idea of the malice of the wicked, who by word and deed do harm to their neighbor. "Their throat is an open sepulcher." For, as the stench of the putrid corpse exhales from an open tomb, so from their mouth issues filthy language, the exhalation of their corrupted heart. "With their tongues they acted deceitfully:" that is, by making use, not only of filthy but deceitful language. "The poison of asps is under their lips;" which words are not only filthy and deceitful, but, furthermore, poisonous, and deadly, and leading to sin. "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood." Those abandoned characters not only rail and fiercely contend in language; but are involved in evil action, and injure every one. For they whose mouths are full of maledictions and railing, are always ready to run swiftly to slaughter and bloodshed. "Destruction and unhappiness in their ways and the way of peace they have not known:" that is, all their thoughts turn upon destruction, devastation, and affliction, of the neighbor, because "The way of peace they have not known;" that is, what belongs to peace. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." The root of all the aforesaid evils; because they clearly cast overboard all fear of God, saying in their hearts, "There is no God."

4. "Shall not all they know that work iniquity, who devour my people as they eat bread?" Here we can justly infer, that this universal corruption of human nature is to be understood of human nature in itself and depending on its own natural strength alone. For, through the grace of God, men become truly just and pious, and they are designated here as "My people" who are despised and persecuted by the wicked. "Shall all they know that work iniquity;" addressed to the wicked, by way of reproof, as if he said: Will they be always insensible, will they ever open their eyes, will they ever begin to learn? "Who devour my people as they eat bread;" which means that the wicked may, from such evils, be warned of their iniquity. For as bread, though eaten daily, is always relished; so the wicked take pleasure in daily harassing the poor, and never tire of it.