

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: 6

***A prayer of a penitent sinner, under the scourge of God.
The first penitential psalm.***

1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath.
2. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.
3. And my soul is troubled exceedingly: but thou, O Lord, how long?
4. Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercy's sake.
5. For there is no one in death, that is mindful of thee: and who shall confess to thee in hell?
6. I have labored in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears.
7. My eye is troubled through indignation: I have grown old amongst all my enemies.
8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.
9. The Lord hath heard my supplication: the Lord hath received my prayer.
10. Let all my enemies be ashamed, and be very much troubled: let them be turned back, and be ashamed very speedily.

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: 6

Explanation of the Psalm

1. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath." The prayer of one truly penitent and contrite, and hating sin supremely. For God then chastises the sinner in anger and rage, when the chastisement does not proceed from the fatherly love he bears us, with a view to our correction, but to annihilate the sinner, and to satisfy his own justice. This happens in this world, when the sinner is struck with blindness and obstinacy, so that sin becomes the punishment of sin; and in the other world, when the soul is consigned to hell's flames; stricken with such horror, and fearing the abyss of the judgments of God, he does not say against the scourge of punishment which, instead of separating from, rather brings us nearer to God; but he dreads the supreme evil and misfortune of being abandoned to the desires of his heart, to his ignominious passions, to obduracy, and blindness, and finally to eternal separation from God. Anger and fury are here synonymous, so are reprove and rebuke; for the prophets not infrequently use such repetitions, by way of emphasis or explanation.

2. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled." The penitent uses some arguments to move God not to rebuke him in his fury, the first drawn from his own weakness, as if he said: Lord, do not look upon my sins as offenses against yourself; but as my own wretchedness and infirmity; and, therefore, punish me not as a judge, but as a physician heal me. Burn me, cut me, if you will; but with a view to heal me in your mercy, and not to destroy me in your justice. For our sins are real miseries, and the more malice we have in committing them, the greater do they become; while the less knowledge and fear we have of them, the greater is the misery it entails on us. Therefore, says he. "Have mercy on me, for I am weak," that is to say, look with mercy on my sins, however great and numerous, in the light of so many diseases and infirmities, that make me weak and feeble. "Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled." The same idea in different language; when God does have mercy, he removes the misery, and consequently, heals the sore; and thus, "having mercy" is synonymous with

10. "Let all my enemies be ashamed, and be very much troubled: let them be turned back and be ashamed very speedily." A final prayer for a total end to his spiritual difficulties. "Let them be ashamed and very much troubled" for having effected nothing, but, on the contrary, having labored in vain. "Let them be turned back" to their own place from whence they came, "And be ashamed very speedily;" that is, let them be off as quickly as possible, and in confusion at my determination not to defer my conversion; but on the contrary, from this hour, this moment, I enter on the straight and perfect way of the Lord.

This conclusion may also be looked upon as a prayer for the conversion of those who, by their persecutions or their temptations, had been the cause of his sins. He prays that they too, by coming to know the truth, and to hate sin, "May be ashamed, and very much troubled," and thus the more quickly converted to God. Finally, these words may be taken in the nature of an imprecation, to take effect on the day of judgment; for on that day all the wicked, whether men or demons, who attempted to stir up the just to impatience or to any other sin, "Will be ashamed, and very much troubled," and will "Be turned back" to see the truth, but without benefiting themselves thereby. Then shall they say, as it is in Wisd. 5, "We therefore have strayed, from the way of truth," That will come about very quickly, because "The day of the Lord tarrieth not," though we may think otherwise, But when it shall come, and come all of a sudden, then will be seen how quickly it came.

END OF PSALM 6

7. "My eye is troubled through indignation: I have grown old amongst all my enemies." The effect of such a profuse effusion of tears. The Hebrew, instead of the word "trouble," has "worn out" or grown dark," to show how great was his anger and indignation with himself for the hideousness of his sins; and so profuse his tears in consequence, that his eyes grew dim and melted. "I have grown old amongst my enemies;" that means, I cannot but be highly indignant with myself for never having perfectly conquered any vice, never subdued any of my spiritual enemies, but have grown old among them all. By enemies, he means all who provoke one to sin, be they demons or men, or vice itself, and evil habits.

8. "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." Having taken to heart so much his having grown old amid his enemies, he exclaims, "Depart from me;" that is to say, relying on the divine assistance, I will consort no more with you, I will not yield to your temptations. "For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping;" that is to say, the Lord, moved to mercy by my tears, has not only forgiven them, but has given me greater grace to resist you.

9. "The Lord hath heard my supplication: the Lord hath received my prayer." An explanation of the former verse, and repeated two or three times, to show the certainty of his having been heard; and that thereby he may gather fresh courage to resist temptation.

"healing." The same applies to "because I am infirm," and "my bones are troubled;" for bones denote health and strength, and one's bones are said to be troubled when one's health fails, or his strength is impaired or debilitated.

3. "And my soul is troubled exceedingly: but thou, O Lord, how long?" A second argument from the consciousness of his sin, as he has it in Psalm 1, "For I know my iniquity." In other words, I am not only wretched, but I acknowledge it; and therefore, my soul, looking in upon its wretchedness and deformity, is so horrified, confused, and filled with wholesome fear, that it becomes impatient and clamorous; "but thou, O Lord, how long?" Why not pity me; why not heal me? The word "how long," without any other word, is very significant, for it indicates the expression of a troubled soul unable to utter a full sentence.

4. "Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercy's sake." The third argument, drawn from God's mercy; "Turn to me;" that is, look on me; for God's look is the source of all our good. "Turn thy face, and we will be saved;" and in another, Psalm 29, he says, "You turned away your face, and I became confused;" and when the "Lord looked on Peter, he began to weep bitterly;" and James 1, calls "God the Father of lights;" for as the sun by its light enlightens, warms, and enlivens our bodies, so God, looking upon us with an eye of affection, illuminates, inflames, and warms our souls. "And deliver my soul;" rescue it from the pit into which it has fallen; from the noose of the hunter, in which it is held bound and captive; deliver it from the hands of its enemies, into which sin has consigned it. "Save me;" that is, deliver me from the imminent damnation of hell; for, properly speaking, to save one, means, to save them from the imminent danger of death. Observe the order followed here. First, God turns to us, and looks upon us with his grace. Secondly, we turn to him, and thus the soul is rescued from sin. Thirdly, so saved from sin, we are saved from the danger of imminent damnation. And all these stages in the process of justification, turn up, not from any previous merits of

ours, (for what does a sinner merit but punishment?) but through the mercy of God; and he therefore adds, “for thy mercy’s sake,” as if he said: I dare to ask so great a favor, having no reliance whatever on my own merits, but on your mercy.

5. “For there is not one in death, that is mindful of thee: and Who shall confess to thee in hell?” A fourth argument, deduced from the glory of God. I ask, he says, not “to be rebuked in thy fury,” because in such case I should undoubtedly be consigned to eternal death; and thus both your praise and your memory would be partly lost, for the damned have no recollection of God, so as to praise him; nor is there any one in hell to confess to God, that is, to praise him by confessing his prodigies and his goodness. Some will have the death spoken of here, to the death of the body only; and by hell, they mean the grave; and make the sense to be, that the dead lying in their graves do not praise God, and are not mindful of him, as they have no feeling, and they quote the words of Ezechias in Isaias 38, “For hell will not confess to thee, nor will death praise thee,” while it is pretty clear that Ezechias only asked to be delivered from the danger of corporal death. But I consider that the passage should be understood to mean everlasting death and the hell of the damned. For, though Ezechias feared the death of the body, he feared also the death of the soul, and, therefore, in his thanksgiving to God, he sang the canticle, because he felt that the restoration of his bodily health was a sort of intimation to him, that God in his goodness had remitted his sins, and delivered him from the danger of hell, and therefore, he says: “But you have rescued my soul that it may not be lost: you have cast all my sins behind your back, because hell will not confess to thee, nor death praise thee; they who descend into the lake will not expect thy truth.” All these arguments would be of no weight, were the death of the body alone in question here. For though the dead in the body and lying in their graves, are incapable of praising God, yet their souls live and praise him, and even their very bodies in the grave expect God’s truth, that is, his faithful promise of resuscitating them. They alone who descend into the lake of eternal damnation neither

expect God’s truth, nor remember his benefices, nor give him present or future praise. So said passage of Ezechias has been understood by St. Jerome and the other fathers.

6. “I have labored in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears.” The fifth argument, drawn from fruits worthy of penance. For, as the apostle has it, 1 Cor. 11, “If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged;” that is to say, if we would condemn and punish ourselves, God would not condemn nor punish us. For he spares those who do not spare themselves. He therefore, says, that he not only understands and detests his guilt, but that he will also, as far forth as he can, punish himself, both now and for the future. “I have labored in my groanings,” which means, I have deplored my sins with such a flood of tears, that I am thoroughly tired, though I do not still cease to shed them; for, “I will wash my bed every night,” means that every night, instead of enjoying sleep or rest, I will copiously deplore my sins, and water my couch with my tears. Here we must notice the profusion of tears and the long duration of them. For the Hebrew for washing conveys the idea, that the quantity of tears shed was so great that one might swim in them, and even the word watering implies a large quantity, when the whole bed was washed with them. “I will water” also is very significant, for it implies the quantity of tears shed to be so great that they ran like a stream. The words “every night” are ambiguous in the Hebrew, for they may signify the whole night, in which sense St. Jerome has taken it, or every night, as it is understood by the Septuagint. In either sense, wonderful to be told, and, perhaps, true in both senses, namely, that every night a long time was spent by him in shedding tears. A serious consideration for those who after the commission of many and grievous sins, can scarce bring themselves to shed a single tear when they come to ask pardon for them.