

END OF PSALM 124

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: 124

The just are always under God's protection.

1. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion: he shall not be moved forever, that dwelleth
2. In Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it: so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth now and forever.
3. For the Lord will not leave the rod of sinners upon the lot of the just; that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity.
4. Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to the upright of heart.
5. But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord shall lead out with the workers of iniquity: peace upon Israel.

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: 124

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion; he shall not be moved forever that dwelleth." The Prophet commences by laying down a general and most certain promise, and repeats it twice to confirm the truth of it. He says, "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion." All they who truly confide and trust in the Lord will be unmoved and as secure, no matter how great the storm, as Mount Zion, which is immovable, not only by reason of its being a mountain, but by reason also of its being sacred and most dear to God. He repeats it, and at the same time explains it, when he adds, "he shall not be moved forever that dwelleth in Jerusalem," which last phrase corresponds with the first part of the first sentence, for "shall be as a mountain" is but a different mode of expressing what is conveyed, "he shall not be moved forever," and "he that dwelleth in Jerusalem" expresses, "they that trust in the Lord." Because they could dwell in thought and hope in the heavenly Jerusalem are the very ones that trust in the Lord; for thus such trust and confidence is explained in Psalm 90, "he that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven."

2. "In Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it: so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth now and forever." He proves his assertion as to Mount Zion being a strong and secure place, and that those who trust in the Lord are much more so. The reason is, that Zion has "mountains round about it" like the wall, but they who trust in the Lord have the Almighty himself round about them; and while the mountains that surround Zion may fall or be leveled, God is round about his people, "henceforth now and forever." The meaning, then, of these verses is that all who trust in the Lord ought to feel quite secure, because he protects them from all evil, for though they may sometimes be temporarily afflicted it is all for their own good; and if God should at any time deprive them of riches, or health, or the like, he gives them something better in lieu thereof, perhaps patience and consolation, with a view to merit life everlasting. The trust spoken of here is not to be cofounded with vain presumption, it is the trust that springs from a sincere faith, a pure heart, a good conscience, and fervent love.

3. "For the Lord will not leave the rod of sinners upon the lot of the just; that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity." He explains a little more clearly how it is that God protects those who confide in his help. For, says he, if God sometimes, for his own just reasons, suffers the wicked to lord it over the just, he

will not suffer them to do so for any length of time, for fear the just may despair and turn to the same wickedness; and he, therefore, says, "for the Lord will not leave the rod of the sinners upon the lot of the just." God will leave the rod, meaning the scepter, the emblem of power, to the sinners for a while, "upon the lot of the just," on the inheritance, or the portion and lot of the just, but he will not leave them such power long, "that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity," for fear that just, on seeing that happiness of the wicked so continuous, appearing likely to have no termination; may not persevere in justice.

4. "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to the upright of heart." Having said there was danger of the just taking scandal at the prolonged power of the wicked, he turns to God, and prays to him "to do good to those that are good," by delivering them as quickly as possible from the power of the wicked; or at least, by giving them a copious supply of interior patience and consolation; and, at the same time, he tells and admonishes us that the truly good are they who are "upright of heart," they who are not scandalized at God's judgments, but take the most favorable view of everything God does, no matter how long he may suffer the wicked to have everything their own way. They had the upright of heart who conform their heart, that is, their judgment and their will, to that most upright rule of the will and judgment of God, even though they understand not why God does this or that, or why he suffers it to be done; and of such people another Psalm says, "how good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!" They submit to God in everything; God is pleasing to them, and they are to God, just as a straight rod laid on a straight line agrees and coincides with it accurately; while a crooked rod will not agree or lie fair anywhere but in a crooked place.

5. "But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord shall lead out with the workers of iniquity: peace upon Israel." Having prayed all manner of good on the upright of heart, the Prophet now issues a terrible threat against those who "turn aside" from such uprightness of heart to a crooked path, who, in persecution or tribulation, lose all patience, or who deny the faith, or complain and murmur against God, and says that they, with the "workers of iniquity," that is, with the persecutors and the wicked, shall "be led out" for judgment, because, as St. James has it, "now, whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one, is become guilty of all." And then, ultimately on lasting "peace upon Israel," that is, on God's people. The word "bonds" has puzzled many, and hence many explanations of it. I look upon it as being put in opposition to the straight path, so much lauded by the Prophet; and when he says, "turn aside into bonds," he alludes to those who follow the crooked way indicated by a rope twisted into coils or bonds, which is the only interpretation that harmonizes with the rest of the Psalm.