

END OF PSALM

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: 59

After many afflictions, the church of Christ shall prevail.

1. O God, thou hast cast us off, and hast destroyed us; thou has been angry, and hast had mercy on us.
2. Thou hast moved the earth, and hast troubled it: heal thou the breaches thereof; for it has been moved.
3. Thou hast shown thy people hard things; thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow.
4. Thou has given a warning to them that fear thee; that they may flee from before the bow; that thy beloved may be delivered.
5. Save me with thy right hand, and hear me.
6. God hath spoken in his holy place: I will rejoice, and I will divide Sichem; and will mete out the vale of tabernacles.
7. Galaad is mine, and Manasses is mine: and Ephraim is the strength of my head. Juda is my king:
8. Moab is the pot of my hope. Into Edom, will I stretch out my shoe: to me the foreigners are made subject.
9. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?
10. Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? And wilt not thou, O God, go out with our armies?
11. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the salvation of man.
12. Through God we shall do mightily: and he shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.

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: 59

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "O God, thou had cast us off and hast destroyed us; the has been angry, and hast had mercy on us." He begins by a narration of the past afflictions of the people of Israel; "O God, thou hast cast us off," from your fatherly care and protection," and hast destroyed us," allowing us to be harassed, oppressed, and destroyed by the Philistines, the Idumeans, the Moabites, and other enemies. "Thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us." Thou hast been angry with us for our sins that provoked you, and therefore given us up to our enemies; but, shortly after thou "hast had mercy on us;" when, through your grace, you inspired us to do penance, and, after having done penance, delivered us from captivity and persecution. The truth of these expressions will at once appear to anyone reading the book of Judges, and the first book of Kings. The Jews were left in the hands of their enemies by reason of their sins; on doing penance they were liberated. So with the Church of Christ. Saint Cyprian attributes the persecution of the early Christians to their sins, which was sometimes so severe, that this verse was quite appropriate to them. The expression, "hast had mercy on us," refers especially to the fortitude of the martyrs; for, though God, angry with Christians for their sins, may permit persecution, he still had great mercy on the Church, in giving the grace of fortitude to so many Christian; and its glory, from the crowns of innumerable martyrs, was much greater than its depression from rapine or the ruin of its sacred edifices.

2. "Thou hast moved the earth, and hast troubled it: heal thou the breaches thereof; for it has been moved." He explains the greatness of the persecution, for it was not one, or two, or many cities that were moved, but "the whole earth was moved." If we take these words in reference to the Jews, the meaning will be: The whole land of promise was moved; if in reference to the persecution of the Christians, the meaning will be: the Church diffused over the whole earth. "hael thou the breaches thereof, for it has been moved;" you who strike with fire and sword, not as an enemy, but as a physician, heal her wounds and "breaches," for "it has been moved;" admonished by the scourge, it has been moved to penance; and she that, from a continued prosperity, had begun to halt and to falter, has now taken to run in the way of your commandments.

3. “Thou hast shown thy people hard things; thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow.” He goes on with the same subject, and says, “thou hast shown thy people hard things;” may your people to see and to feel severe persecution. “Thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow;” taken advantage of this persecution, you have made us enter into ourselves, and drink the bitter, but wholesome cup of holy sorrow. The word “shown” conveys the idea of God’s kindness, who rather shows than inflicts trouble; and that with a view more of deterring than of punishing us; whence his chastisements are not at all as severe as they appear to be to the carnal; and therefore, the apostle says, “our present tribulation, which is momentary and light.” The words, “thou hast made us drink,” convey to us also an idea of God’s goodness, who does not show us that most wholesome gift of penance, but pours into our hearts, into the very depth of our hearts, and thus warms us, as wine warms the whole interior.

4. “Thou hast give a warning to them that fear thee; that they may flee from before the bow; that thy beloved may be delivered.” Through all those, “hard things” meaning the persecutions and afflictions by which the just are harassed here below God gives a warning to them that fear him, “to flee from before the bow,” that will shoot deadly arrows at the wicked on the last day; for the tribulations that the just suffering here, in order to purge them from venial sin, are signs of the grievous punishments that await the wicked after this life, of which the apostle Peter writes in his First Epistle, chapter 4, “for the time is that judgment should begin at the house of God. And if first at us, what shall be the end of those who believe not the gospel of God?” And his fellow apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 11, “but whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord, that we may not be damned with this world.” God, then, while he purges the elect, leads them to infer, from their own trouble, how great are the punishments in store for the wicked; and therefore, that they should be leading a pious and holy life, “flee from before the bow;” which is not drawn, but, on the last day, will be let fly with such force as will destroy the wicked for all eternity. “That thy beloved may be delivered;” a prayer for the deliverance of his beloved from their troubles and persecutions.

5. “Save me with thy right hand, and hear me.” Save me, the king of your people, and him my prayers for them.

6. “God hath spoken in his holy place: I will rejoice, and I will divide Sichem; and will meet out the vale of tabernacles.”

7. “Galaad is mine, and Manassas is mine: and Ephriam is the strength of my head. Juda is my king.” He now begins to show that his prayer was heard, that he conquered all his enemies, and that he made a considerable addition to his kingdom. “God hath spoken in his holy place,” through me his holy prophet, to whom he has revealed what is to happen, most of which is already accomplished. The prophecy was a well-known one, for Abner, Saul’s general, said to the people, 2 Kings 3, “the Lord hath spoken to David, saying: by the hand

of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hands of the Philistines, and of all their enemies.” “I will rejoice, and I will divide Sichem.” Having mentioned the prophecy, he now comes to prove that it was already, in a great degree, fulfilled. “I will rejoice,” like a conqueror after a victory, with an extension of his kingdom, and first of all, “I will divide Sichem,” that is, Samaria; as master of it, I will form it into districts, make a census of its cities, towns, and villages, and appoint judges and magistrates in them; “and I will mete out the vale of tabernacles,” I will do the same in the country next it, called the vale of tabernacles from the fact of Jacob having first pitched his tent there, and bought part of the land of Sichem. Observe here, that David, in enumerating the provinces of his kingdom, begins with Sichem, a part of Samaria, and is generally applied to Samaria; as also from the vale of tabernacles, called also Sochet, because it was there Jacob and his sons first hold of the land of promise. It is to be observed also, that he mentions here not more than Sichem, Sochet, Galaad, Manassas, and Ephraim, all of which belonged to the tribe of Joseph, because that was the greatest tribe of all, and thus he made it to signify all the tribes of Israel, on the kingdom of Israel. He makes several mention afterwards of the tribe of Juda, uniting it with the tribe of Benjamin, and was called the kingdom of Juda, when the division was made under Roboam. He, therefore, adds, “Galaad is mine, and Manasses is mine,” mine is the country called after the man named Galaad, and mine is the country called after Manasses the son of Joseph. “And Ephraim is the strength of my head;” mine is the country named after Ephraim, another son of Joseph, a country full of brave men, the principal defense, strength, and support of my kingdom. “Juda is my king.” Having enumerated the provinces of the ten tribes, under the name of Manassas and Ephraim, he now asked the tribe of Juda, to which, as we said before, was united with the tribe of Benjamin. “Juda is my king.” The whole country called Juda, from Juda son of Jacob, is mine too. Juda is a royal tribe, as we read in 1 Par. 28, “for of Juda he chose the princes;” and Jacob himself, at his death, and blessed his sons, said of Juda: “the scepter shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh;” alluding to which promise David makes use of the word used by Jacob, that signifies either a king over leader. He therefore says, “Juda is my king;” that is to say, the tribe of Juda, that always held the first place, and from which the kings, my fathers, sprung, is mine, and will supply the future kings.

8. “Moab is the pot of my hope. Into Edom I will stretch out my shoe: to me the foreigners are made subject.” Haven’t enumerated the provinces of his own kingdom, he now enumerates the provinces of the enemy become tributary to him, first of which he names that of some Moabites, called Moab, after Moab, the son of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. “Moab is the pot of my hope.” The province of Moab, now subject to be, is like a pot full of meat, abounding in riches and plenty, and giving me great hopes. “Into Idumea will I stretch out my shoe;” Idumea is the country possessed by the descendants of Esau, brother to Jacob, and at the time this Psalm was written, though David had obtained a victory over them, having killed twelve hundred of them, he had not yet conquered the whole of Idumea. That he did so afterwards appears from 2 Kings 8, where we read, “and all Idumea became subject to David.” He therefore says, “into Edom I will stretch out my shoe.” I will proceed to wage war, and trample on Idumea. “To me the foreigners are made subject.” I have

already subdued the Philistines, who are foreigners, so-called having had no connection or affinity with the Israelites. The Idumeans, the Ammonites, and the Moabites, though not children of Jacob, were connected with the Israelites, for the Idumeans were descended from Esau or Edom, who was brother to Jacob; and the Ammonites and Moabites were descended from Lot.

9. “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will be me into Edom?” Edom being the only nation not entirely subdued by David, and being the best fortified of all, he now says, “who would lead me into the strong city?” Idumea was a real stronghold, and he asks who will be the leader of the expedition to subdue it; of its strength the prophet Abdias says, “the pride of thy heart hath lifted thee up, who dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, and settest up thy throne on high, who sayest in thy heart. Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou be exalted as an eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence I will bring thee down, saith the Lord.” And he tells us of what strong city he speaks, when he adds, “who will lead me into Edom?” Who will help me to conquer Idumea? All this is most applicable to Christ and the Church. The kingdom of Juda means the Church, the Schemites or, Samaritans mean its enemies, who will, with great trouble, but with great certainty, be ultimately subdued. Ephraim and Manasses, typify the schismatics, inasmuch as Jeroboam drew them off from Jerusalem and the temple, and set up another altar; and they too will, at a fitting time, be subdued. The Idumeans are the type of the Jews, the last to submit, like the Jews, who, however, in the end will be brought to Christ.

10. “Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? And wilt not thou, O God, go out with our armies?” He answers a question by asking another. Nobody can possibly bring us into the strongholds of the Idumeans, but you, “O God, who hast cast us off.” “And wilt not thou, O God, go out with our armies?” If you do, we must needs conquer; without your help, we will be the conquered.

11. “Give us help from trouble: for vain is the salvation of man.” You, therefore, who are alone the all-powerful, give us that help that will free us from all trouble; for any human help is of no value.”

12. “Through God we shall do mightily: and he shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.” Relying on God’s help we can do anything, and we will frustrate the designs of all those who seek to harm us.