

END OF PSALM 134

## 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: 134

An exhortation to praise God: the vanity of idols.

1. Praise ye the name of the Lord: O you his servants, praise the Lord.
2. You that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.
3. Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good: sing ye to his name, for it is sweet.
4. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself: Israel for his own possession.
5. For I have known that the Lord is great, and our God is above all gods.
6. Whatsoever the Lord pleased he hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps.
7. He bringeth up clouds from the end of the earth: he hath made lightnings for the rain. He bringeth forth winds out of his stores.
8. He slew the firstborn of Egypt, from man even unto beast.
9. He sent forth signs and wonders in the midst of thee, O Egypt; upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10. He smote many nations; and slew mighty kings:
11. Sehon, king of the Amorrhites, and Og, king of Basan, and all the kingdoms of Chanaan:
12. And gave their land for an inheritance, for an inheritance to his people Israel.
13. Thy name, O Lord, is forever: thy memorial, O Lord, unto all generations.
14. For the Lord will judge his people, and will be intreated in favor of his servants.
15. The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of men's hands.
16. They have a mouth, but they speak not: they have eyes, but they see not.
17. They have ears, but they hear not: neither is there any breath in their mouths.
18. Let them that make them be like to them: and everyone that trusteth in them.
19. Bless the Lord O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron.
20. Bless the Lord, O house of Levi: you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.
21. Blessed be the Lord out of Sion, who dwelleth in Jerusalem.

*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: 134**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM**

1. "Praise ye the name of the Lord: O you his servants, praise the Lord."

2. "You that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God." Those two verses are word for word with the first verse of the last Psalm, and are now repeated, with a view of keeping up the praise then and there commenced. The Prophet, then, addressing the servants of the Lord, exhorts them to praise his name and himself. And he tells what servants he means when he adds, "you that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God;" you that are not now exiles, nor on the road, nor pilgrims, who need prayer more than praise; but you who have come home, and who now stand in the house, of whom another Psalm says, "Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O Lord, they will praise thee forever and ever." The Psalm, then, seems specially adapted to those who have arrived at their home above, and have entered that house not made by the hands of man, but that everlasting one in heaven. It may be also applied to those who, in hope and desire, have begun to dwell in that house above; such as those who, with the apostle, can say, "but our conversation is in heaven;" and it is peculiarly applicable to the clergy, whose duty it is to stand in the houses consecrated to God, and to minister to him with zeal and propriety. All God's servants are bound to that, but the clergy especially are bound by virtue of their peculiar obligations.

3. "Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good: sing ye to his name, for it is sweet."

4. "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself: Israel for his own possession." Having exhorted God's people to praise him, he now assigns a reason why they should do so. First, because he deserves it highly. Secondly, because it will turn to our own benefit and pleasure. Thirdly, because we are specially bound thereto, more so than others, by reason of the many favors he conferred on us. "Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good;" for a good thing is worthy of praise – a bad thing, of censure. Now, God is so good, that he alone is absolutely good, and so good in every respect, because he does not derive his goodness from anyone or thing but himself, and nothing can be good but by his gift and favor. Other things are good to a certain extent, such as a good man, house, or clothes; but God is goodness itself, having in him all the essence of goodness. "Sing ye to his name, for his name is sweet." Reason the second, because it is neither troublesome nor laborious, but sweet, pleasant, and agreeable. The saints in heaven know how sweet it is to sing to the

See Psalm 113.

21. "Blessed be the Lord out of Sion, dwelleth in Jerusalem." He concludes by praying that out of Sion may come the blessing of the Lord, "who dwelleth," as in his seat of governments "in Jerusalem;" or, in other words, that all the citizens of Sion and Jerusalem should never cease to bless God, who is a great king, and who selected Jerusalem as his seat of royalty; all which is most applicable to the Church militant, but much more so to the Church triumphant, which, free from all troubles, and devoid of all care, has nothing else to do, "but the be still, and see that the Lord is God."

15. "The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of men's hands."

16. "They have a mouth, but they speak not: they have eyes, but they see not."

17. "They have ears, but they hear not: neither is there any breath in their mouths."

He now goes on to prove that God is greater than any other god, that being the second proposition he laid down in verse 5. And, though it is not saying much for God's being superior to idols of gold and silver, excelling, as he does, all kings, demons, and angels, still the Prophet thought right to compare them with God, to show their weakness and infirmity the more clearly; as also, because, though many of the idols of the Gentiles were really demons, still the Gentiles did not know that and looked upon them as so many gods, as is evident from the history of Dagon. And, finally, because from it may be inferred the weakness and infirmity of those demons, who could give neither life nor feeling to those images, as the true God did to his image, man, to whom he gave the spirit of life, feeling, and motion, and what is of much more value, liberty and free will. David, then, justly proves that God is greater than any other of those gods, who, though they may have mouth, eyes, and ears, have them to no purpose, because the breath of life has not been infused into them, the Prophet evidently alluding to the expression in Genesis. "And breathed into his face the breath of life." See Psalm 13, for further explanation.

18. "Let them that make them be like to them: and everyone that trusteth in them."

19. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron."

20. "Bless the Lord, O house of Levi: you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." Having compared the true with the false gods, he now institutes a comparison between their relative worshipers, and, by way of imprecation, predicts that the votaries of the former would be like their idols, dumb, blind, and deaf, as regards the seeking for, and finding, and praising, what is truly good; and he invites the servants of the true God to bless the Lord, for they, as being images of the living God, see, hear, and speak, and are, therefore, bound to exercise their tongue in praising that God, from whom they have the senses of feeling, life, and understanding. He invites, in the first place, the house of Israel in general, and then, severally, the house of Aaron, in the order of precedence, as being the priestly family; then the house of Levi, as the Levites who attended the priests; and finally, "all that fear the Lord;" that is, all the laity. Now, though the contrast drawn here between the worshipers of the true God and worshipers of idols applies specially to the pagans, as distinguished from Christians, still it applies also to the avaricious; for avarice is a worship of idols, and to those whose God is their belly, and to all who, while they acknowledge that they know God, deny him by their acts, as contra distinguished from the pious, "whose conversation is in heaven" For the former, like idols, do not see what is truly good or truly bad, though they have eyes, as it would appear; nor do they hear God's voice, nor chant his praises, though they appear to have ears and a tongue: on the other hand, the truly pious, whose heart is in heaven, have eyes for the interior; and they see the ears of their heart erect, and they understand; their tongue free and unrestrained, "to bless God at all times, and to have his praise always in their mouth."

Lord, and thus, they never desist a moment from his praise, and that by reason of their constantly tasting of his sweetness at the very source of it; we find it sometimes sweet enough, and at other times irksome enough, because it is not always that we taste of God's sweetness; it is only, when through the grace of God, and previous meditation, we come to know him, and burn to love him. "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself: Israel for his own possession." Here is the third reason derived from justice and obligations. As God, by a special gift of his grace, chose the children of Jacob to be his own people, it is only just, and due to that people, that they should be the foremost in praising him. We must here remark, that God, the founder of the universe, directs all nations by his providence, that he gave to them all the light of reason, and the natural law inscribed on their hearts, with Guardian Angels, not only to each individual, but also to every kingdom and province; and that such favors are enjoyed by all nations in common with the people of Israel; that he adopted Abraham, with his posterity, through Isaac and Jacob, to be, as it were, his own inheritance, portion, and possession, and gave them a written law and ceremonies for his worship; and the prophets, as so many messengers, through whom he would instruct them. Secondly, that this was a wonderful gift from God because he selected that people as his possession, for the purpose of heaping favors upon them, and cultivating them as he would his chosen vineyard; and all this was his own gratuitous gift. He chose them not on account of their merits, but because it so pleased him; as is clear from the predestination for eternity, alluded to by Malachi 1; and St. Paul, Romans 9, "for when the children were not yet born, (Jacob and Esau,) nor had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, it was said to her: the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." Thirdly, all that has been said, and a great deal more, applies to the Christian people collected from the Gentiles, for, as St. Paul teaches, the Gentiles, were the wild olives, in reference to the Jews, who were the natural branches of the olive; and when most of them got broken off by their incredulity, God adopted the wild olives, and engrafted them on the good olive; that is to say, he built up the Gentiles "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," by calling them through faith to his people, and making them "fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God." We, then, ought, nay, even we are bound in justice, to praise God; but it is Jacob and Israel, the elect, now in possession, the Jerusalem above, the assembly, to wit, of the saints, to whom is specially directed the order, "praise the Lord, Jerusalem, praise your God, Sion," who are specially bound.

5. "For I have known that the Lord is great, and our God is above all gods."

6. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased he hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps." He now answers a question that may be put to him, viz., why he invited God's people in so pressing a manner to praise him? "For I have known that the Lord is great," and that, not only over men, but even "above all gods;" and, therefore, I cannot be silent; therefore I cry out, I chant, I sing, and I invite all to join me therein. He then proves both assertions of God's being

great, and of his being greater than any other gods. His greatness is shown in his omnipotence, because, "whatsoever the Lord pleased he hath done," throughout the universe, "in heaven, earth, sea, and in all the deeps," which deeps may mean the lower regions, for such they are called in the Gospel, Matthew 8, where "the Devils besought him, that he would not command them to go into the deep," and thus all parts of the world are included, the heavens above, hell below, and earth and sea between them. Compare then, for moment, our infirmity with God's power.

"Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth he hath done," for "nothing is impossible to him." We wish to do many things but cannot do them. God did those things because he wished it; of his own free will, and not through any necessity, for he needs nothing. We generally work because we need to, and if necessity did not compel us we would lie idle. Finally, God did everything he wished, by reason of his being Lord of all things; and when we cannot carry out even our own wishes, how can we do anything else? It is, therefore, but just, that instead of praising ourselves, we should constantly praise the Lord our God.

7. "He bringeth up clouds from the end of the earth: he hath made lightning for the rain. He bringeth forth winds out of his stores."

8. "He slew the firstborn of Egypt, from man even unto the beast."

9. "He sent forth signs and wonders in the midst of thee, O Egypt; upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants." He now addresses some examples of God's action on the air, the earth, and the waters, when it so pleases him; for God does wonderful things, both among his angels above, and in the abyss below. As we know nothing, however, of what happens in either of those places, he gives us an example of what he does in the places we are acquainted with, the sky, the earth, and the waters, though we cannot account for those wonderful things. First, as regards the clouds; they rise from the earth, are formed in the sky, and return to the earth again, after being turned into rain. "He bringeth up clouds from the end of the earth." In speaking thus, he accommodates himself to the general notions then about the earth, which was that of an extensive plain, from the four quarters of which, as the wind varied, the clouds were supposed to ascend; and though the familiarity of the matter makes us regard the thing with very little surprise, it is a matter of great wonder and surprise, how the vapor ascending so imperceptibly from the earth and the sea, should all at once become so condensed as the veil the whole heavens with clouds, and that in a moment; the only thing that makes it cease to be wonderful is, its being the work of the Almighty. The next is more wonderful, "he hath made lightning's for the rain." He mixed them both together, a most wonderful thing! For one would suppose that lightning would dry up the rain, or the rain would extinguish the lightning. He, possibly, alludes to that passage in Exodus, where it is said, "and they hail and fire mixed with it, drove on together." – "He bringeth forth winds out of his stores." The third example of the greatness of God is taken from his production of the winds. We are well acquainted with them, we sometimes feel them acutely, and still nothing is more obscure than the mode of their production, and, therefore, the Lord himself said, "the spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh, nor whither he goeth;" as much as to say, you

hear the noise, and that is all you know about it. The expression, "out of his stores," is quite figurative, for God has no such stores, but when he sends gales of wind, it looks as if they had been locked up for some time, and let suddenly loose. To this third example of God's power, he now adds the fourth which consisted in the slaughter of all the firstborn of Egypt, men as well as beasts, as related in Exodus 12, and he couples it with the generation of the winds, because, just as the winds are a sort of corporeal spirits, who, by reason of the minuteness of their composition are all but invisible, and still cause a wonderful havoc among the trees in the country, the houses in the cities, and the ships at sea; thus the celestial spirits, who were invisible to human eyes, in a twinkling, at God's beck, slew all the firstborn of Egypt, beasts as well as men; a thing that could not be ascribed to pestilence or to any other natural cause, whereas, none but the firstborn suffered, and of the Hebrews, not one at all. He finally alludes to all the miracles that God wrought in Egypt, through Moses, as may be read in Exodus.

10. "He smote many nations; he slew mighty kings."

11. "Sehon, king of the Amorrhites, and Og, king of Basan, and all the kingdoms of Chanaan."

12. "And gave their land for an inheritance, for an inheritance to his people Israel." To the miracles wrought in Egypt against Pharaoh he now adds the miracles that were wrought on the journey, against two most powerful kings, Sehon and Og, who were conquered by the Israelites in a most miraculous manner, see Numbers 21. And he finally alludes to the miracles that God did in the very land of promise against thirty-one kings who were in possession of it. Many were the miracles performed there: for instance, that the walls of Jericho tumbling to the ground at the sound of the trumpets by the priests; and of the sun and moon standing still at the command of Josue. God, then, gave all that country to his people of Israel, to be held by them as their own inheritance, just as he wishes the kingdom of heaven, of which it was a type, to be had by fighting and laboring for it. However, if he did not go before, accompany, and follow-up all our labors with his grace, we could do nothing whatever. He it is, then, that saves us, frees us from captivity, and bestows on us an everlasting inheritance.

13. "Thy name, O Lord, is forever: thy memorial, O Lord, unto all generations."

14. "For the Lord will judge his people, and will be intreated in favor of his servants." He now concludes the first proposition he undertook to prove, namely, God's greatness, and having proved it satisfactorily, he says, "thy name, O Lord, is forever." These wonderful acts of yours will keep your memory alive forever, which, as usual, he reiterates, when he says, "thy memorial," your name, will be remembered "unto all generations." "For the Lord will judge his people," as he always did, by severely punishing all her enemies; "and will be intreated in favor of his servants," will always leave himself open to attend to their prayers.