

5. "Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou has anointed my head with oil; and thy chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!" The seventh favor, namely, the wonderful consolation extended by God to his elect, in the troubles incidental to them in this world. The meaning of this verse is, not that God has prepared a table, wine and oil, against his enemies, as if they were the weapons wherewith to fight; but the meaning is that God provides great consolations to meet great tribulations; and, as the enemy seeks to do us much injury, so God pours upon us many consolations, which are pictured as if we were enjoying a feast, where the table was overspread with the choicest meats, with the rarest wines, and the most precious perfumed ointments, such as we read of Mary Magdalen having poured on the head of our Savior. "Against them that afflict me." This is clearer in the Greek, and the meaning of it is: Out of the persecution and trouble prepared for me by my enemies, you have extracted great consolation—a well-furnished table for me. "Thou anointed my head with oil." Thou has poured precious ointment on my head, and thus "made my face cheerful with oil:" nor was there wanting the cup of wine, inebriating me with thy grace, so "goodly," and so "gladdening to the heart." Such another passage occurs in Psalm 93, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul." And in 2 Cor. 7, "I am filled with comfort: I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."

6. "And thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days." This is the last good, that brings to the supreme good. "Thy mercy will follow me," not for a time, but forever, which is the peculiar privilege of the elect. "And that I may dwell;" that is, it will follow me for that purpose, "to dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days;" that is forever.

END OF PSALM 22

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: 22

God's spiritual benefits to faithful souls.

1. The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.
2. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up, on the water of refreshment:
3. He hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake.
4. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.
5. Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriateth me how goodly is it!
6. And thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days.

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: 22

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. “The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.” The happiness of the elect, under the figure of sheep in charge of some excellent shepherd, is described in this Psalm. David, one of such sheep, exclaims, “The lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing;” I am one of God’s sheep, and he being a most wise, powerful, and good shepherd, I may confidently assert, “I shall want nothing.” This is the language of one of the happy, “on the road,” and “in hope.” For the happy, actually so, and “at home,” do not use the future tense, but the present, because they are done with labor and grief, and have already “entered into the joy of their Lord.” But the blessed on the road, and in hope, cannot say, I want nothing, being subject to many passions; but they can justly say, “I will want nothing;” because, when they will want they will get; when they shall be hungry, they will not fail to be supplied with food; when they shall be sick, they will be sure of a physician. The words, “I shall want nothing,” come to be explained by him after. Sheep require, first, rich pasture; secondly, pure water; thirdly, one to bring them back when they stray; fourthly, to be brought through easy passages; fifthly, to be protected from wolves and wild beasts; sixthly, to be supported when tired and weary; seventhly, if cut or maimed by passing through cliffs or rocks, to be cured; and, lastly, at the close of day, at the end of their journey, to have a home wherein they may securely rest. All these matters God gives in abundance to his elect, and they can, therefore, justly say, “I shall want nothing.” David takes up the first in these words, “He hath set me in a place of pasture;” not in a barren or desert spot, but in prairie land, where an abundance of the choicest and most wholesome grass is to be had; where the sheep have food in abundance; the food, in a spiritual sense, being the knowledge of God, his sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Truth himself, for these are what support, nourish, and increase the spiritual life within us.

2. “He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment:” The second necessary for the sheep, viz., to have not only plenty of wholesome pasture, but to have plenty of pure water at hand, to be cooled in the heat and the thirst. The spiritual water that extinguishes the thirst of us sheep, is the grace of God, of which Christ himself speaks in the Gospel, John 4, “Whosoever shall drink of the water I will give him, shall not thirst forever.” Nothing is so effectual in curbing our carnal desires, as a taste of the love of God; to the soul who once tastes of it, everything else seems insipid.

3. “He hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name’s sake.” The third want of the sheep, the being brought back when they stray; for man, though he may be his own strength turn from God, cannot by his own strength return to him. He says then: The good shepherd sought me out when I strayed, brought me back, and, more than that, never allowed me to stray again—a peculiar privilege to the elect. “He hath led me on the paths of justice.” The fourth duty of the shepherd, made me walk in the narrow path of his commandments; and, thereby, lead the life of the just. That he effected by taking from the power and strength of the tempter, by an increase of charity, by additional sweetness, by illuminating with his justice, by enticements, by excitement, by endearment, by terror, and other innumerable ways, on which, if we would only reflect for a moment, we would never cease, during our whole lifetime, to return thanks to so sweet a Pastor; the more so, when all this has been done, not by reason of our previous merits, but “on account of his own name, that he may make known the riches of his mercy to the praise of the glory of his grace.”

4. “For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.” The fifth service rendered the sheep, is their protection from wolves and other wild beasts. “For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death;” through dark, dreary places, exposed to all manner of dangers from wild beasts, robbers, precipices, “I will fear no evils, for thou art with me.” And, in truth, no one can well imagine the security a faithful soul feels when they bring to mind that God, who cannot be resisted, accompanies them. “The shadow of death” is of frequent recurrence in the Scripture; the proper meaning of which is that dense darkness, which shuts out all light, and is caused by death. The blind are said to be in darkness, because they see nothing; and with much more reason are the dead said to be so, because they feel nothing. Hence, the poets make the dead to dwell in shady places, wrapped up in darkness; and hence, the Scripture promiscuously uses darkness for the shadow of death, to explain one through the other, as in Job 3, “Let darkness and the shadow of death cover it;” and Job 10, “To a land that is dark, and covered with the mist of death;” Isaias 9, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen;” in each of which passages “dwelling in darkness,” and “dwelling in the region of the shadow of death,” are used to signify the same thing. And as dark places are exposed to a great many dangers, and we generally go through them with no small amount of fear, David, therefore, says, “Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death:” in dense darkness, surrounded by danger, “I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.” The sixth benefit conferred on the sheep, their being supported when weary. He now drops the simile of the sheep, and takes up the shepherd, for sheep are not supported, when weary, by a staff, but are carried on the shoulders of the shepherd; which God is always ready to offer his faithful souls when weary.