

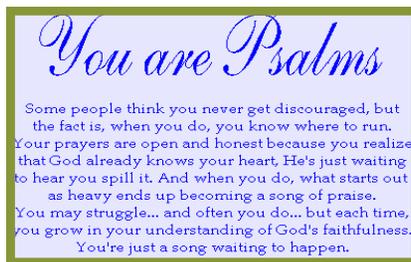
8. "Arise, all my glory; arise, psaltery and harp: I will arise early." Having said he would "sing and rehearse a psalm," that he may do it properly, he now invokes, not the Muses, in the style of profane writers, but the Spirit of prophecy. "Arise my glory;" that is, that divine Spirit, through whose inspiration I have sung of the divine mysteries; "arise psaltery and harp;" that is, my soul and my tongue; the psaltery, which yields the higher notes, representing the spirit; and the harp, which yields the lower notes, representing the tongue. "I will arise early; "the fittest time for contemplation, and for chanting God's praises.

9. "I will give praise to thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing a psalm to thee among the nations." When David did rise early in the morning to sing God's praises, he says, "I will give praise to thee, O Lord, among the people;" that is, among the Jewish people; and, knowing that his Psalms would be chanted all over the world by the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, he adds, "I will sing a psalm to thee among the nation's."

10. "For thy mercy is magnified even to the heavens; and thy truth unto the clouds." The subject of this praise to all nations will be his mercy, which is become so great that it has risen up to the heavens; not that his mercy, absolutely speaking, has so risen, from being infinite, it admits of no increase but in his works; and, in like manner, "thy truth," which also has risen to the heavens; "clouds" being used here to signify them, an expression used by Christ himself; who says, "you shall see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of God, and, coming in the clouds of heaven."

11. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth." As God's mercy and truth reach the heavens, it is only meet that his praise and glory should fill the heavens and the earth.

END OF PSALM 56



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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: 56

The Prophet prays in his affliction, and praises God for his delivery.

1. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in thee. And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away.
2. I will cry to God the Most High, to God who hath done good to me.
3. He hath sent from heaven, and delivered me: he hath made them a reproach that trod upon me. God hath sent his mercy and his truth.
4. And he hath delivered my soul from the midst of the young lions. I slept troubled. The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth.
6. They prepared a snare for my feet; and they bowed down my soul. They dug a pit before my face, and they are fallen into it.
7. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and rehearse a psalm.
8. Arise, O my glory; arise, psaltery and harp: I will arise early.
9. I will give praise to thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing a psalm to thee among the nations.
10. For thy mercy is magnified even to the heavens; and thy truth unto the clouds.
11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth.

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: 56

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in thee. And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away." David hiding in a cave, prays to God to be delivered from Saul's persecution; a type of Christ, who, too, concealed in a cave, as he was, while in the form of a servant, prays for the delivery of his body, the Church, from the persecution of Satan and his ministers. "Have mercy on me O God." God of mercy, take me out of the misery I am suffering, while my life is in danger, through the persecution of Saul. "For my soul trusteth in thee." Whereas God promises his assistance to those that trust in him, confidence in God is the surest way to have his mercy extended to us. "And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope." I have not only hitherto trusted in thee, but I will persevere and continue to trust in thee as long as may be necessary, which will be "until iniquity pass away;" until our pilgrimage here shall have an end; for so long will iniquity be found in this world. The metaphor of "the shadow of thy wings" is a frequent use in the Scriptures; in Psalm 16, we have, "protect me under the shadow of thy wings;" in Psalm 62, "and I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings;" in Psalm 90, "under his wings thou shalt trust;" and our Lord himself, in Matthew 23, says, "how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." The meaning is: I will have as much confidence in your protection as the chickens have in that of their mother, when they gather under her wings for protection from the birds of prey; thereby conveying to us the signal love of God for his elect, and his special protection of them.

2. "I will cry to God the most High, to God who hath done good to me." The confidence he has in God's protection will make him "cry to God the Most High," as being supreme judge, far and away above all other judges; and his reason for doing so is, because he knows, from experience, the advantage of thus appealing to God; "to God who hath done good to me;" who enabled me to avenge myself of my enemies, (such is the force of the Hebrew.) Saul has so surrounded a mountain to which David had fled, that his escape seemed absolutely impossible, when God so ordered the news came to Saul of an incursion of the Philistines into his kingdom, that compelled him to withdraw his troops from the pursuit of David, to his own great disgrace and sorrow, to which he briefly alludes in the following verse.

3. "He hath sent from heaven, and delivered me: he hath made them a reproach that trod upon me. God hath sent his mercy and his truth."

4. "And he hath delivered my soul from the midst of the young lions. I slept troubled. The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." "He hath sent from heaven" help and assistance, "and delivered me," when I was surrounded by the enemies legions, and all but killed or captured. "He hath made them a reproach that trod upon me." He disgraced Saul and his soldiers, who were about to trample me to the dust, when they were unable to effect their purpose, by reason of their having to retire to meet the Philistines. "God hath sent his mercy and "his truth;" that is, his justice, to shame and confound my enemies. "And he hath delivered my soul," meaning my life, "from the midst of the young lions;" from Saul and his soldiers, fierce and ferocious as any lions. Notwithstanding this delivery, however, "I slept troubled;" for I feared the detractions and the calumnies of my enemies, "whose teeth are weapons, and their tongue a sharp sword;" that is to say, though the impending danger from the young lions was removed, I knew I was not safe from the tongues of the detractors and calumniators, who, from a distance, could still shoot their darts at me; and, therefore, "I slept troubled."

5. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth." Having related the extent of his fear, he prays to God to manifest his glory by inflicting punishment on his impious enemies. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens." Sit on thy highest throne for judgment. "And thy glory above all the earth." Let your glory be made known to all on earth, that all may understand and praise your justice.

6. "They prepared a snare for my feet; and a bowed down my soul. They dug a pit before my face, and they are falling into it." He assigns a reason for calling down God's vengeance on his enemies. For, along with many other persecutions, "they prepared a snare for my feet," to trap me like a wild beast. "And they bowed down my soul." Their persecutions and plots were so numerous, that, from constant care and trouble, I got bent and bowed down. He then repeats the same in another metaphor. "They dug a pit before my face;" right in my path, in the hope of my falling into it; "and they are fallen into it;" caught in the trap themselves, as actually happened to Saul, who went into the cave of Engaddi, to answer a call of nature, in which case David and his friends had taken refuge. They urged David that now was the time to have Saul's life, helpless and unsuspecting of danger as he was. David decline, but Saul fell into the pit.

7. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and rehearse a psalm." He now, in the end of the Psalm, raises his soul to God, exclaiming, "my heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready;" ready to live, ready to die, ready to rule, ready to be trampled on, ready to take anything cheerfully from your hand. "I was sing and rehearse a psalm;" I will praise your justice, praise your mercy in song and music.