

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.

FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON PSALMS AND OTHER READINGS
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 41

The fervent desire of the just after God: hope in afflictions.

1. As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after thee, O God.
2. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come, and appear before the face of God?
3. My tears had been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?
4. These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me: for I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; the noise of one feasting.
5. Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to him: the salvation of my countenance.
6. And my God. My soul is troubled within myself: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and Hermoniim, from the little hill.
7. Deep calleth on deep, at the noise of thy floodgates. All thy heights and thy billows have passed over me.

Continued>

(continued from preceding page)

8. In the daytime the Lord hath commanded his mercy; and a canticle to him in the night. With me is prayer to the God of my life.
9. I will say to God: thou art my support. Why hast thou forgotten me? And why go I mourning, whilst my enemy afflicteth me?
10. Whilst my bones are broken, my enemies who trouble me have reproached me. Whilst they say to me day by day: where is thy God?
11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me? Hope thou in God, for I will still give praise to him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God.

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: 41

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters: so my soul panteth after thee, O God." Love is a fiery affection, and, therefore, cannot be restrained, but breaks forth in words and sighs. To express his love somehow, David compares himself to a thirsty stag, saying, "as the hart panteth after the fountains of water;" a most happy and expressive simile. The stag is noted for four peculiarities. It is a deadly enemy to serpents, and constantly at war with them. When it is pursued by the hunters, it betakes itself to the highest mountains as quickly as possible. By some natural instinct, they singularly carry out the advice of the apostle, "bear ye each other's burdens;" for, according to St. Augustine, when they move in a body, or swim across a lake, the weaker ones rest their heads on the stronger, and are thus helped along. Finally, when they are tired after a combat with serpents, or a flight to the mountain, or from helping each other along, they seek to refresh themselves by copious draughts of water, from which they cannot be tempted or deterred. Such is a most perfect idea of the true lover of God. He has to wage a continued war against the serpents of his evil desires. When he is nigh overcome by temptation, or by persecutions, he flies away to the mount of contemplation, bears his neighbors infirmities with the greatest patience, and, above all, thirsts ardently for God, from whom he will not be held back by any earthly happiness or trouble. Such was David, though a soldier; so was Paul, Peter, and the other apostles and martyrs; such were all who felt they were, while here below, in exile, and, through good and evil days, never lost sight of that country, the supreme object of their wishes.

10. "Whilst my bones are broken, my enemies who trouble me have reproached me. Whilst they say to me day by day: where is thy God?"

11. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me? Hope thou in God, for I will still give praise to him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God." Not only has my enemy "afflicted me" before your face, you who are "my support," but even "whilst my bones are broken," come to such a pitch of debility and infirmity, that I can scarcely resist temptation. "My enemies who trouble me have reproached me," asking me incessantly, "where is thy God?" The very enemies who persecute and harass me, reproach me with the confidence I have in you, as if the confidence were of no avail, for they constantly ask, "where is thy God?" Who you boasted was "your helper and protector." So Tobias was reproached, "where is thy hope for which thou gavest alms and buried the dead?" And again, "it is evident thy hope is come to nothing, and thy alms now appear." So the Jews upbraided Christ on the cross, "he trusted in God; let him deliver him if he will." Thus also, his incredulous enemies insulted David in his troubles, but though he was for the moment "saddened and disquieted," he only reproved himself, saying, "why are thou cast down, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me? Hope thou in God, for I will still give praise to him;" words we have already explained in verses 5 and 6 of this Psalm.

END OF PSALM 41

7. “Deep calleth on deep, at the noise of thy floodgates. All thy heights and thy billows have passed over me.” He goes on with an account of the dangers and temptations of this life, comparing them to an inundation, alluding to that of Noe. “Deep calleth on deep.” An immense mass of water came rolling over me, and the moment it passed, another came in succession, as if called by the first. And those vast inundations poured in “at the noise of thy floodgates;” with such a noise and such a clamor, as if the floodgates of heaven were opened. “All thy heights,” all the lofty breakers, “and thy billows have passed over me;” the whole inundation, the universal deluge, passed over me. He alludes, as we said before, to the general deluge, when “the cataracts of heaven were opened;” that is, the quantity of rain that fell was such that would lead one to think some cataracts in heaven were opened, and that all the water burst forth with an unheard of force and violence, from which foundation arose the great abyss, an immense depth and quantity of water. This metaphor is used here to give an idea of the great dangers and temptations to which God will sometimes expose his elect. Men such as David, truly spiritual, alone are aware of the extent and magnitude of these temptations; for it is such people only know the boundless machinations of the enemy, and how grievous a matter it is to fall away from the grace of God.

8. “In the day time the Lord hath commanded his mercy; and a canticle for him in the night. With me is prayer to the God of my life.” After having described the extraordinary amount of temptation endured by him, he now tells us how he was in turn relieved by the consolations he got. “In the day time the Lord hath commanded his mercy,” which means, after those inundations of water, and those dreadful abysses had cleared away; “in the day time” of prosperity, “the Lord hath commanded his mercy” to visit and console me; “and a canticle to him in the night,” and the night of tribulation and temptation; even “his canticle” will not cease, for I will, even in the night, sing his praises, thank and glorify him. “With me is prayer to the God of my life.” My song at night shall be in the secret of my heart, speaking with it rather than with my lips, looking upon him as the source of my salvation and my life, I will say to him,

9. “I will say to God: thou art my support. Why hast thou forgotten me? And why go I mourning, whilst my enemy afflicteth me?” He now admires the vicissitudes of the divine providence in governing us. If, O God, thou art really “my support, why hast thou forgotten me?” How does it come to pass that I should be overwhelmed by so many temptations and tribulations, that so pour down upon me, that, though you are my hope and my strength, you seem to have forsaken me? How does it happen again, that “I go mourning whilst my enemy afflicteth me?” While you are my helper and my protector.

2. “My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come, and appear before the face of God?” He explains the meaning of “panting after God,” and why he should be sought after. St. Chrysostom observes, that three things usually excite our love, and through it our thirst and desires; and these are the beauty of the object, favors conferred on us, and love itself, for beautiful objects almost compel one to love them; favors conferred, lead us to love the giver; and love on their part provokes mutual love. Should these three things be united in one person, that is, could there be found or imagined anyone of surpassing beauty, conferring boundless favors daily on another, for whom they feel the most intense and ardent love, how could the latter possibly stand by not ardently loving the former in return? Dave shows here that these three things are united in God, in regard of himself; and, therefore, states that “he thirsts after him;” that is, he is inflamed by love and desire towards him. “My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God,” and the most beautiful, most noble, most excellent of all things; comprising all good, “strong,” not transitory or perishable, but permanent, everlasting. “Living,” active, intelligent, loving, pouring down continual favors on us, having great regard for us, boundless love for us. Such thirst after what is so good, so kind, so loving of me, forces me, from my whole heart, to exclaim, “when shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord?” When will there be an end to my pilgrimage, when the commencement of any joys?

3. “My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it said to me daily: where is thy God?” He that will reflect attentively on the three points already alluded to, namely, the incomprehensible beauty of God, the multitude of his favors, and the extent of his love that caused him to deliver up his only begotten Son for us, cannot but burst into tears in his desire for getting the full possession of so great a good. David seriously reflected on these points, and, he, therefore, adds, “my tears have been my bread day and night.” My tears were my only food, I lived on them day and night; that is, during the whole term of my pilgrimage, whether in the days of prosperity, or the nights of adversity, my soul not only refused to be gladdened by any earthly consolation, or to be saddened by any tempo mishap; but, at all times, my tears have been my meat and my drink. “Whilst it is said to me daily,” by the wicked and the incredulous, “where is thy God?” That means, while I wander about daily, “seeking whom my soul loveth,” my thoughts and my spirit said to me, “where is thy God?” All those things you have seen in your search for him are beautiful, to be sure, but not like thy God. Where, then, is your God? Where will you look for him? When will you come and see the face of your God?

4. “These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me: for I shall go into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; the noise of one feasting.” He goes on with the expression of his desires, “he poured out his soul,” which may be interpreted in three ways.

First, when about to enter the wonderful tabernacle, the very house of God. I cleared, banished all earthly delights out of my soul, that I may fill it with the delights of my Lord. Second, I extended, expanded my soul to be able to contain the immense good to be had in that wonderful tabernacle; where there is the “never failing plenty of the house of the Lord.” Third, “I poured out my soul:” rose above it in contemplation, as it is expressed in Lam. 3, “he shall sit solitary, and hold his peace; because he hath taken it upon himself.” And, in fact, in this our exile there is no more ready way of getting up to the “wonderful tabernacle,” and the actual house of God, than through our own soul, which is the image of God. It is more sublime than the heavens, and deeper than the abyss; and he who can steady his own soul and rise above it, will rise to him whose image it is, and he “will go over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle and the house of God.” To touch briefly on this ascent, let us consider: the soul is a spirit, and, therefore, far exceeds all things corporeal; and thus, God being a spirit, and the Creator, not only of bodies but of spirits, therefore, far exceeds not only bodies, but even spirits. Again, the soul, however simple and indivisible, is yet entire in the body and in all its parts; filling all the members, yet occupying none exclusively; thus, God, while he is one, and indivisible, still fills the whole world and all created things, everywhere entire, present everywhere, confined nowhere. Thirdly, the soul does not move about in the body, still carries it, guides it, governs it, quickens and enlivens it, as we see from the death of anyone; for, the moment the soul departs, the body falls down at once, and in one moment loses all power of motion, sense, beauty, everything. Now, what the soul is to the body, God is to the universe; not that God is the soul of the universe, as some philosophers vainly imagined; but, because he seems to have a certain resemblance to the soul in these respects; for, while he remains fixed and unmoved in himself, “upholding all things by the word of his power,” and, “in him we live, move, and have our being.” Fourthly, the soul is intelligent, and our intellect has cognizance of all of the senses, and knows many things besides, which no corporal sense can comprehend. So God is all intellect preeminently, replete with the knowledge of all men and angels, and of infinitely more matters, far beyond our understanding. Fifthly, the soul knows many things not only in theory but even practically; hence, the endless productions of human ingenuity, in the various arts, trades, and manufacturers; so exquisitely wrought as nearly to vie with nature; so also with the understanding of God, both in theory and practice, who without tools, without trouble, in a moment, by his sole word, from nothing made the universe. Sixthly, the soul is endowed with free will, and, therefore, moves the members of the body at its pleasure. Thus God, at his pleasure, governs all created things; and, therefore, David, in Psalm 118, says, “for all things serve thee.” And, not only is the soul, in its essence, the image of God, but in a remote sense it is the image of the Trinity; for there is in the soul intelligence representing the Father; knowledge derived there from, representing the Word of the Father; and love, springing from such intelligence, and knowledge, representing the Holy Ghost. There is also in the soul memory, intellect, and will, which, to some extent, represent the three divine Persons. “The soul then is poured in itself,” and rises over itself in contemplation, that it may be enabled to pass over to the “wonderful tabernacle;” and, therefore, the Prophet adds, “for I shall go over to the

place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God.” By the place of the wonderful tabernacle is meant, the heavenly Jerusalem, the tabernacle in heaven not made by human hands, where the house of God is, of which he said in Psalm 26. “One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life.” – “With the voice of joy and praise, the noise of one feasting.” He tells us now, that in that ecstasy in which “he poured out his soul,” and in contemplation arrived at the site of “the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God,” that he did not do so in silence, but in loud acclamations, in admiration, and praise, in such joy and Jubilee, as those enjoying a banquet cheerful and glad, such is meet for the soul wrapped up in contemplation of the joys of the heavenly Jerusalem.

5. “Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to him: the salvation of my countenance.” With such spirits and mental consolation he seeks to dry up his tears, saying, “why art thou sad, O my soul?” Why should tears be your bread day and night? Why will you by such incessant tears so “trouble me?” “Hope in God,” though you don’t see him, you so ardently long for, yet hope in him, “for I will still give praise to him;” that means, though the time has not yet come, it will come when before his face I will praise God, and declare his mercies, and say to him, “the salvation of my countenance;” that is, you are my salvation, for you brighten up my countenance by your light, and my face to behold yours, “and I will know as I am known;” and from a clear knowledge I will say, “thou art my God.”

6. “And my God. My soul is troubled within myself: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and Hermoniim, from the little hill.” He now tells the alternations of sadness and consolation that were wont to seize him; sadness, in fear of the dangers of this life; consolation, from the hope and promise of the future. “My soul is troubled within myself.” Though I told my soul “to hope in God,” yet, when I looked in upon my weakness, and the little light and strength I possess, I was seized with great fear, and “my soul was troubled;” to cure which fear and terror I said, “I will remember thee from the land of Jordan and Hermoniim, from the little hill. I will take my eyes off myself, and fix them on you, instead of fixing my eyes on the Jordan before me; I will think of the river “that gladdens your city, and the torrent of thy pleasure,” enjoyed by those who are there with you; and from this little hill Hermoniim, before me, I will remember your holy mountain, in which you dwell with your holy angels; and with such recollections I will console my soul and my desires. Whether Hermoniim be a different mountain from Mount Hermon is not very clear; most probably it is, for Hermoniim is here spoken of as small, whereas Hermon was a very large mountain.