

after the soul of the just;" the wicked will, as usual, try to ensnare the just, as the hunter seeks to catch his prey; "and will condemn innocent blood," when they shall have ensnared him they will condemn him to death, however conscious they may be of his perfect innocence; which may be understood of corrupt judges, false accusers, and all ill-disposed characters.

22. "But the Lord is my refuge; and my God the help of my hope." The Prophet now speaks in the person of the just; and in reference to the expression, "they will hunt after the soul of the just," the just man replies, so they may; they may hunt after me, and condemn me to death," but the Lord is my refuge," so that their treachery cannot reach me. "And my God, the help of my hope." In the Hebrew, it is "my rock;" on which I firmly stand and build.

23. "And he will render them their iniquity: and in their malice he will destroy them: the Lord our God will destroy them." The most just providence of God consists in finally helping the just, and scattering the wicked. "He will render them their iniquity." He will cause their wickedness to recoil on themselves, for it will not harm the just, who will be rewarded with a crown for his patience; while it will damage the impious, who will be punished for his malice, which is explained in the next sentence; "and in their malice he will destroy them." St. Augustine observes the force of "in their malice," because God punishes them, not so much for what they did, but for the spirit, the malice in which they did it. Judas gave Christ to death, so did God the Father; but we thank him because, in the excess of his love, "he spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" but we execrate Judas, who delivered up the Lord, not through love, but through avarice; not for our salvation, but for his own purse. The Prophet adds, "the Lord our God will destroy them;" to explain who it was would destroy them, for though he said, in the beginning of the verse, that they would be destroyed, he did not say by whom, and he now says they will be destroyed by "the Lord our God," whose providence they either denied or despised."

END OF PSALM 93

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: 93

God shall judge and punish the oppressors of his people.

1. The Lord is the God to whom revenge belongeth: the God of revenge hath acted freely.
2. Lift up thyself, thou that judgest the earth: render a reward to the proud.
3. How long shall sinners, O Lord, how long shall sinners glory?
4. Shall they utter, and speak iniquity: shall all speak who work injustice?
5. Thy people, O Lord, they have brought low: and they have afflicted thy inheritance.
6. They have slain the widow and the stranger: and they have murdered the fatherless.
7. And they have said: the Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob understand.
8. Understand, ye senseless among the people: and you fools, be wise at last.
9. He that planted the ear; shall we not hear? Or he that have formed the eye, doth he not consider?
10. He that chastiseth nations, shall he not rebuke: he that teacheth man knowledge?
11. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain.

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12. Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord; and shalt teach them out of thy law.
13. That thou mayest give him rest from the evil days: till a pit be dug for the wicked.
14. For the Lord will not cast off his people: neither will he forsake his own inheritance.
15. Until justice be turned into judgment: and they that are near it are all the upright in heart.
16. Who shall rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who shall stand with me against the workers of iniquity?
17. Unless the Lord had been my helper; my soul had almost dwelt in hell.
18. If I said: my foot is moved; thy mercy, O Lord, assisted me.
19. According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.
20. Doth the seat of iniquity stick to thee, who framest labor in commandment?
21. They will hunt after the soul of the just, and will condemn innocent blood.
22. But the Lord is my refuge; and my God the help of my hope.
23. And he will render them their iniquity: and in their malice he will destroy them: the Lord our God will destroy them.

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: 93

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. “The Lord is the God to whom revenge belongeth: the God of revenge hath acted freely.” And the beginning of this Psalm, David lays down one proposition, from which all, if you choose, can plainly learn that not one of the wicked will go unpunished. Here is the proposition: the Lord God is the supreme Judge, most just and most powerful, so that none can resist him. For vengeance is the province of the Judge, and is, therefore, prohibited to private individuals. And though all judges are authorized to punish guilt and crime, yet vengeance, absolutely speaking, belongs to God, who will punish the crimes not only of all people, but even of judges, princes, and kings. He, therefore, says, “The Lord is the God to whom revenge belongeth;” that is, our Lord, who, strictly speaking, is the only Lord, who is obeyed by all in heaven and on earth; he is the God “to whom revenge belongeth” that is, the supreme Judge, who will punish all crime; “the God of revenge hath acted freely;” punished when he liked, for he fears no one, is not an acceptor of persons, no one can impede him, no one can resist him. That appeared in his ejecting the devil and his angels from heaven; in the deluge, through which he destroyed the human race, with the exception of a few; in the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; in the overwhelming a Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; and in various other signal

that meet us everywhere; in saying so he speaks in the person of the pious, and says “unless the Lord had been my helper,” were it not for his help and assistance, “my soul had almost dwelt in hell;” I was within an ace of everlasting death, for I would have fallen under the temptations, and doubted of the Providence of God. From this passage it will be objected that God’s help is not absolutely necessary to overcome temptation, but that it enables us to overcome them with more facility; for he would seem to say, if the Lord had not help me, I would hardly have escaped death, which would appear to imply, that he would have escaped death, but with some trouble and difficulty. The answer is, that the expression, “had almost,” refers not to the difficulty of the matter, but to the shortness of the time, making the meaning to be: had not the Lord assisted me my soul had been in a few minutes after in hell.

18. “If I said: my foot is moved; thy mercy, O Lord, assisted me.” He explains the nature of the mercy without which his soul had almost dwelt in hell, and it was this that the moment I acknowledged my weakness, and my inability to meet temptation “thy mercy, O Lord, assisted me,” for it enlightened my understanding, purified my affections, etc., strengthened my will, all of which enabled me to place the powers of my soul in the way of your commandments.

19. “According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.” God, in his providence, not only gives the virtue of patience to do just, but with it great and unspeakable consolation; which, though it does not remove tribulations, finds a place with them, and converts them into a subject of joy. So the apostle says, 2 Cor. 7, “I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.” Because when the just man suffers any tribulation, he feels that he is only purged of the dross of his faults, should he have any to be purged of; or, if he has not, that he is only being tried by the Lord: he feels that he is only suffering with Christ that he may be afterwards glorified with him; and, finally, he feels and understands that the reward of patience is great and valuable beyond measure, according to the apostle, 2 Cor. 4, “for our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.” He, therefore, says, “according to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart.” In proportion to the sorrows that produced sadness in my heart, “thy consolations have given joy to my soul;” for it is not according to the sufferings in the flesh that God gives consolations in the flesh to the just in this world; but in proportion to their corporal sufferings God gives them spiritual consolations, that subdues the sadness arising from their corporal sufferings. Nor does this expression of the Prophet, “according to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul,” contradict the saying of the apostle, “I exceedingly abound in joy;” for spiritual joy is far and away beyond any corporal sadness, but is always in proportion to the extent of the tribulation.

20. “Doth the seat of iniquity stick to thee, who framest labor in commandment?” He assigns a reason why God should console the just in their trouble, and that is, when God, who is all justice, gave men his commandments, which are troublesome to observe, it was meet that he should, with the oil of his sweet consolation, soften down and modify the burden of a law in other respects heavy and severe. “Doth the seat of iniquity take to thee?” Have you chosen for a companion the judgment seat of those who judge unjustly, “who framest labor in commandment,” you who have made your commandments so difficult of observance.

21. “They will hunt after the soul of the just, and will condemn innocent blood.” He concludes the Psalm by affirming that the wicked would deal unfairly with that just, but that God, in his providence, would watch them, and give both their deserts. “They will hunt

our comfort abound;” and again, in chapter 6, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,” where he does not say absolutely sorrowful, but “as sorrowful,” because his joy exceeded it, as he says, in chapter 7, “I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.” We have to observe also that while a crown is being woven for the just, a pit is being dug for the wicked, and that we must not be surprised at their punishment being sometimes deferred, when their pit, perhaps, is not entirely dug; as we are also not to wonder if the just be not crowned at once, when, perhaps, their crown is not completely woven. A matter of much wonder, though, is that the happiness and rise of the wicked should be the actual digging of their pit, and a higher they rise, the deeper they are sure to be buried; for the higher the wicked are exalted, the prouder they become: and by the very fact, the deeper they fall before God, according to Psalm 72, “when they were lifted up, thou hast cast them down.”

14. “For the Lord will not cast off his people: neither will he forsake his own inheritance.” He assigns a reason for having said, “Till a pit be dug for the wicked;” such a death is prepared by divine providence for the wicked; “for the Lord will not cast off his people,” however angry he may appear to be for a time, and suffer them to be afflicted, which he repeats when he says, “neither will he forsake his own inheritance.” He calls the assembly of the elect his people and his inheritance, for they are truly the people of Israel, chosen to be his inheritance.

15. “Until justice be turned into judgment: and they that are near it are all the upright in heart.” The Prophet now informs us that the assembly of the just would not be repulsed nor deserted by God to the day of judgment, that is, so long as we shall be surrounded by temptation, “until justice be turned into judgment;” that is, until the day when the justice of God, and now seems to be dormant, inasmuch as it does not reward the good, nor punish the wicked, comes into play; and that which was previously justice in the name comes now to take action and reward the good, while it punishes the wicked with a crown of justice, or the stipend of death everlasting. “And they that are near it are all the upright of heart;” and then, according to the justice of God, which will appear admirable in the clouds, they who will sit near him will be all day who loved him; who then will not fear but love him, being “upright of heart;” that is, conformable to his uprightness, and thereby just.

16. “Who shall rise up for me against the evildoers? Or who shall stand with me against the workers of iniquity?” He said that there would be an end of all injustice; and, on the contrary, that justice would reign forever, after the Last Judgment; he now says that, in the meantime, in the interval of converting justice into judgment, that the divine assistance was of absolute necessity to the just, to protect them from the persecutions of the wicked. “Who shall rise up for me against the evildoers?” Who will protect me from such a number of wicked men and Angels? “Or shall stand with me, to defend me against the workers of iniquity?” The second part of this verse being a mere repetition of the first.

17. “Unless the Lord had been my helper; my soul had almost dwelt in hell.” He tells the greatness of the danger we are in by reason of the multitude of the malignant

judgments. I come now to explain the words. The Hebrew for God, in this passage, implies that he is stout, brave, strong, to signify that he takes vengeance on crime with great severity. He is called “the God of revenge,” to give us to understand that vengeance proceeds from him, just as he is called the God of peace, the God of hope, the God of salvation. For God is really a God of revenge, because he not only punishes the guilty, when he sits in judgment on them, but he also takes vengeance on his creatures in innumerable and occult ways. For, through the justice of God, sin often becomes the punishment of sin, and the very things that men most desired and seek for become sources of punishment to them, through God’s justice. “Hath acted freely;” for he that is afraid cannot act freely, and the meaning is that when God chooses to avenge the sins of mankind, he does so freely, and before the whole world.

2. “Lift up thyself, thou that judgest the earth: render a reward to the proud.” Having said that God was the avenger of crime, he now calls upon him to do his duty, and, by punishing the wicked, to close the mouths of those who question his providence. “Lift up thyself, thou that judgest the earth;” you want the Judge of the whole world, rise, and ascend thy throne; “render a reward to the proud;” pass sentence of damnation on them, and thus punished the principal crime of mankind; for pride is the queen of vices, and once it is subdued, vice in general is conquered. Another reason for specifying the proud here is, that they alone who will not humble themselves through penance, will be punished on the last day; “for all have sinned, and need the glory of God,” but those who humble themselves under the powerful hand of God, and have a contrite and humble heart, will be saved; but the stiff necked, who only excuse their sins, shall be severely punished.

3. “How long shall sinners, O Lord, how long shall sinners glory?” He assigns a reason for calling for judgment on the wicked and the proud, and that is the long continuance of their pride and wickedness. This, however, is not to be read as an imprecation, but as a prediction, and that is order to console the just and the afflicted, to whom the Prophet says that the wicked and the proud will quickly perish, however established their happiness and power may seem to be now. “How long shall sinners O Lord, how long shall sinners glory” in their strength, their prosperity, and their crimes? “Shall they utter and speak iniquity?” Boast of their iniquitous doings, without any shame or fear whatever.

4. “Shall be utter, and speak iniquity: show all speak who work injustice?”

5. “Thy people, O Lord, they have brought low: and they have afflicted thy inheritance.”

6. “They have slain the widow and the stranger: and they have murdered the fatherless.” He tells what an amount of crime they perpetrated while they were suffered to run riot. “Thy people, O Lord, they have brought low.” The assembly of the pious, your people, chosen and set aside by you, and devoted to you alone, has been humbled, laid low, afflicted, and persecuted by them; “they have

afflicted thy inheritance;" they have most unjustly oppressed the same assembly of the pious, your peculiar inheritance. And they have afflicted the community in general, but they have specially vented their fury on wretched people, destitute of all help; for they killed "the widows" who lost their husbands, and "the strangers," who were far from their own country, and unknown; and "the fatherless," who were left without the parents help when most they needed it.

7. "And they have said: the Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob understand." He assigns a reason for those wicked people having committed sin with such effrontery; for they were so foolish as to suppose that God took no cognizance of human affairs, and that there was no judge to whom they would be bound to render an account of their works. "And they has said" to each other "the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob understand;" he will need to see nor hear, and thus will not know what we are doing, and, therefore, cannot examine or understand what we have about.

8. "Understand, ye senseless among the people: and you fools, be wise at last."

9. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? Or he that formed the eye, doth he not consider?"

10. "He that chastiseth nations, shall he not rebuke: he that teacheth man knowledge?" The verse, "he that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" This is a refutation of the verse, "the Lord shall not see," where seeing is used for the knowledge derived from either eyes or ears. The Prophet proves that God both sees and hears, from the fact of having given men eyes to see and ears to hear, and, therefore, must, of necessity, see and hear; for no one can give what he has not. The verse, "he that chastiseth nations, shall he not rebuke?" this is a reply to the wicked, who said, "neither shall the God of Jacob understand;" for the Prophet proves that God is endowed with intelligence and reflection, for it was he who gave both to man; for he both teaches and instructs them when he creates them what a mind able to reason, and infuses the light of intelligence into their minds. "Ye senseless among the people," gives us to understand that the wicked are the most brainless set among the entire people, in preferring false to true happiness, and temporary to eternal. "He that planted the ear" is a beautiful figure, giving us to understand that the sense of hearing, as well as the other senses, did not spring from the body itself, but were planted in it by God, as the trees, that do not spring from the earth itself, which is inanimate, but from the seed which man puts into the earth. "Shall he not hear?" This does not imply that God enjoys the corporeal sense of hearing, but that he, essentially, knows what we know only through the sense of hearing. The expression, "he that formed the eye," is another figure, through which we are given to understand that the beautiful mechanism of the eye, and the more extraordinary power it has see object, was made by God with as much facility as the potter forms any vessel whatever. "He that chastiseth nations, shall he not rebuke?" He that chastises all nations, by smiting their conscience, and admonishing them to desist from evil, and often punishing them openly, shall he not also rebuke his people, through the prophets, or through the scourge of tribulation? And if God corrects

and reproves, he certainly knows and understands what men are doing, and, therefore, falsely do the wicked say, "neither shall the God of Jacob understand?"

11. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men; that they are vain." Having refuted the assertions of the wicked, he says this is no new calumny of theirs, nor unknown to God. For "he knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vain." For man, after his nature was corrupted by the fall of the first man, became vain and like the senseless brutes that think of nothing but the present. We are, therefore, reminded here not to presume on ourselves, but, in all humility, to ask God for wisdom; for, "all men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God;" and St. James, therefore, admonishes us, "but if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not;" that is, he never upbraids us with our importunity for asking too often or too much; for he is rich in mercy, and so generous and liberal that he not only gives us what we ask, but rewards us for asking it. "Pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father, who seeth is secret, will reward thee."

12. "Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord; and shalt teach him out of thy law." This is a consequence of the preceding verse, for, if the thoughts of man, as far as they spring from himself, are vain, it certainly follows that he alone, whom God deigns to instruct, that is, whose eyes are opened by God to see and arrive at what is really good, if truly happy; that is to say, not vain, nor puffed up, but full of true and solid virtue. "And shalt teach them out of thy law;" that is, make him fully persuaded that he must give all the affections of his heart to the observance of God's law; for he cannot be said to have learned God's law who can merely repeat the Commandments; it is he alone whose heart and affections, moved by the infusion of divine grace, are so devoted to the observance of them, that he keeps them through the love of justice, rather than the fear of punishment; and the law becomes to him a yoke that is sweet, and a burden that is light.

13. "That thou mayest give him rest from the evil days: till a pit be dug for the wicked." The Prophet now instances one of the fruits of God's teaching, for the man so instructed by God will feel the persecution of the wicked less acutely, until their own ruin shall have come about. "That thou mayest give him rest from the evil days." The advantage your teaching will confer on the just man will sensibly mitigate the sadness consequent on the evil days, the days of tribulation and persecution. How long, though, are those days to last? "Till a pit be dug for the wicked;" until the digging of that pit, in which the wicked are to be cast, shall have been finished, for then there will be an end to the evil days, as there will be no wicked to harass the just, as all grief and pain shall then have left them, and recoiled upon the wicked. We must here observe that this delight in the law, and the spiritual gladness that characterizes the just in this life, is not pure and simple, as it is in the kingdom of heaven, but it is mixed to a certain degree with sadness; for the sadness is only mitigated, and not entirely removed, as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. 1, "for, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth