

END OF PSALM 97

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: 97

All are again invited to praise the Lord, for the victories of Christ.

1. Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: because he hath done wonderful things. His right hand hath wrought for him salvation, and his arm is holy.
2. The Lord hath made known his salvation: he hath revealed his justice in the sight of the Gentiles.
3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
4. Sing joyfully to God, all the earth: make melody, rejoice and sing.
5. Sing praise to the Lord on the harp, on the harp, and with the voice of a psalm:
6. With long trumpets, and sound of cornet. Make a joyful noise before the Lord our King:
7. Let the sea be moved, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
8. The rivers shall clap their hands, the mountains shall rejoice together.
9. At the presence of the Lord; because he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with justice, and the people with equity.

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: 97

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Sing ye to the Lord, a new canticle: because he hath done wonderful things. His right hand hath wrought for him salvation, and his arm is holy." He invites all men to praise God for his wonderful works. "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle," for there is not only new but great and wonderful matter for it, "because he hath done wonderful things;" for he was wonderfully, and in an unheard of manner, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, committed no sin, justified sinners, made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, nay, even the blind to see, the lame to walk, cured the sick, raised the dead; and, what is the most strange and wonderful of all, showed himself alive within three days after he was buried, took his body up to heaven, sent the Holy Ghost from heaven, and through the agency of the poor, humble men, persuaded the prudent and the wise to worship the crucified, to despise the things of the present, and to look forward to the things of the future, and, finally, as St. Augustine says, conquered the world, not by the sword but by the cross. All this may be referred to the Father, who in the Son, and through the Son, effected all these wonderful things; for the Lord says, "but the Father, who abideth in me, he doth the works. "His right hand hath wrought for him salvation, and his arm is holy." He explains what those wonderful things are, and instances one of them that comprehends the whole. The wonderful thing God did consisted in his having saved the world purely by his own power, without associates, without an army, without arms; he alone cast out the prince of this world, and delivered mankind from this power. Such was the object of all the wonderful things enumerated above; and thus, this one thing comprehends all. The expression, "hath wrought for him salvation," may apply to the Son, who saved the world by his own power; and to the Father who, through Christ, his right hand, saved it; but it comes to the same thing; "and his arm is holy," is merely a repetition of the foregoing; right hand and arm being nearly synonymous, and they signify virtue and power; but the word "holy" is added, for fear we should suppose carnal, not spiritual, strength is intended; for Christ did not overcome his enemy by the force of arms or by bodily strength, but by love and patience, by humility and obedience, by the merits of his most holy life, by his most precious blood spilled for love of us, and not by the spear or the sword, and obtained a signal victory over a most powerful enemy. So, says the apostle, "he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

2. "The Lord hath made known his salvation: he hath revealed his justice in the sight of the Gentiles." This verse, too, may be referred to the Father, "who made known his

salvation;" that is, the Savior he sent; first through the prophets, then through the apostles, and through the same "revealeth his justice." It may also be referred to the Son, who made known the salvation effected by himself, through himself, and through his apostles; for he preached it openly for three entire years and more, and then he sent his apostles, who announced his Gospel to the entire world. The Lord, therefore, by his own preaching, "made his salvation known;" that is, the salvation he brought on earth to confer on those who would believe in him; then, "in the sight of the Gentiles," through his apostles, "he hath revealed his justice;" that is, he made known and revealed to the Gentiles that mystery that was hidden from the world; and the mystery is his own justice; that is, the fulfillment of that promise that was formally made to the fathers concerning the redemption of the human race. This I consider to be the meaning of justice here; for in the following verse it means truth, as we shall see. However, if anyone, wishes justice to be understood of the satisfaction Christ had to offer, in the rigor of justice, for the sins of the whole world, I do not object, whether in reference to the Father, or to the Son. For truly did the Father, through the passion of the Son, and the Son through his own sufferings, "reveal" how iniquity required to be punished, and how rigorously God's justice required satisfaction. On this mystery the apostle writes as follows to the Ephesians, "to me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to enlighten all men what is the dispensation of the mystery, which hath been hidden from eternity in God."

3. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." He assigns a reason for God's having "made known his salvation," and "revealed his justice." Because he promised such to the fathers; and though he delayed the fulfillment of his promise for some time, he at length "remembered" it; that is, he acted as those do who remember a thing. God cannot forget, but he is figuratively said to remember when he does a thing after a while, as if he had forgotten it. The expression often occurs in the Scriptures; thus, "the Lord remembered Noe;" and, Luke 1, "he hath remembered his mercy." God the Father, then, remembered his mercy," through which he promised a Savior to the fathers; and God the Son "remembered his mercy," that induced him to promise to come as a Savior; and both remembered "their truth," their honor and justice in fulfilling the promise "toward the house of Israel;" for the promise was made to them, and not to the Gentiles; although God had determined, and often announced it through the prophets, that he would have mercy on the Gentiles, too. Hence our Savior, Matthew 15, says, "I was not sent out to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." And the apostle Romans 15, "for I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, but that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy, as it is written. Therefore will I confess to thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles." – "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." See the fruit of the preaching of the apostles! It was not in vain that God made his salvation known through their preaching, for the Gentiles heard them, and believed in Christ; and thus, the interior eye of the heart having been purified through faith and grace,

“all the ends of the earth,” the whole world, to its remotest boundaries, “have seen the salvation of our God,” or the Savior sent by him. There is a degree of point in the expression, “have seen;” it implies actual faith, united with knowledge, that moves the will to love and to desire; for they cannot be said to have seen God’s salvation, who, content with habitual faith, never bestow a thought on the Savior, and take no trouble whatever in accomplishing the salvation to be had through him. The expression, “all the ends of the earth,” is not to be read literally, for it does not mean each and every individual, but a great many from every nation and people.

4. “Sing joyfully to God, all the earth: make melody, rejoice and sing.” The giving thanks to God, and exulting and singing in spiritual joy, is a sign of faith. Thus, he that found the treasure “went, and through joy, sold all he had.” Thus when Philip preached in Samaria, and the inhabitants received the word of God, “there was great joy in that city;” and the eunuch, when converted and baptized, “went his way rejoicing” thus also St. Peter says, “and believing, shall rejoice with an unspeakable and glorious joy.” This joy is now predicted by the Prophet, as if he were inviting and exhorting the faithful to it, “Sing joyfully to God, all the earth.” All you faithful, all over the world, would have been brought from darkness to “the admirable light,” to the knowledge of the true God and our Savior Jesus Christ, praise and thank with a loud voice; sing, exult, and play upon musical instruments.

5. “Sing praise to the Lord on the harp, on the harp, and with the voice of a psalm.” “With long trumpets, and sound of cornet. Make a joyful noise before the Lord our King.” Four instruments are enumerated for those who have seen God by faith, and desire to see him by sight; they are the harp, the psaltery, long trumpets, and sound of cornet. These were, literally, the instruments most in use among the Jews, and a spiritual signification has been attached to each instrument. They seem to be to represent the cardinal virtues, the harp implying, prudence; the psaltery, justice; the long trumpet, fortitude: and the cornet, temperance. The harp, having various strings, blends their sounds together, and produces a sweet harmony; and thus prudence unites good works with various circumstances, and produces a perfect work. The psaltery of ten strings represents the Decalogue, containing all the precepts of justice. The long trumpet is beaten out and formed by repeated blows of the hammer, until it produces the sweet sounds required; thus, fortitude, by patiently bearing all trials and tribulations so draws out and perfects the man of God, back, with holy Job, it is no trouble to him to give out that sweet sound, “if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?” Finally, temperance, like a hard horn, from which the cornet was made, rising above and out topping the flesh; that is, chastising the body, by fasting and watching, and by bringing it under subjection to the spirit, forms it into a spiritual cornet. Such was the precursor of our Lord, who, with wild honey and locusts for his food, and a garment of camels here with a leathern girdle for his dress, called out, “a voice of one crying in the desert.” Such, too, was the most blessed Paul, who, instructed as he was by long continued temperance, gave out the following sweet sounds, “but having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content;” and again, “the meat for the belly, and the belly for the meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.” And truly,

“piety with sufficiency is great gain.” “Make a joyful noise before our King.” Be sure to strike up all the aforesaid instruments the moment the great King, who is Lord of all, shall have made his appearance.

7. “Let the sea be moved, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” As the coming of the Lord was a blessing for all in general, the Prophet calls, not only on the whole earth, but on all its parts, separately, to praise and sing to God. “Let the sea be moved,” heaving and swelling with exultation, as if it were animated; “and the fullness thereof;” its waters, islands, fishes; “the world, and they that dwell therein.” Let them, too, rejoice and exult because the Lord is the Savior of all men, especially of the faithful.

8. “The rivers shall clap their hands, the mountains shall rejoice together.” Having invited the sea and the earth, he now summons the rivers and the mountains to unite in their expressions of joy. He said, however, “let the sea be moved,” in the Hebrew, let it thunder; whereas to the rivers he says, they shall “clap their hands,” thereby expressing the difference between the noise of the one and of the other; and when he calls upon “the mountains to rejoice together,” we can easily understand that the Prophet does not ask those inanimate things to speak, to praise, or to sing, but that he is so carried away and inflamed with love for the coming Messiah, that he calls upon and wishes all created things to unite with him, as far as possible, in praising and thanking God.

9. “At the presence of the Lord; because he cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with justice, and the people with equity.” “Because he cometh to judge the earth” may be referred either to his first or his second coming. If to his first, the meaning will be: let all the aforesaid rejoice, “because he cometh to judge the earth,” to rule and govern the earth through most just and wise laws, not only as of old, in the majesty of his invisible divinity, but in visible and corporal appearance, “being made to the likeness of men, and in shape found as a man.” – If we refer it to his second coming, the meaning would be: let all these rejoice, because “the Lord cometh to judge the earth,” and he will exterminate all the sinners in it, and renew all its elements, “and he will deliver it from the servitude of corruption, under which it now groans and is in labor.” – “He shall judge the world with justice.” The same as the conclusion of Psalm 95.