

# Psalm 53

In finem in carminibus intellectus David cum venissent Ziphei et dixissent ad Saul nonne David absconditus est apud nos.

a. Deus in nomine tuo salvum me fac et in virtute tua iudica me. Deus exaudi orationem meam auribus: percipe verba oris mei.

b. Quoniam alieni insurrexerunt adversum me et fortes quaesierunt animam meam: non proposuerunt Deum ante conspectum suum diapsalma.

c. Ecce enim Deus adiuvat me Dominus susceptor animae meae.

d. Averte mala inimicis meis in veritate tua disperde illos.

e. Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi confitebor nomini tuo Domine quoniam bonum. Quoniam ex omni tribulatione eripuisti me et super inimicos meos despexit oculus meus

a. *Deus in nomine tuo.* Supra in aliis psalmis psalmista exaggeravit iniquitatem peccatorum quantum ad affectum peccati et contemptum Dei; hic exponit persecutionem quam ab eis patitur.

Titulus: *in finem intellectus David in carminibus.* Prima pars tituli plana est. Secunda tangit historiam quae scripta est *1 Reg. 23*, quando David pervenit ad desertum Ziph civitatis, et homines illius civitatis accusaverunt David Sauli, et Saul persecutus est eum, non tamen potuit eum comprehendere; unde haec accusatio non nocuit David, in quo significatur quod Ziphaei, idest florentes in hoc mundo; *Isai. 40 : Gloria mundi quasi flos agri [omnis gloria eius quasi flos agri]*, accusant sanctos, nec tamen nocere possunt, quia sanctus occultatur apud Ziphaeos, quia sanctus inter peccatores non floret, sed floritio eius est in occulto; scilicet flores honestatis. *Coloss. 3: vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo.* Agit ergo David in psalmo isto de bonis qui absconditi sunt inter malos et persecutionem patiuntur ab eis.

Dividitur ergo psalmus iste in partes tres. Primo praemittit orationem. Secundo ostendit

Unto the end, In verses, understanding for David. When the men of Ziph had come and said to Saul: Is not David hidden with us?

Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me in thy strength, O God, hear my prayer: give ear to the words of my mouth.

For strangers have risen up against me; and the mighty have sought after my soul: and they have not set God before their eyes.

For behold God is my helper: and the Lord is the protector of my soul.

Turn back the evils upon my enemies; and cut them off in thy truth.

I will freely sacrifice to thee, and will give praise, O God, to thy name: because it is good: For thou hast delivered me out of all trouble: and my eye hath looked down upon my enemies.

*O God, by thy name.* Above, in the previous two Psalms, the Psalmist presented emphatically the wickedness of sinners in so far as its was a matter of the desire for sin and the contempt of God; here he sets forth the persecution that he suffers at their hands.

The title reads: *Unto the end, In verses, understanding for David.* The first part of the title is quite clear. The second part touches upon the story that is written in *1 Kings 23*, when David came to the desert of the community of Ziph, and the men of that community denounced David to Saul, and Saul pursued him, but nevertheless was not able to seize him; so, this denunciation did not injure David, by which is signified the Ziphians, that is, those flourishing in this world, [Isaias 40: The glory of the world is like the flower of the field (all its glory is as the flower of the field)], who brought charges against the holy, but were not able to injure them, for the holy one [David] was hidden even among the Ziphians; a holy person does not flourish among sinners, but rather his flowering (namely the flowers of genuine goodness) is in secret; namely the flowers of genuine goodness; *Colossians 3: And your life is hid with Christ in God.* David speaks therefore in this Psalm about the good people who are hidden among the evil people and the persecutions that they suffer from them.

Therefore this Psalm is divided into three parts. In the first part, he presents his prayer. In the second

necessitatem orandi, ibi, *Quoniam alieni*. Tertio praemittit recompensationem, ibi, *Voluntarie sacrificabo*.

Circa primum duo facit. Primo ponit petitionem. Secundo ponit exauditionem, ibi, *Deus exaudi*. Petitio sua circa duo versatur. Primo enim petit pro se. Secundo pro inimicis. Pro se enim petit ut salvetur, non per merita sua sed propter amorem divini nominis. Unde dicit: *Deus in nomine tuo salvum me fac. Act. 4: Non est aliud nomen datum sub coelo*, etc.. Prov. 18: *Turris fortissima nomen Domini*.

Pro adversariis petit iudicium quod potest tripliciter intelligi. Uno modo de iudicio discretionis, ut scilicet eiuscausa discutiatur ab eis. *Ps. 42: Iudica me, Deus, et discerne*. Alio modo ut intelligatur de iudicio persecutionis, ut scilicet secundum suam iustitiam iudicet eum, liberando ipsum a malis. *Isai. 11: Iudicabit in iustitia pauperes*. Alio modo de iudicio condemnationis. Et hoc non petit ex desiderio vindictae sed conformando se divinae iustitiae.

Vel hoc dicit malorum iudicium praevidendo. Et hoc est quod dicit, *Et in virtute tua iudica me, Deus, exaudi orationem meam*. Hic ponitur exauditio. In oratione sunt duo. Scilicet illud quod petitur, et petitio. Quandoque autem Deus exaudit quod petitur, et non ipsam petitionem, quia id quod petitur aliquis impetrat ex gratia et misericordia; et haec sunt a Deo donata. Sed ipsa petitio aliquando fit a peccatore; et ideo non est exaudita, quia non est Deo accepta. Et ideo petit, scilicet ut sua oratio sive petitio impleatur cum dicit: *Deus, exaudi orationem meam*, et quod sua verba percipiat auribus, *Auribus percipe verba oris mei*; quod fit quando sua verba Deus acceptat et approbat. *Ps. 5: Verba mea auribus*, etc.

**b. Quoniam alieni insurrexerunt.** Hic ponit necessitatem orandi, ubi exaggerat persecutionem hostium, primo ex eorum affectu. Secundo ex potentia. Tertio ex contemptu Dei.

he indicates the grave reason for prayer, at *For strangers*. Third he makes recompense, at *I will freely sacrifice*.

With respect to the first he does two things. First he sets out what he is asking for. Second, he sets out the hearing of this, at *O God hear my prayer*. His prayer is occupied with two concerns. First, he asks on his own account. Second, on the account of his enemies. On his account, he prays that he be saved, not by his own merits, but according to the love of the divine name. For this reason, he says, *Save me, O God, by thy name; Acts 4: For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved; Proverbs 18: The name of the Lord is a strong tower*.

On the account of his opponents he asks for a judgement, which can be understood in three ways. In one manner, as a judgement of disclosure, namely so that his cause may be considered by them; *Psalm 42: Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause*. In another manner, so that it is understood as a judgement about the persecution [they impose], so that he be judged according to his own justice, by freeing him from evil people [who would judge him]; *Isaias 11: But he shall judge the poor with justice*. And, in another manner, as a judgment of condemnation. And he does not ask for this out of a desire for vengeance, but rather by conforming himself to divine justice.

Or he says this with an eye to the judgement of the wicked. And this is what he says, *And judge me in thy strength, O God, hear my prayer*. Here, he sets down the hearing of his cause. There are two things in his prayer, namely, that which is asked for, and the petition itself. When God hears the cause that is asked for, but not however, the petition itself, this is because that which is asked for is gotten by somebody out of grace and pity; and these are given by God. But the very same petition can be made by a sinner; and thus this is not heard, since it is not acceptable to God. So, he asks precisely that his prayer or petition be fulfilled when he says: *O God, hear my prayer*, and that his words be heard by [His] ears, *Give ear to the words of my mouth*, which takes place when God accepts and approves of his words; *Psalm 5: Give ear, O Lord, to my words*.

*For strangers have risen up against me*. Here he presents the grave reason for his praying, where he treats at length the persecution these enemies make against him, first from their disposition and desire. Second from their power. Third, from their contempt of God.

Ex affectu quia quando aliquis omnino alienus ab aliquo persequitur aliquem, hoc est periculosum, quia sine misericordia in eum insurgit; et ideo dicit, *Quoniam alieni*, idest daemones, vel peccatores. Si referatur ad quemlibet iustum, *Insurrexerunt adversum me* sine aliqua compassione sive misericordia. Sed alieni possunt dici qui aliter se habent quam amici, sicut Saul alienus erat a David, et Ziphæi qui accusaverunt eum Sauli. *Iob 19: Noti mei quasi alieni recesserunt a me.*

Ex potentia, quia quando debilis invadit potest se quis defendere; sed isti sunt fortes, quia *Fortes quaesierunt animam meam. 1 Reg. 24: Saul elegit tria millia virorum ad persequendum David.* Vel fortes, idest daemones. *Luc. 11: Cum fortis armatus*, idest diabolus, etc.

Ex contemptu Dei, quia aliquando aliquis desistit a persecutione in quantum retinetur amore Dei. Sed isti nec propter hoc dimittunt, unde dicit, *Et non proposuerunt Deum ante conspectum suum. Psalm: Dixit enim in corde suo: non requirit Deus.*

**c.** *Ecce enim Deus adiuvat me.* Hic ostendit se esse in oratione exauditum. Et primo ostendit se esse exauditum quantum ad aliquid. Secundo ponit exauditum quantum ad alia, ibi, *Averte mala.*

Dictum est supra quod oratio erat pro se cum dicit: *Salvum me fac*, et pro inimicis cum dicit *In virtute*. Primo ergo dicit se exauditum pro se quia dicit se salvatum; et deinde dixit de inimicis qui insurrexerunt contra eum et qui quaerebant animam suam; et in utroque est salvatus, quia contra insultum inimicorum dicit, *Ecce Deus adiuvat me*, scilicet praebet mihi auxilium. *Isai. 50: Dominus Deus auxiliator meus.*

Contra hoc quod quaerit *Animam meam* dicit, *Dominus susceptor est animae meae*, quasi dicat: Dominus salvavit me suscipiendo me in sua tutela. *Sapient. 3: Iustorum animae in manu Dei sunt. Psalm. 3: Tu autem, Domine, susceptor*, etc.

**d.** *Averte mala inimicis meis.* Hic petit se exaudiri pro inimicis. Et petit duo contra duo quae faciebant in illo, quia persequerentur eum, et quaerebant eum occidere; et ideo petit ut ipsi patiantur persecutionem et occidantur.

From their desire because, when somebody persecutes somebody else who is a total stranger to him, this is a most dangerous condition, because he rises up against him without any pity; and therefore he says, *For strangers*, that is demons, or sinners. If this refers to any particular just person, [they] *Have risen up against me*, without any compassion or pity. But the term "alien" can be said of any who are otherwise related than as friends, just as Saul was alien to David, and the Ziphians who denounced him to Saul; *Job 19: And my acquaintance like strangers have departed from me.*

From their power, because when somebody weak attacks, one can defend oneself; but these people are strong, since [the Psalmist states] *The mighty have sought after my soul; 1 Kings 24: Saul therefore took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went out to seek after David.* Or the mighty are demons; *Luke 11: When a strong man armed*, that is, the devil, *keepeth his court.*

Out of contempt for God, in that sometimes somebody leaves off from persecuting in so far as they are held back [from injustice] by love of God. But these people do not renounce this on account of that reason, whence he says, *And they have not set God before their eyes.*

*For behold God is my helper.* Here he shows that he was heard in his prayer. And first he shows that he was heard with respect to something. And, second he writes of the hearing in respect to other things, at, *Turn back the evils.*

It is said above that the prayer was on his account when he says: *Save me*, and on the account of his adversaries when he says, *In Thy strength*. He speaks first, therefore, on his own account because he says himself to be saved; Besides, he spoke about the adversaries that have risen up against him and who sought his soul; and in both of these conditions, he is saved, because against the insult of his adversaries, he says, *For behold God is my helper*, namely, he offers aid to me; *Isaias 50: The Lord God is my helper.*

Against the fact that they seek *My soul*, he says, *The Lord is the protector of my soul*, as if to say: the Lord has saved me by taking me under his care; *Wisdom 3: But the souls of the just are in the hand of God; Psalm 3: But thou, O Lord art my protector, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.*

*Turn back the evils upon my enemies.* Here he asks that he be heard on account of his enemies. And he asks two things against the two that they did at that time, because they persecuted him, and they sought

Quantum ad primum dicit, *Averte*, scilicet a me, *Inimicis meis mala*, quae mihi quaerunt inferre, quasi dicat: in eos illa mala averte quae volunt inferre mihi. Quantum ad secundum dicit, *Disperde illos*, idest fac ut disperdantur; idest occidantur; et hoc *In virtute tua*. Vel *In virtute tua*, idest propter potentiam tuam.

Sed hoc videtur esse contra verbum Christi, qui dicit: orate pro persequentibus. Dicendum quod omnes istae imprecationes quae leguntur in prophetis, tripliciter possunt intelligi.

Uno modo per modum pronunciationis quia loquebantur spiritu Dei et praedicebant futura per modum orationis, quasi dicat *Averte*, etc., idest avertes. Unde in Hebraeo habetur de praesenti, avertis.

Alio modo secundum conformitatem ad divinam iustitiam.

Tertio secundum spiritualem denunciationem. Peccatores quando desinunt peccare, tunc moriuntur et desinunt esse peccatores. Et hoc est continue precandum.

e. *Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi*. Hic ponit recompensationem. Et primo ponitur recompensatio. Secundo ponitur recompensationis ratio. Duo intendit recompensare sacrificium et confessionem.

Quantum ad primum dicit, *voluntarie sacrificabo tibi*. Contra supra dixit si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem. Et dicendum quod hic dicit de sacrificio quod est acceptum Deo, quod est sacrificium spiritus contribulati et castigationis corporis. *1 Cor. 9: Castigo corpus meum*, etc.. *Rom. 12: Exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem*, etc.

Tertium sacrificium est de rebus melioribus. *Hebr. ult.: Beneficentiae et communionis nolite oblivisci, talibus enim hostiis promeretur, idest placatur Deus*. Hoc ergo triplici sacrificio *Sacrificabo tibi, Voluntarie* quia cum gaudio. *1 Esdrae 3: In omnibus in quibus offerebatur ultro sacrificium. 2 Cor. 9: Hilarem datorem diligit Deus*.

Quantum ad secundum dicit, *confitebor nomini tuo, Domine, quoniam*, scilicet per gratiarum actionem. *Tob. 12: Benedicite Deum coeli, idest gratias agite*.

to kill him; so, he asks that they suffer persecution and that they be slain.

As to the first, he says, *Turn back*, namely from me, *The evils upon my enemies*, that they seek to bring against me, as if to say, "turn back the evils on those who will to being them upon me". As to the second, he says, *Cut them off*, that is, make them be dissipated; that is, killed, and this *In your strength*. Or, *In your strength* means "on account of your power".

But this appears to be against the expression of Christ, who says: "pray for those who persecute you". It is to be said that all of those curses that are read in the prophetic books can be understood in three ways.

In one way by the mode of declaration, because they discoursed through the spirit of God and predicted things to happen in the manner of prayer, as if he said, *Turn back*, etc. that is, "You will turn back". Whence, in the Hebrew, it has the present, "You turn back"

In another way according to the conformity to divine justice.

In another way according to the spiritual denunciation. When sinners cease to sin, at that time they die and they cease to be sinners. And this is something to be prayed for continually.

*I will freely sacrifice to Thee*. Here he sets down that which he gives in return. And first he sets down this recompense. Second he sets down the reason for this recompense. He intends to give back in return in two ways, by sacrifice and by giving praise.

As to the first, he says, *I will freely sacrifice to Thee*. Against the things above, he declares, "if you had wished a sacrifice, I would have given it". And, it is to be said that he says this about the sacrifice that is accepted by God, which is a sacrifice of an oppressed spirit and of chastising of the body; *1 Corinthians 9: But I chastise my body; Romans 12: That you present your bodies a living sacrifice*, etc.

The third sacrifice is of the better things; *Hebrews 13: And do not forget to do good, and to impart; for by such sacrifices God's favor is obtained*. This therefore is the threefold sacrifice that *I will . . . sacrifice to Thee, Freely*, because with joy; *1 Esdras 3: And on all in which a freewill offering was made to the Lord; 2 Corinthians 9: For God loveth a cheerful giver*.

As to the second he says *And [I] will give praise, O God, to thy name*: namely by the giving of thanks, *because it is good; Tobias 12: Bless ye the God of heaven*, that is, give him thanks.

Et quare? Non propter bona temporalia, sicut peccatores faciunt, de quibus dicitur confitebitur tibi cum benefeceris ei. Sed propter Dei bonitatem et benignitatem, et propter beneficia suscepta, quia exauditus sum in petitionibus meis.

Unde dicit se exauditum in se cum dicit, *Quoniam ex omni tribulatione eripuisti me*. Et tibi quantum ad inimicos, quia *Super inimicos meos despexit oculus meus*, quia non potuerunt mihi nocere. Vel *Despexit*, etc., quia contempsit eorum felicitatem et prosperitatem: *Ps. 14: Ad nihilum deductus est*, etc.

And why? Not for temporal goods, just as sinners do, about whom it is said that "he will praise you when you will have done him benefit". But for God's goodness and friendliness, and for the benefits received, for I have been heard in my petitions.

So, he speaks of this hearing of his case when he says, *For thou hast delivered me out of all trouble*. And I will even praise you in regards to my enemies, because *My eye hath looked down upon my enemies*, because they were not able to kill me, or, *Hath looked down*, etc., because he disdains their happiness and prosperity; *Psalm 14: In his sight the malignant is brought to nothing*.

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