

PSALM 29

✠ This psalm is a Thanksgiving Psalm.

✧ See the note about “thanksgiving psalm” in the introduction to Psalm 17.

✠ This psalm is read at the Third Inter-hour. It is read also at the Moleben of Thanksgiving for the recovery from illness.

✠ *The Orthodox Study Bible* indicates that this psalm prepares for the Resurrection of Christ, and together with Him the Resurrection of the Church.

“Thanksgiving for the Resurrection”

“Song of praise and thanksgiving : Thou hast healed me”

“In His Will is life and security”

1 For the end. A psalm of a canticle of the dedication of the house. By David.

V 1 About the Inscription : in the Masoretic (Hebrew) text the Inscription is “A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House; of David”.

✠ About “*for the End*” : see the note about “*for the End*” on Psalm 4:1.

✠ The NIV notes that this is the fourth of fourteen psalms with historical Inscriptions. See the note on Psalm 3:1.

✠ About “*psalm of a canticle*” : see Psalms 47:1 ; 66:1 ; 67:1 ; 74:1 ; 86:1 ; 91:1.

✧ About “*canticle*” : This is a psalm-like song, which is rooted in the Holy Scriptures.

✠ About “*the dedication of the house*” : Saint Athanasius recommends that we sing Psalm 29 when we are ready to dedicate the house of our soul, our heart, and also our domiciles to the Lord. He reminds us that our spirit, our soul, is the dwelling of the Lord in our bodies. He recommends that at these times we also sing Psalm 126.

✧ Saint Basil the Great explains that the Inscription may prepare for the Incarnation of the Word of God. The house may be a precursor of the Church built by Christ (see 1 Timothy 2:15), and it may refer also to the personal and communal renewal of all those who make up the Body of Christ. He

also comments that this psalm might have been used at the sanctification of the Temple constructed by Solomon.

✧ Saint Jerome of Bethlehem shows that this dedication may be understood as the Resurrection of Christ, and the subsequent dedication of all the members of the Body of Christ.

✧ Saint Augustine teaches in a similar fashion that this psalm prepares for the Resurrection of Christ, and the life of the Church. He adds that this also includes the transition to the state of immortality, and the renewal of the Church. This is the house that will abide in eternal peace. He further contrasts the temporary nature of a tent as a habitation as compared with the stability of a habitation made of stone and wood. He yet further reminds us that the house which is the Church is still in the process of construction, and that its ultimate dedication is yet to come.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus comments that this psalm refers to the restoration of human nature which Christ accomplished in His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension.

✧ Pseudo-Athanasius of Egypt opines that King David sang this psalm after his rescue from sin, when his soul was renewed through repentance.

✧ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) explains that this psalm was originally written and then sung on the occasion of the consecration of the royal palace of King David in Jerusalem.

✧ This psalm later came to be sung annually at the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, at Hannukah, after the Macabbean renewal (165 BC).

✧ See 2 Kingdoms 5:9, 11 ; 1 Chronicles 14:1.

✧ About “*by David*” : in this psalm, the Greek gives only “David”. We keep the preposition, because the intention is to show authorship.

[Ὑψώσω σε, Κύριε Exaltabo te, Domine]

2 I shall exalt You, O LORD, for You have drawn me up,/ and You have not gladdened my enemies over me.

V 2 About this verse : Saint Augustine makes a summary of this verse as though it were spoken by Christ within the Church to the Lord. The exaltation with thanksgiving includes the rescue of the Church from the attacks of enemies and the frustration of their plots.

✧ About “*exalt*” : Saint Ambrose of Milan teaches us that one who is holy and strives towards the Lord exalts the Lord, whereas the sinner abases Him.

✧ Origen writes that we cannot exalt God until we, in Christ, have been lifted up through the Cross. We exalt Christ, who exalts the Father and reveals the Father to us.

✧ See the note on Psalm 7:7.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see verses 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13 ; see the note about “*Lord*” on Psalm 1:2.

✧ About “*drawn me up*” : this translates the Greek word ὑπολαμβάνω, *hypolambanō*, which means “to take up”, “to pull up” from beneath.

✧ About “*not gladdened*” : see Psalms 24:2 ; 34:19, 24.

✧ About “*enemies*” : Origen explains that there are inimical spirits who are envious of our salvation, and they observe every fault, fall, or mistake through which they may cause despair or mock this salvation. He reminds us to be wary of these wiles, and to persist in living in gratitude to God for everything.

✧ Saint Augustine explains that these “*enemies*” refer to the devil, the governor of Hadēs and Death, and his angels, who could not hold Christ captive and prisoner.

✧ See the note about “*enemies*” on Psalm 5:9.

3 O LORD my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me.

V 3 About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on verse 2.

✧ About “*God*” : see verses 9, 13. See the note about “*God*” on Psalm 3:3.

✧ About “*cried out*” : Saint Basil the Great cautions us that it is only those who desire great and heavenly things who can cry out to the Lord. Those who desire mere trifles or earthly things, can only muster a mumble which the Lord will not hear.

✧ See verse 9 ; see also the note about “*while praising ... call ... saved*” on Psalm 17:4.

✧ About “*healed*” : Saint Augustine explains that Christ is, as it were, speaking. He then says that when He cried out to the Lord at Gethsemane, the Lord did heal Him – not of any personal illness, but of all the suffering, sickness and pain which He carried on behalf of all human beings. His flesh was healed at the Resurrection from the dead, and He showed us that our own healing after our death will be similar (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-58, especially verses 54-55).

✧ See the note about “*heal*” on Psalm 6:3.

4 O LORD, You led my soul up out of Hadēs :/ You saved me from those going down into the pit.

V 4 About “O LORD, You led my soul up out of Hadēs” : following Saint Aphrahat of Adiabene, *The Orthodox Study Bible* notes that, as seen in 1 Kingdoms 2:6 and 2 Maccabees 12:42-44, belief in the resurrection was already present.

✧ See 1 Kingdoms 2:6 (Matins Canticle 3) ; Psalms 39:3 48:16 ; 85:13 ; 87:5.

- ✧ About “Lord” : see the note about “Lord” on verse 2.
 - ✧ About “Hadēs” : see the note about *Hadēs* on Psalm 6:6.
 - ✧ About “soul” : see the note about “soul” on Psalm 3:3.
 - ✧ About “saved” : see the note about “save” on Psalm 3:8.
 - ✧ About “those going down into the pit” : see Psalms 27:1 ; 142:7.
 - ✧ About “pit” : see the note about “pit” on Psalm 27:1.
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5 Chant to the LORD, you His holy ones,/ and confess the memory of His holiness ;

V 5 About “*chant to the Lord*” : Saint Basil the Great comments that it is only those who are pure of heart, and who are righteous and holy who can truly sing to the Lord. Mere repetition of words (especially in the context of a corrupt life) does not constitute true singing to the Lord, as a sick tree cannot bear good fruit (see Matthew 7:18 ; 12:33). He encourages us to a repentant life so that we may truly “*chant with understanding*” (Psalm 46:8).

- ✧ About “*chant*” : see the note about “*chant*” on Psalm 7:18.
 - ✧ About “Lord” : see the note about “Lord” on verse 2.
 - ✧ About “*holy ones*” : see the note about “*holy one*” on Psalm 4:4.
 - ✧ About “*confess ... holiness*” : see Psalm 96:12.
 - ✧ About “*confess*” : see verses 10, 13 ; see the note about “*confess*” on Psalm 6:6.
 - ✧ About “*holiness*” : see Psalms 95:6 ; 96:12 ; 144:5 ; Luke 1:75 (Matins Canticle 9, Part 2).
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6 for anger is in His fury, and life in His will./ In the evening shall weeping abide, but exultation in the morning.

V 6 About “*anger ... will*” : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) comments with Saint Athanasius that by behaving in a manner displeasing to God, we bring wrath and retribution upon ourselves, “for the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). On the contrary, by doing God’s will we find life, health and joy (see Romans 14:17).

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus reminds us of the example of King Hezekiah, who, because of his kingdom’s sin had received a prophecy of death through the Prophet Isaiah (4 Kingdoms 20). Hezekiah called out to the Lord, and the Lord healed him, and the kingdom was protected. He adds that likewise, the Apostles and Women lamented the Crucifixion and Death of Christ, but they then rejoiced in the Resurrection.

✧ Arnobius the Younger likewise points out that although death came to us through the disobedience of Adam, life came to us in the Resurrection of Christ.

✧ About “*anger*” and “*fury*” : see the note about “*anger*” and “*fury*” on Psalm 2:5.

✧ About “*His will*” (God’s will) : Saint Augustine explains that there is life in God’s will. It is He who willed to give us that eternal life to which we could never by our own strength or abilities or virtues have found our way back.

✧ Saint Anthony of Optina exhorts us to recall that the Lord God in His wisdom and love arranges everything that is profitable for human beings. It is not for us to question why things occur in this or that manner, but with child-like submissiveness to give ourselves up to the will of our loving Heavenly Father. Let us say with our Saviour, not my will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42).

✧ See verse 8 ; see Psalms 39:9 ; 102:7, 21 ; 106:30 ; 142:10 ; 1 John 2:17.

✧ About “*in the evening ... in the morning*” : Saint Basil the Great tells us that the most shining example of this sentence is that of the Holy Apostles and the holy women who lamented in the evening, as they saw the Lord on the Cross, but they rejoiced in the morning, as they saw Him risen (Matthew 27:46 ; Mark 15:34, 42 ; Luke 23:44-45 ; John 19:31, 42 ; Matthew 28:1 ; Mark 16:2 ; Luke 24:1 ; John 20:1).

✧ Saint Augustine reminds us that it was evening in Paradise when Adam and Eve sinned and hid from God, and it was evening when they left Paradise and wept outside. The light of righteousness had set for the human race, and since then there has been weeping as humans await the Day of the Lord. Likewise there was weeping in the evening when Christ was laid in the tomb. However, morning dawned with joy upon the faithful with the Resurrection of Christ.

✧ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus gives several of many examples in the Scriptures in which there was oppression and despair in the evening, but in the morning the Lord brought His people joy. He reminds us about the attack of Sennacherib against Jerusalem and the Lord’s rescue of Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:36).

✧ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) explains to us that it is a great pity that many people can be mindful of the Lord only during a time of pain and adversity. They quickly forget or even ignore that the main experience of the Lord by all His creatures and especially human beings is that of “*exultation*” in the context of His mercy and His love. If He chastises us for some reason, it lasts only briefly,

since its purpose is to catch our attention and to help us to repent and to return the true path in love and gratitude. He reminds us that night-time is the time for repentance, after which the day-time is the time for joy and gratitude.

✧ See the note about the comment of Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) about “*every night*” on Psalm 6:7.

✧ Saint Justin (Popović) of Ćelije explains that it is through sin that we become mad, insane. Every sin, even the most seemingly insignificant one, is always an insanity of the soul. Through repentance, we come to our senses, become complete again, come to ourselves.

✧ About “*weeping*” : see the note about “*weeping*” on Psalm 6:9.

✧ About “*exultation*” (noun) : this word implies triumphant elation, great jubilation, great rejoicing.

✧ See Psalms 44:8, 16 ; 46:2 ; 50:10, 14 ; 64:13 ; 99:2 ; 104:43 ; 106:22 ; 117:15 ; 125:2, 5, 6 ; 131:16. See also the note about “*Exultation*” on Psalm 31:7. See also the note about “*exult*” (verb) on Psalm 2:11.

7 But as for me, I said in my prosperity :/ “I shall not be distressed unto the age”.

V 7 About “*prosperity*” : Saint Basil the Great makes a comparison between the prosperity of a city which depends upon the supply of goods for sale in the market, and the prosperity of the soul which is filled with good works of every sort. This soul must be carefully cultivated and enriched by the heavenly waters so that it may bear multifold fruit. He refers us to 5 Moses 28:5 “blessed shall be your store-houses and your reserves”.

✧ Saint Augustine reminds us that human beings have only truly had prosperity during the prelapsarian period in their home in the Garden of Eden. Adam lacked nothing. Since then, human beings have had plenty in labour, trouble, sorrow and disaster. The rich, in their having much, have not been content but rather craved more and more.

✧ The NAB comments that an untroubled life often presents a temptation through complacency to forget God : see 5 Moses 8:11-17 ; Proverbs 30:9 ; Hosea 13:6.

✧ See Psalm 121:6 ; see also (as a verb) Psalms 26:7 ; 44:5 ; 89:17 ; 100:7 ; 101:29 ; 139:12.

✧ About “*not be distressed*” : see the note about “*not be distressed*” on Psalm 9:27.

✧ About “*unto the age*” : see the note about “*unto the ages*” on Psalm 5:12.

8 O LORD, in Your will, You granted power to my beauty ;/ but You turned away Your Face, and I was stirred up.

V 8 About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on verse 2.

✠ About “*will*” : see the note about “*His will*” on verse 6.

✠ About “*granted power to my beauty*” : Saint Basil the Great affirms that this indicates that we were made beautiful by nature, because of the Image of God. However, we were enfeebled and numbed by sin. Therefore, to the original beauty at creation, God added a strength (power) appropriate to what is right, so that we might be able to contemplate Him. Thus, as we then contemplate His beauty with a purified mind, we are enabled to reflect that beauty. In this manner, the face of Moses shone after his encounter with the Lord (2 Moses 34:29-35 ; 2 Corinthians 3:7).

✧ Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) notes that Cassiodorus and others, follow the logic of Saint Basil the Great. Archimandrite Placide tells us that Cassiodorus explains that the beauty is the splendour of the human nature of Christ, and the power is the glorious radiance of His Divine Nature which is present in the hypostatic union, but which He lay aside in His kenosis (Philippians 2:7-8). Archimandrite Placide shows us that Saint Basil and others see in the beauty the Divine Image in the Christian ; and they see in the power the Divine Grace which enables the Divine Likeness in the Christian.

✠ About “*turned away Your Face*” : see the note about “*turned His Face away*” on Psalm 9:32.

✠ About “*stirred up*” : see the note about “*stir them up*” on Psalm 2:5.

9 To You, O LORD, I shall cry out ;/ to my God I shall make supplication :

V 9 About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on verse 2.

✠ About “*cry out*” : Saint Basil the Great explains that only one who desires great and heavenly things may cry out to the Lord.

✧ Saint Augustine opines that these words refer to the intercession of Christ for us all.

✧ See the note on Psalm 17:42.

✠ About “*God*” : see the note on verse 3.

✠ About “*supplication*” : see the notes about “*voice of my supplication*” and “*supplication*” on Psalm 5:3.

10 “What profit is there in my blood / when I go down to corruption ?/
Surely the dirt shall not confess You, / or announce Your truth ?”

V 10 About “*what profit ... truth*” : Saint Augustine summarises the verse from the perspective of Christ. Were He to fall into corruption and not to rise immediately, there could be no confession of the Lord, nor announcement of His truth, nor proclamation of the Gospel. Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) makes a similar summary.

✧ In these words, Saint Ambrose of Milan finds assurance of Christ’s love and mercy towards us whom He redeemed through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Similarly, Saint Athanasius of Alexandria assures us of Christ’s love for us ; but he cautions us not to bury or hide our talent (Matthew 25:14-30).

✧ About “*blood*” : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) mentions that in this case, blood signifies death (see 1 Moses 4:10 ; 4 Moses 35:33 ; Psalm 50:16 ; Apocalypse 6:9-10).

✧ However, in the Scriptures, “*blood*” is generally a metaphor for life (see 1 Moses 9:4-6 ; 3 Moses 17:11-15 ; 5 Moses 15:23 ; John 6:53).

✧ See the note about “*blood*” on Psalm 5:7.

✧ About “*corruption*” : see the notes about “*corruption*” on Psalms 9:16 ; 15:10.

✧ About “*surely ... truth*” : see the note about “*Hadēs*” on verse 4.

✧ About “*confess*” : see the note on verse 5.

✧ About “*announce*” : see the note about “*announce*” on Psalm 9:12.

✧ About “*truth*” : see the note about “*truth*” on Psalm 5:10.

11 The LORD has heard, and He has had mercy on me ;/ the LORD has
become my Helper.

V 11 About “*The Lord ... mercy on me*” : see the note about “*have mercy*” on Psalm 6:3.

✧ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on verse 2.

✧ About “*Helper*” : see the note about “*Helper*” on Psalm 9:10. See also the notes about “*Helper*” on Psalm 17:2, 3.

For me, You turned my lamentation into joy ;/ You broke asunder my sack-cloth,/ and You girded me with gladness,

V 12 About this verse : Saint Basil the Great comments that the “joy” of God is not found in every soul ; but it is certainly found in those who have suffered for a long time and mourned their own sin, even as though bewailing their own death, and then have this mourning turned into joy. The mourning garment is torn and it is replaced with the garment of joy and salvation, which will admit them to the bridal chamber (see Matthew 22:11-12).

✠ About “*lamentation into joy*” : Saint John of Sinai shows us that the one who wears blessed and God-given mourning as a wedding garment comes to know the spiritual laughter of the soul.

✧ See Psalm 125:5, 6 ; Isaiah 61:3 ; Jeremiah 38:13 ; Matthew 5:4 ; John 16:20, 22.

✠ About “*you broke ... sack-cloth*” : Saint Augustine explains that “*sack-cloth*” is a metaphor for mortality, and it may be understood to refer to that mortality of human beings which the Logos without deserving it took upon Himself. He further shows us that the breaking asunder of the “*sack-cloth*” refers to the Resurrection of Christ.

✧ See Isaiah 20:2.

✠ About “*sack-cloth*” :

✧ This translates the Greek word σάκκος, *sakkos*. It is a very coarse and rough cloth made from camel’s hair, goat hair, hemp, jute, cotton, or flax. This cloth was often used as a sign of mourning. At such times, it is also used as an exterior garment. For some people, it is used as a spiritual discipline to help to subdue the passions of the flesh. Then, it is worn next to the flesh, and often about the waist. The sack-cloth garment, typically in the shape of a “T” provided the inspiration for the garment worn by Christian Roman Emperors, and by Orthodox Christian bishops after them (in which case, the material was no longer sacking, but a splendid material). Nevertheless, the garment continues to be called “*sakkos*”. There may well have been a hint of penitence on the part of the rulers. In addition, this episcopal vestment is also related in shape to the vestments of a Hebrew High Priest.

✧ As a sign of mourning (sometimes accompanied by dust and/or ashes) : see 1 Moses 37:34 ; 2 Kingdoms 3:31 ; 4 Kingdoms 6:30 ; Esther 4:1-4 ; Psalm 34:13 ; Job 16:15 ; Amos 8:10 ; Joel 1:8, 13 ; Isaiah 22:12 ; Lamentations 2:10 .

✧ As a sign of repentance : see 3 Kingdoms 20:27 ; 4 Kingdoms 19 ; 1 Chronicles 21:16 ; Nehemiah 9:1 ; Jonah 3:5, 6, 8 ; Isaiah 3:24 ; 15:3 ; 32:11 ; 37:1, 2 ; Jeremiah 4:8 ; 6:26 ; 31:37 ; Ezekiel 7:18 ; Daniel 9:3 ; Matthew 11:21 ; Luke 10:13 ; Apocalypse 11:3.

✠ About “*girded me with gladness*” : Saint Augustine likens the removal of the garment of mourning (“*sack-cloth*”) with which we were previously girded, and its replacement with the garment of joy with the baptismal washing from sin, which is followed by the giving of the baptismal garment, a reflection of the first robe, the garment of undying joy (see Luke 15:22).

✠ About “*gladness*” : see the note about “*gladness*” on Psalm 4:8.

13 so that my glory may chant to You,/ and I shall not be pierced with
 compunction./ O LORD my God, unto the age shall I confess You.

V 13 About this verse : Saint Augustine first reminds us that it is our glory that everything that we have
or good that we do comes from the Lord Himself [see 1 Corinthians 15:28]. He goes on to say that when
we feel compunction for our sins and we confess them to the Lord, the Lord forgives us our sins [see 1
John 1:9] so that we may unto the ages confess Him.

✧ Saint Basil the Great previously commented similarly. Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrihus comments
likewise, but he adds that all this is so because of the Lord’s love for us, and he cites John 3:16.

✠ About “*glory*” : Saint Basil the Great affirms that the “*glory*” of a righteous person is the Holy Spirit
within that person.

✧ See the note about “*glory*” on Psalm 3:4.

✠ About “*chant*” : see the note about “*chant*” on Psalm 7:18.

✠ About “*compunction*” : see the note about “*pierced with compunction*” on Psalm 4:5.

✠ About “*Lord*” : see the note about “*Lord*” on verse 2.

✠ About “*God*” : see the note on verse 3.

✠ About “*unto the age*” : see the note about “*unto the ages*” on Psalm 5:12.

✠ About “*confess*” : see the note on verse 5.

O Most Merciful God, the Support of all,
do not permit our enemies to be delighted over us ;
but so fortify us with Your strength,
that, with our lamentation transformed to joy,
we may continually cultivate the memory of Your holiness. — Roman
