



A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

a collection of thoughts & encouragement
from a nerdy Jesus lover



BY HEIDI ENNIS

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Acknowledgements

I began this journey at the end of 2019, just prior to the covid pandemic. Do you remember that? (insert scoff here) Of course you do. When 2020 hit, I had no idea how much I would need this lifeline. For me, looking back at this journey is like *Footprints in the Sand*. I look back and see how God carried me through the covid mess and the change from what life was before then to what it is now. What a journey it has been. I have left the dates on these devotions; some of you may find that interesting. I do.

I know many of you walked this journey weekly with me. I appreciate you, your support, and your encouragement along the way more than I can ever express. The best I can do is to provide this compilation as my thanks. If you know someone who could use some encouragement, please share this. The book of Psalms is filled with encouragement, hope, and reminders of God's faithfulness.

For me, the greatest take away from my journey through the Psalms is just that: God's faithfulness throughout time. If He was faithful way back in ancient times—and we can see it plastered on every page of the Bible—then why would He stop now? Why would He not come through for you and me in our time of need today? Why do we doubt?

God was faithful. He is faithful, and He will continue to be faithful. That is the Truth.

Thank you, Desi, for encouraging me to write these down and share them. All the years and memories we have together are a treasure.

Thanks to Mike always, Camryn and Collin for being my willing and unwilling audience, and to May and Millie for keeping me company and keeping my feet warm under my desk.

Heidi xoxo

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,

LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalms 19:14 NIV

How to follow this study:

Hi! Feel free to print this off or to study it on your computer or phone. Whatever works for you. I'm leaving some blank spaces for you to write in thoughts and prayers, questions, whatever you want. I love to write all over my Bible study guides. So go for it! If you don't print this off, then I recommend having a notebook nearby to write down thoughts and questions and special verses to memorize.

And please do share this with anyone that you feel would benefit. I am no expert, but God taught me so much throughout this study. I really do want to share it with whomever also has a desire to know God more intimately through His Psalms.

Now let's talk about Bible translations. Did you know that most Bible translations are under copyright law? Hmm, neither did I. Well, I guess if I'd thought about it, I would have come to that conclusion. But who thinks of someone, other than God, owning the Bible?

I originally wrote out all Bible verses in my study. I have since learned that was a violation of copyright law and have spent hours removing them, praying about what to do, and coming up with Plan B.

What is Plan B, you may ask? Of course, God's Plan B was the best choice all along, and it's this: use your own Bible. 😊 Well, I recommend your Bible and the You Version Bible app or Gateway Bible on your computer. There is beauty and wisdom and beautiful things that God will show (He showed me!) if you read the Psalms in different translations. And the easiest way to do that is on the Bible app.

As we get to studying, I will recommend reading verses in different Bible translations. Don't get locked into the one's that I choose, follow God's lead. I only ask that you read the verses in several different versions and here's why: humans translated God's Word from language to language over a long period of time. There are no errors; however, I do think that reading different versions can broaden and deepen our understanding about the original text. And, my friend, God will blow your mind (especially if you grew up, like me, reading one version)!!!

A pastor friend of mine explained the two different "types" of translations to me:

Formal Equivalency—word for word translations (ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASB, etc.)

Dynamic Equivalency—thought for thought translations (NLT, NIV, GNT, CEV, etc.)

So keep all that in mind and let's get started! Yay!

Heidi xoxo

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Psalm 1: The Orphan Bookend

February 1, 2020

BOOK ONE (Psalms 1-41)

Read Psalm 1

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The very first question to ask—What even are the psalms?

The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems and songs written throughout the history of God's people. They are God's inspired words. He wants us to read them, to know them, and there are a lot of them—150! Many speak of times and events in the past, many refer to Jesus in prophesy, and all can teach us something about how to live and walk with the Lord today.

This book of the Bible gives us strength and purpose and reminds us of God's covenant love and faithfulness throughout time and even today.

Studying the Book of Psalms allows us to learn more about God's heart, and why this ancient book was—and is—so important to the children of God and the church today. The Book of Psalms, or the Psalter as it's often referred to, was probably compiled by post-exilic Jewish temple priests or servants during the 4th century BC. As the people returned from seventy years of captivity in Babylon, they set off rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple on Zion. It was probably a very exciting time. The people gathered back home in Jerusalem, together again to rebuild the city and the temple, to worship, to celebrate. God had given them another chance. And although the city was in ruins, they knew what they had to do. The story can be read in the book of Ezra.

The Book of Psalms is a wonderful collection of ancient Israel's most important prayers and praises. These songs or poems were used in worship, in the temple (after Solomon) and the tabernacle prior. Before they were written down, they were sung or recited regularly to keep the stories alive.

One hundred of the one hundred and fifty psalms are signed. Seventy-three are signed by David. Scholars believe many of the unsigned fifty may also be David's words. David's son Solomon wrote two. Ethan and Heman wrote one each and are believed to be wise men from David's time. Asaph, one of the tabernacle's worship leaders also during David's time, wrote twelve psalms. Moses wrote Psalm 90. The Sons of Korah (or Korah's descendants) wrote eleven psalms.

Psalms 1 & 2 are not signed. Bible scholars often refer to them as "book ends," kind of like an introduction to the entire book. Psalm 1 is a "book end" or introduction to the first 41 psalms, called Book 1 of the Psalter.

In other translations, Psalm 1 is titled, *The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked* (ESV); *The Way of the Righteous and the End of the Ungodly* (NKJV); and simply, *Two Ways to Live* in the International Children's Bible.

It is the psalmist's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 1 opens with the word “blessed.” *Bless-ed (adjective): made holy; consecrated consecrated (adjective): having been made or declared sacred; sacred (adjective): connected with God*

Read Psalm 1:1-2—Compare two translations (I recommend the NKJV and the NLT) and write your thoughts below or write out the verses if you’d like.

Do you wish to be blessed, declared sacred, and connected with God?

- The author here of Psalm 1 clearly explains the way to be blessed—don’t keep walking in sin, or hanging out with sin, or sitting in the company of sin. (Note: we all sin, but this says don’t keep sinning)
- Revere the Lord and His Word. (Revere: to feel deep respect or admiration for).
- Study God’s Word. Not only "read it," but know it.

Psalm 1:3 NIV

The author goes on to say the one who does these things—the blessed one—is like a tree with fruit and beautiful leaves that lives by streams of water. And everything that tree does prospers. These are poems or songs that will often use metaphors to paint a picture. This one uses the metaphor of a tree.

How often do we feel like a healthy, well-watered tree? How often do we feel like a strong tree living our best life next to the water? How often do we feel like all we do each day is prosperous?

Or do we more often feel like the chaff that’s so easily blown away by the breeze?

Verse 4-5—Compare the ESV and the NLT

(note differences—verse 5 is an example of how reading in more than one translation can help us better understand. If we just read verse 5 in the ESV we might be confused at the meaning)

Do you sometimes wonder what you’re doing day in and day out, and who even cares anyway? Does it ever seem like, at the end of the day, when you fall into bed exhausted, that all you did that day was not enough? That you are not enough?

Friend, if you were to tell me that all you did today was take care of a sick child or parent or make meals that weren’t appreciated and you didn’t even have any time to care for yourself, I would tell you that you are worthy and you are loved. If all you did was go to work and barely make it through the day, I would tell you that you are loved and watched over.

If you feel meaningless, useless, unworthy—if you feel like chaff blowing in the wind—this is the psalm for you.

Friend, God loves you. He sees you. Your work is valued in His eyes. And He will daily sustain you.

Colossians 3:23-24

We may not feel like the tree with fruit and beautiful leaves, with cool crisp running water. We may not feel that all we do "prosper," but that is up to God. We just need to show up. We just need to revere His word and not sin, or not keep sinning. We just need to seek the Lord and work for the Lord with each task. The fruit, therefore, is in His hands.

And, oh, are they qualified and capable hands. They are trustworthy hands.

God is seasoning the fruit of our lives. He is using our fruit, or He will, in His time. We just need to show up. Put one foot in front of the other. And trust in Him. Our Father in heaven is working. He is moving. He uses us, even in our daily, mundane, boring, tiresome tasks. The tasks that feel like no one cares, no one helps, no one knows—He does.

There is a lesson in this psalm for you and me, and the end says it clearly. Are you the fruitful tree “drinking of” the sustaining water? Or are you the chaff blown in the breeze?

We may feel like chaff blowing in the breeze. But Psalm 1 is saying that if you are a child of God and you are working for Him each day, you are the righteous. You are the tree. He is sustaining you. He is growing your fruit. He is watering your soul.

Read verse 6 in a different translation

The Lord watches over the path of the righteous. The wicked blow away like chaff in the wind.

Even when we don't feel Him working or sustaining or growing us, He is. Trust in Him.

When life is hard. When being parent and spouse and sibling and friend is hard. When you are thirsting for love, for acknowledgment, to know your worth . . . Drink of the water and *know* it will sustain you as your fruit grows and in God's eyes all that you do prospers.

Do each daily task with the knowledge that your Father in heaven sustains you. He sees you. He walks with you.

To drink of the water and be blessed—run from sin and run to God.

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 2: Orphaned Book End #2

February 14, 2020

Read Psalm 2

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 2 is titled, *The Messiah's Triumph and Kingdom* (NKJV); *The Reign of the LORD's Anointed* (ESV); and simply, *God's Chosen King* in the International Children's Bible.

Read Psalm 2:1-2—Compare the NKJV and the NLT

This poor little orphaned psalm, what do you mean? Who wrote you? Why were you significant in ancient Israel?

In Acts 4, Luke quotes Peter and John:
Acts 4:25-26

Through Jewish tradition and therefore what Luke, Peter, and John were taught growing up, they knew that this psalm was written by King David. And even more than that, that these words that were spoken to King David by the Father Himself. "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant David."

During the time that Luke was writing this chapter in Acts, the disciples—Peter and John—were in Jerusalem and had just been released from prison for ticking off the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling counsel) again. Apparently, talking about Jesus and healing in His Name was a way to get yourself thrown into prison during those days. The Sanhedrin were not happy and would not stand for it, because every time that Peter and John spoke, people believed and gave their hearts to Jesus.

Oh, that when we speak, people would believe. But unfortunately, when I speak it usually falls on deaf ears, or seems to. The socks remain on the floor and the dogs still need to go out. 😊

But in all truth, my friends, we do not know the impact that our words have on those around us. So, speak today. Speak about Jesus: to your spouse, to your children, to your mom, to your neighbor. Don't miss a chance.

Bible scholars call this a "Royal Psalm," meaning it was composed and probably read, sung, or recited at the coronation of kings. Which makes sense if you read it again.

"His anointed" means that God has chosen and set this king in a place of ruling and of power over His people. The reference to "father" and "son" was a reference to God the Father and His anointed king of "son."

This psalm, as Peter and John attested to in Acts 4, also relates to Jesus. (Acts 4:24-31)

Jesus is God's anointed One, His Son, and Savior of this world. Of you and of me. David lived 1000 years before Jesus. He did not know this Royal Psalm pertained to the Messiah. But Psalm 2 spoke of God's anointed king over His people, and of His Son as ruler over all throughout time.

Let's just stop on verse 4 for a second.

The One who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.
Psalm 2:4 New Living Translation

Can you imagine our God laughing as He sits on His throne? He is not pacing and worrying, nor is He full of fear and uncertainty. It says He's laughing from His throne. What a sight that must be. A terrifying sight for those He laughs at. A comforting sight for those who stand behind Him in safety.

Oh, sweet friends, laugh in the face of troubles today. Laugh at your worry. Laugh at that Algebra unit that is stumping you because things were just not taught that way when you were a kid. Laugh at the pile of laundry that only grows and spreads or the pile of bills or the phone calls that need to be made. 😊

Laugh today.

We don't laugh because it's funny. We laugh because we do not walk this road alone. God is our strength. We laugh because our Lord *is* enthroned in heaven. We laugh because it all fits together in God's mighty plan.

And speak it. Tell of it. Give the reason for your joy, your hope, your laughter.

In the Old Testament the Lord gave the following command through Moses.
Read Deuteronomy 11:18-20

Finally, take refuge in Him and His goodness and faithfulness. He has always been faithful. He was faithful to the kings of ancient Israel. He has proven Himself.

He is faithful today. He will be faithful tomorrow. "Take refuge in" this promise.

To take refuge in- to seek protection or shelter from some source of danger or hardship; to hide in something; to seek safety or comfort in something. (freedictionary.com)

Blessed, consecrated, set apart, and holy are all who take refuge in Him. My friends, take refuge in the Lord, seek safety and comfort in His goodness and faithfulness.

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 3: David's Great Sadness

February 18, 2020

Read Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

My friends, have you felt abandoned by someone you love? Do you have a wayward child? Have you felt so alone it's as if God has abandoned you, too?

This psalm is for you. This psalm is for me.

Psalm 3:1-2 in the NLT—I have so many enemies LORD.

In the second book of Samuel, King David was betrayed by his son, Absalom. This was not just the refusal to clean his room or to stop dating a girl the family did not like. This was a grown man set on destroying his father. Absalom was turning David's advisers against him, preparing to forcefully take his father's throne, and murder him. The ultimate betrayal.

And the ultimate heartbreak.

Read 2 Samuel 15 to catch a glimpse of David's heartache.

King David is remembered as a "man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). God loved David and blessed him greatly. But David was a sinner and, unfortunately for him, his sins are listed in the Bible for all generations to read and learn from. He was not perfect. But God was with him and loved him.

Psalm 3:3 NIV—But you, LORD, are a shield around me.

Other psalms will talk of David's heartbreak, of his losses, and his misdeeds—and then of how God redeemed him. However, when it comes to Absalom and David's family dynamics, part of the problem is in David's choices. David took many wives—eight of them! God's plan for marriage is good and right and set in the Bible from the very beginning when God created Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:27; 2:21-24). And then when the people asked God for an earthly king over them, God agreed but gave stern warnings:

Read Deuteronomy 17:17

Polygamy is not of God. And He clearly did not want His kings to have more than one wife. The Lord knew what would happen; He knows the hearts of men. Polygamy is not God's plan and does not make Him happy. Even for the kings of old, even for the beloved King David. And polygamy does not make for a happy household, nor well-adjusted children. History records that David had nineteen sons. A recipe for disaster?

However, if you read Samuel and the accounts of this story, David loved Absalom. And Absalom broke his heart.

Have your children broken your heart? Read David's words again.

Read Psalm 3:4 Compare the NLT and the ESV—Interlude. Write these words down somewhere.

Do you fear at night? Does the weight of the world come crashing down upon you? Do trivial things seem to grow fangs and claws in the dark? Why is that?

Read David's words from Psalm 139:11-12. Write them down too. These are so good to memorize.

Many of us struggle with sleeping and worrying, tossing and turning. We struggle with what we said or didn't say. Over the future of our children, their health, their choices, their salvation. Over what we did or didn't finish in the day.

This is not the only psalm that David talks about the Lord sustaining him while he sleeps. David believed it, and he had things to worry about. He had children to worry about. He had a family to provide for. He had a kingdom to run.

Read verses 3 and 4 again—the LORD my shield.

In a land and time when shields and swords were the difference between life and death, these verses take on another meaning.

During one of the most difficult times in David's life, he says the Lord is—a shield around me. He sustains me as I sleep. He is the reason I can lift my head again.

A shield does no good lying on the ground. In fact, a shield is useless without an arm and strength to hold it. What David meant was: he held the shield of the Lord up.

How do we do that? How do we protect ourselves from the attacks of the evil one in our great time of pain? In the times of worry and stress and sleepless nights?

My friends, we hold on to that shield as tight as we can, as if our lives depend upon it. The Apostle Paul tells us to put on the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:16

The shield is faith.

Take up your shield today, wrap yourself in God's goodness and faithfulness whatever you are going through. Trust that He will sustain you 24 hours a day—day and night. When you are awake and when you sleep, let God be your shield. When flaming arrows assail you, hold fast to that shield.

Verse 5—Lie down and sleep.

You are strong enough because the Lord is on your side, and He will see you through.

Even though David feared for his life and the lives of his loved ones, as he fled his home in fear, as he watched friend and family abandon him, as people told him he was getting what he deserved, that God had in fact forgotten him: David picked up that shield.

David was probably afraid, but he picked up that shield and he claimed God's protection.
Psalm 3:6—I will not fear.

David didn't say, "Lord, be my shield." He said, "Lord, you *are* my shield."

Romans 8:38

David never heard these wise words, but he believed them

Whatever you are facing today, take up your shield of faith and know that your Father loves you and has your back whatever your foe may be. Not that He will make it all go away, but that He will never leave you. He will equip you, and He will fight for you.

Exodus 14:14

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 4: David finds solitude with God.

February 21, 2020

Read Psalm 4

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Solitude (noun)—the state or situation of being alone; a lonely or uninhabited place (Oxford Dictionary).

Many of David's songs seek solitude in God. But solitude in God is not isolation or loneliness. Isolation is something forced upon someone. It's not a choice. It's sadness and loneliness. God does not call us into sadness. But He does call us to seek solitude with Him. In solitude is aloneness with God, a state of replenishment and of healing.

David seeks this place. When life was in upheaval around him, David sought his Father in solitude. And David had great faith in God. That God would meet him there. Always. That in his solitude and aloneness, God was present.

Psalm 4:1-2—Compare two versions

To King David: God is good and faithful . . . always. In good times and bad, God is good.

Wherever you are today, my friend, may you hear God's words of love to *you* through David. Seek the Father's words in the solitude of your heart where He promises to meet you.

Are you at a place in life that feels lonely? Have your children moved on or are they moving on soon? Are your parents gone? Is the tediousness of life wearing you thin?

Cry out David's words to your Father in heaven: Hear me, Father. Answer me, Father. Look at me, Father.

You know that feeling when you turn your face to the sun and close your eyes? Boy, do we ever crave that here in the Pacific Northwest. That light and warmth.

Let your face shine upon me, Father.

You see, whatever David was going through at this time, he pleaded with God, "Remember me, like you have before. Answer me. Hear me." And he believed it would happen.

this is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for current favor.
-Charles Spurgeon, *English preacher, 1834-1892*

Sure, God has been faithful to me throughout my life; I can look back and see it clearly. But He is just not listening right now! Don't we all get caught in this?

My friends, take David's example in this psalm and claim God's faithfulness in whatever you are going through because *He has* always been there for you. If He has always been faithful, why would He stop now?

Psalm 4:3 NKJV—The LORD hears when I call.

David is calling himself the Lord's faithful servant. God's children are His servants. We must strive every day to live as He calls us to live. He has set us apart from the world for Himself, like a good, good Father. And because of that, He hears us when we call to Him.

Believe this. Jeremiah 33:3

Need another reminder of this promise? Isaiah 65:24

Okay, one more, and in this one the Lord was speaking to His people through the prophet Jeremiah. He was reassuring them that He was still there even though they were captives in a foreign land. Sounds like a pretty lonely time.

Jeremiah 28:11-13

Finally, David claims the Lord's provision on him and the people of Israel through a portion of the ancient Aaronic blessing found in the books of Numbers. Aaron was Moses's brother and chief priest. God said to Moses that these words were to be spoken over His people.

Read Numbers 6:24-26

These words are still spoken today. Have you heard them before? They speak of God's goodness and faithfulness. David knew this, and at another hard spot in his life, he called upon the Lord not to forget this promise.

When we are in community with our Lord, His face is upon us. Whatever you are doing today, whether home or working or teaching a classroom of kids or just your own, whether you are lonely or seeking solitude, fed up with life or basking in all good things, call upon the Lord.

Psalm 4:8

And then *know* that His face shines upon you, like the warmth of the sun. He looks toward you, my friends, let Him give you His peace.

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 5: A Morning Prayer

February 26, 2020

Read Psalm 5

For the director of music. For pipes. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a beautiful psalm this is. This is God's promise, that as we read and study His Word, He *will* reveal Himself to us.

Psalm 5:1-2 in the NLT—Hear me. Pay attention to me. Listen to me.

Upon first reading of this psalm, it may seem like just another psalm. Sometimes, if we're not reading to understand and to learn, they can all start sounding the same. When we pray for wisdom and understanding, when we read it in different translations, when we seek out what others have said, it is then that a psalm such as this one becomes a shining jewel of hope.

Psalm 119:105

King David knew the best way to start his day. How do you start yours? Coffee? Feeding the animals? Rushing out the door in a mad dash? David began his day with the Lord.

God wants us to start our days with Him. This psalm is another reminder of that expectation. God tells us in not so many words, "You want to start your day off right? Start it with me."

Sure, grab a cup of coffee, and let the dogs out first. But start your day with your Father in heaven. Even if it means getting up twenty minutes earlier, begin your day with the focus and peace that comes when we spend time with God.

Psalm 5:3—write it, memorize it, KNOW it 😊

Just look at the beauty in the KJV,

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;
in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up.
Psalm 5:3 KJV

The Hebrew term used for "lay before you" or "direct unto thee" is something like arranging the morning sacrifice on the altar. I can imagine this was done with great care, preparation, and thought. In this psalm, David

says this is how we are to pray to God. That we take the prayers and carefully lay them out like the morning sacrifice, then we are to *look up!*

Can you picture a child tying his or her shoes for the first time then looking up to his or her mother? "Mama, look, I did it."

Isn't our God a good Father? Isn't He watching us tie our shoes? Isn't He watching us lay our prayers upon that morning altar? Sweet friend, rest assured He is watching over you with love in His eyes.

Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Lay your prayers at the altar in the morning (first thing!) and look up at your Father knowing He hears you and will answer.

Psalm 5:4-11—NLT

The verses in the middle, at first glance, appear to be angry curses aimed against the surrounding enemies of Israel. Verses like these can sometimes make a Christ follower cringe. But when we find ourselves cringing over God's Word it's time to dig for deeper understanding. We do not/cannot close our Bibles and say, "never mind." God's Word is not the problem, our understanding of it is.

So, digging deeper: Jesus expected something very different from us than the angry curses.
Read Matthew 5:43-45

When Jesus came to this earth, He re-taught us God's expectations, the Law, and what is required to be children of God. Therefore, these "words in red" are now our path.

But why would David call curses down upon his neighbors? Why would he not want them to turn from their wicked ways? Also, it does not seem that these verses are only calling down curses. Could this be just a prayer of a frustrated and worried king? Like a prayer journal?

We must remember that Israel lived in constant fear of attack from all sides, and still do. During King David's time, they were always vigilant, always cautious, always fearful. And for good reason.

"God help me! God those people are crazy and they're trying to hurt my family again. Smite them all! Help me!"

Whatever the reason behind David's words, what we can take away from this psalm is to cry out to God. Carefully lay those requests at His altar and look up, expect Him to see you and hear you and answer you. Even if we call out to God in anger, He will hear us. Obviously not all actions are good and acceptable, but all feelings are. And God wants to know us.

Okay, one last thing: I uncovered a quote from that smart and sassy Bible preacher, Charles Spurgeon, that I just love. I must share it and hopefully it will make you smile too. He wrote this paraphrase of verse 11.

Come, ye mournful ones, be glad. Ye discontented grumblers, come out of the dog-hole! Enter the palace of the King! Quit your dunghills; ascend your thrones.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And THAT is where we will leave this psalm, my friends.

Quit your dunghills and ascend your thrones!

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 6: a voice in our tears

March 6, 2020

Read Psalm 6

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Lord may these words touch our hearts today.

Wow, here we go . . .

History assigns this psalm to David, and Jewish tradition holds that this psalm is the first of seven "Penitential Psalms," meaning songs of confession and humility before God. The early church used these during the season of Lent (40 days of reflection and personal preparation before the celebration of Easter).

Well, today (March 2, 2020) is the first Monday of Lent, a good time to read this specific psalm and try to discern its meaning to our hearts and lives.

The "sheminith" meaning is lost in antiquity. Some things we just aren't certain of, and that is okay.

Bible scholars don't agree on what was going on for David when he wrote Psalm 6. Some believe he was physically sick or someone he loved was sick, and he called upon the Lord for healing as well as the forgiveness of sins. Possibly David felt that the illness was a result of his sin, that God had allowed an illness to afflict him as a natural consequence or, possibly, as punishment.

One Bible scholar believed that it was David's soul that was in torment for some reason. Like he made himself physically sick because of inner turmoil. Whatever the real reason for David's distress, if you read this psalm, his heart is filled with pain and fear. Whether physical pain or emotional pain. Or both.

To the point of not having any more words.

Psalm 6:1-4—NLT (if you read Psalm 6 initially in the NLT, then pick another version like the ESV or NKJV)

Have you felt that pain before? That you cannot even put your feelings or your thoughts into words to cry out to God? May this psalm reassure you . . . God knows.

Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Liquid prayers!

But thou, O LORD, how long? Psalm 6:3b KJV

We believe in God's goodness and faithfulness. We believe that He hears and answers prayers. But have you said this before:

"How long, Lord, how long? When will you answer me? When will you help me? Are you even listening?"

Certainly, it is reassuring to find the same uncertainty in the Bible. And from the great King David, "a man after God's own heart."

One thousand years after David, Paul and Barnabas were preaching the Good News about Jesus in the synagogue.

Read Acts 13:22—What did God say about David?

David was a sinner. His sins are listed in the Old Testament, and they are big. David's dirty laundry has been read by generations. But sometimes, he couldn't sleep because he worried so much. Sometimes, as we see in these psalms, his anxiety could cripple him. He worried, he feared, and even felt like he couldn't make it. Sometimes he could not even get up off the floor. And sometimes, he could not even put his prayers into words.

Does any of that sound familiar? Do you relate?

Read Psalm 6:5-7 NLT

The very center of Psalm 6 is:

I am weary with my groaning . . . Psalm 6:6a KJV

Whatever was vexing David was powerful, and he felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. You can feel it in his words. He felt God had turned His back, that God was rebuking him. Punishing him.

David did not know Jesus. He knew God; he had a relationship with God. But he did not know the forgiveness and grace that is evident and real and so powerful in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All of God's anger toward sin was poured out upon Jesus as He hung on that cross for you and for me. Surely, we face consequences for sin. Like a loving Father, God steps back and lets our choices fall where they may.

Read Hebrews 12:7

David is so bold with his words. He says it. He names it, and he calls upon God's goodness and faithfulness to see him through. David shares his weakness and then claims God's goodness. The sun comes up in the morning, and he gets up, dries his face, and takes a deep breath . . .

Read Psalm 6:8—in the KJV

Our heavenly Father hears a *voice in our weeping*.

Even when you don't have the words, lay your requests upon the morning altar and look up. In your fear or pain or sickness or joy, the Lord hears words when you cannot speak at all.

He hears a *voice in our weeping*.

Ah! My brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a cry: but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he has heard a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magical influence which his heart cannot resist.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 7: God's Faithfulness

March 11, 2020

Read Psalm 7

A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Throughout this study, I am reminded that the Old Testament is ALL about God's faithfulness . . . *Faithful* (adjective): remaining loyal and steadfast; true to the facts or the original (Oxford Dictionary).

Read Deuteronomy 7:9—write it down, memorize it!

The Lord was faithful to Moses, who wrote the words above from Deuteronomy, and to David. They believed it. And the Lord is faithful to you and to me.

The meaning of "shiggaion" is lost in antiquity. The word is in two places in the Bible—here and at the beginning of Habakkuk 3 (in its plural form). No one knows really what it means; maybe some kind of meditation, maybe a musical term we no longer use. But whatever the meaning, Bible scholars think this psalm is something different.

Also, Cush the Benjamite. Whatever happened with this Cush fella upset David so much that he sang this song to the Lord. History records that the tribe of Benjamin supported Saul as king even when the Lord placed David as head of His people. Saul himself was a Benjamite. Some of these Benjamites took Absalom's side (David's rebellious son) in that whole terrible debacle. David knew they didn't like him from the very beginning, and he had reason to fear them.

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-8 about a certain stone and curse throwing Benjamite.

Whatever David was feeling, whether a physical attack or slander, this psalm records his fear and worry. Psalm 7:1-9 NLT—Protect me, save me, arise, LORD. Wake up God!

But the beautiful thing about David's psalms is that when he calls to God for help, he also states his confidence in the Lord's goodness and faithfulness.

Psalm 7:10-11 NLT—God is my shield and an honest judge.

Sometimes we forget this. Sometimes we doubt this. How often do we bring a list to God and spill our worries and fears and insecurities at His feet and then wait impatiently?

David does his share of complaining in this psalm. He begs God to save him, pleads his case of innocence, calls upon God to judge his enemies, to string His bow and make ready His arrows of fire. David goes on to share his belief that God will do these things; that whoever digs a pit for him (David) will fall into it himself.

We can read David's songs like a prayer journal. Even the great warrior King David struggled with his faith, with many worries and insecurities, and with sin. He wrote his thoughts down and we can treasure these because God loved David. David was not perfect. He was a sinner. But he kept on trying and he kept on believing in God's faithfulness. His journals are filled with poems and songs to God that show us these things.

God is a loving Father. He wants to hear the things on our hearts. He's okay with the complaining and the fears and insecurities. He does want to help.

But after David spews his worries, his tone changes. It's almost like he's done complaining, he takes a deep breath, maybe feels a little better from letting it all out. Then he says, "but you know what God, whatever happens, whatever you decide to do, I will praise you and I will thank you."

Psalm 7:17

Whatever you are going through today, my friends, God wants to hear about it. He wants to hear about your worries, the things that keep you up at night. He wants to hear about the things that make you mad and the way that life is unfair. He wants to hear it. David is our example. Believe it.

But then . . . He wants you to praise Him and thank Him for His goodness and His faithfulness. He wants you to take a breath and remember who He is, what He has done, and what He promises to do.

David made psalms; we also will make psalms and sing them as well as we can to the honor of our Lord, and to spite and mock the devil.

-Martin Luther, German priest, 1483-1546

There's no resolution to this psalm. Does David get what he wanted? Did Cush leave him alone? Did God miraculously make it all better? It doesn't say. What David says instead is this, "God is faithful. God is my shield. God is my refuge."

Speak your worries for today, your regrets of yesterday, and your fears for tomorrow. Know that your Father hears you, understands what you are going through, and loves you.

Then sing of His faithfulness yesterday, today, and tomorrow . . . to a thousand generations.

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 8: a joyful song

March 16, 2020

Read Psalm 8

For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

In the early 1980's, Michael W. Smith wrote a song with some of these words. Have you heard of it?

"Oh Lord, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth. Oh Lord, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth. Oh Lord, we praise your name. Oh Lord, we magnify your name prince of peace, mighty God Oh, Lord God almighty."

Remember it? Now it will be stuck in your head all day long. You're welcome. 😊

But it is a beautiful, powerful song. When the song is performed in church, the piano bangs this same chorus repeatedly and the choir sings their hearts out. It is literally just those words repeated.

The song is so simple, but it's loud and exciting and gets stuck in our heads. What a wonderful example of the meaning behind this psalm.

David is singing for JOY.

Michael W. Smith knew this and wrote a song that is so filled with joy that the piano seems like it might explode, and the choir probably will have no voice left.

The heading for Psalm 8 includes, *"for the director of music, according to gittith."* Bible scholars are not certain what "gittith" refers to. But possibly "an instrument of Gath." Gath being an ancient Philistine city.

Other scholars suggest that Obed-Edom, the Gittite (from Gath), had some special solo with this piece, or maybe that David wrote it for him.

Obed-Edom's story is found in 2 Samuel 6:9-12.

The Ark of the Covenant was carried from place to place by God's people for centuries. The Ark was the place the Lord would come down and meet with His priests, the holiest of holy places to the Israelite people. And for a time, the Ark of the Covenant resided in Obed-Edom's house as David sought the Lord's will for what to do with it. And, during that time, the Lord blessed him and his household! (2 Samuel 6:11)

Obed-Edom had reason to be filled with joy. Was David singing this psalm in celebration of the blessings rained down upon this man's family? Was David celebrating with a friend? Was David so filled with joy because the Lord was pleased?

The exact meaning of "Gittith" is not known for certain. But the word is also included in the headings of Psalm 81 and 84, both are psalms full of joy and celebration.

Whatever you are going through today—and regular life has been impacted around here—know that the Lord in heaven wants you to hear *joy* in this psalm. I am 100% sure of this.

How does David express joy in this psalm? Well, it's simple, he sings of God's awesomeness, that God is not only the God of Israel yesterday, today, and tomorrow, but He is God of *all* the earth.

And . . . He is not only God of all the earth! Even the earth cannot contain His glory!
Psalm 8:1 NLT

The universe is big. Here's a reminder of how big. NASA's website says, "Our sun, the nearest star, is 93 million miles away. That's why the sun, which is a million times the size of the earth, looks so small. It would take the space shuttle seven months to fly there." (nasa.gov)

And that's just within our galaxy, the Milky Way.

Psalm 8:2-3 NIV

Wait . . . let's just repeat that and let it sink in a bit. Our sun (which is a million times bigger than the earth) is the work of God's *fingers*. David says God is bigger than the universe, but His glory comes from the mouths of babies, too. Did you catch that?

Remember the Old Testament story of Elijah when he fled the queen who was killing the Lord's prophets? All of them were dead; he was the only one left. His story is recorded in 1 Kings and fits with Psalm 8.

We look to the God of the universe, in storms, disasters, and trials, in suffering and triumphs. But do we sometimes miss His voice? Sometimes He speaks through the mouths of babies . . . or a whisper in the breeze—
1 Kings 19:11-13

Elijah feared for his life. In fact, he was running for his life. Just before verse 11, Elijah just laid down to die, and the angel of the Lord told him to get up twice. The man was freaking out. He was giving up. The great prophet Elijah was panicking.

God could have roared His commands. He could have rained His expectations down with thunder and lightning upon this man having a panic attack.

But, my friends, this is such a good reminder for us . . . He did not do that.

God, who is bigger than the universe, spoke to Elijah in the calmness of a breeze. He spoke love to His prophet Elijah in his time of great need and fear.

That is our God.

Today, in our world, we're scared. Life can be filled with uncertainty and sometimes we even fear going out. Friends, listen to God's whisper of love in a breeze today. Maybe in the sunshine on your face. Maybe in dog or cat snuggles. Maybe in the blossoms on the cherry trees or the daffodils that are peeking through the dirt already.

Be reminded that you are loved, and you are in His hands, however uncertain the earth seems. The Lord is bigger.

Let's leave this psalm right there, and find joy in the knowledge that our Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, is MINDFUL OF US.

Listen for His voice today.

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 9: count my blessings

March 24, 2020

Read Psalm 9

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Death of the Son." A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

So much in this world steals our attention and our time, forcing us to focus on things that brew worry and fear and bitterness. That is not what God wants for us. God is calling us to Him, to seek Him with all our hearts, especially as the world around us yells and screams for our attention.

Focus on your Father in heaven who loves you and wants to give you His peace and His joy.
Isaiah 26:3

Some old Bibles like the Septuagint (the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament, 3rd century BC) and the Vulgate (Latin Bible translation 4th century AD) put Psalms 9 and 10 as one long acrostic poem instead of two chapters. Many believe the acrostic poem—each line begins with the subsequent letter in the Hebrew alphabet—made it easier for Hebrew kids to learn and memorize the song. Cute!

The NIV Bible titles Psalm 9, "to the tune of Death of a Son." Other Bible translations use the Hebrew word *Muth-labben*. Bible scholars believe the title refers to a tune (*Muth-labben*), maybe an older song that many were already familiar with and aided in memorization. Possibly a catchy song about how their beloved King David slew "the son" (Goliath) when he was a young teen himself. No one knows with certainty.

Psalm 9:1-2

We could stop right there. What beautiful verses filled with heart felt praise. But how exactly does one give thanks with a *whole heart*? What does that mean?

David gives us an answer within the psalm—by remembering all that God has done.

When our kids are complaining about how a friend has a new phone, new clothes, or something else they wish for, what do we say? Count your blessings.

My friends, are you feeling hopeless today? Fearful? Finding it hard to find peace in your heart? Are you struggling with letting go and letting God handle things? Want to praise God but you just can't find the words sometimes?

Count your blessings. Thank Him for the things He has done. Simple things. Big things. Great miraculous things, or even just for the new day. Thank God for the things He has done for you and throughout time.

Nothing reminds us of all that we have to be thankful for better than counting our blessings. Even better? Speak them.

When we start to remember all that God has done and we *speak* these things to Him, a peace will come through our hearts. Why? Because remembering good things is a way to praise Him and thank Him. It sets our minds on God's faithfulness.

The Hebrew word for "wonderful deeds" or "marvelous works" is the same word found here:

Psalm 106:7 & 22

Now *those* things were some amazing miracles. But today is filled with the wonderful deeds of the Lord as well.

Today is as full of God to this man [David] as the sacred yesterdays of national history, and his deliverances as wonderful as those of old.

-Alexander Maclaren, English preacher, 1826-1910

Seriously, God's marvelous deeds recorded in the Bible are huge and so amazing. He parted the Red Sea to save His children (Exodus 14), the sun stood still for Joshua (Joshua 10), the awesome resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28), the feeding of the five thousand (which BTW would be closer to fifteen thousand with women and children; Mark 6), and don't forget the creation of the universe (Genesis 1).

These are miraculous deeds, and when we stop to remember them, it is a reminder of God's mighty strength and His plan throughout time.

But what about the marvelous deeds He has done for you?

Psalm 71:17

Psalm 119:18

How has God shown His love to you? How has God delivered you?

Let's remember to count our blessings today. And, my friends, there are blessings to count. There are big blessings for sure, but don't miss the small ones. The small blessings that happen every single day.

David goes on in this psalm and the next to list some of the ways God has been faithful to him. He was good at singing God's praises. Who knows what was going on for David as he wrote this song. He was a king after all, and surely life was always busy and stressful. But this psalm reminded him, as it does us, to slow down and speak about God's provision. About His love and His mercies, big and small.

Slow down and remember.

When the world is in upheaval around us, when fear threatens to suffocate us, when it is hard to take a step forward:

Psalm 9:1-2 New Living Translation

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 10: KING Forever and Ever

March 28, 2020

Read Psalm 10

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Can't you just hear the author of this psalm calling for help, "Do something Lord or evil will overtake me!"

Psalm 10 has no heading. Some Bible scholars believe Psalm 10 to be a continuation of Psalm 9, but no one knows with certainty. Because this unnamed psalm is nestled between several psalms attributed to King David, this one is also thought to be penned by him.

At first glance, Psalm 10 seems like one long list of complaints, yet at further study this list will fill us with encouragement.

The psalms are prayers. When you read them, read them like a prayer to God. Psalm 10 starts off with anger, frustration, and fear at what is going on around the author. He moves into asking God for help. Then closes with a song of praise to a God who always hears and answers His children. A prayer.

That is how we are taught to pray. When we talk to the Lord, we share our worries and fears. He hears us, and even through the act of sharing, we can find peace and comfort in the One who listens. We can also find encouragement that He will act. We trust in that promise.

My friends, hear the encouragement in Psalm 10 today.
Psalm 10:1—in a different translation

The words of the Lord are timely and meaningful. Do you feel like God is absent right now? Or silent? Some people do. Or do you feel His presence even more in times of worry and trials?

Or is it a daily (maybe moment by moment) battle or choice to seek Him? Do you, like many of us, wake up in the middle of the night and as the mind re-engages in the dark all those things that seemed so manageable during the day threatened to suffocate you?

Is it in those moments that you can call for God, like our psalmist here, "Why, LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide your face from me? Why, when I need you most, does it feel like you have abandoned me?"

The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure . . . It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

This is what we fear—that God won't answer. That He is not listening. That He has, in fact, turned His back on us.

Friends, this is our human response. This is fear. And we know who plays upon this human weakness, don't we? Especially when it's dark . . . and quiet . . . and that voice whispers again, "you truly are alone now."

In those moments, think on God's promises.

God very clearly states His desire for us. Here are just a few of His powerful promises (Write your favorite down, keep it somewhere you can see it!):

Deuteronomy 31:8

Joshua 1:9

Zephaniah 3:17

Matthew 28:20

John 6:37

Romans 8:38-29

Isaiah 43:1-2

If you feel alone and as if God hides His face from you during trials, remember these promises:

- . . . that He walks through the fire with you.
- . . . there is no trial that He has not seen before.
- . . . no worry that He has not faced.
- . . . no problem that is too big for Him.

The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

There was a widely circulated poem in the 20th century called *Footprints in the Sand* (author unknown). The poem is the story of someone going through a trial. One day, he looks back at his life and sees two sets of footprints in the sand, yet only one set during the most difficult times. He asked God, "why would you leave me during those times?" God replied, "Those are my footprints, and I was carrying you."

A beautiful description of God's love and His promises from the above verses. Apparently, there have been battles and controversies over who wrote *Footprints in the Sand*. Sadly, that is how people are.

But here is a portion of one of Charles Spurgeon's sermons and what a gem it is. Maybe he is the one who inspired *Footprints in the Sand*. Hmmm. May you hear a reminder that the Lord walks with you always. He has not and never will leave you. In fact, He goes before you and behind you.

Were you ever in a new trouble, one which was so strange that you felt that a similar trial had never happened to you, and moreover, you dreamed that such a temptation had never assailed anyone else? I should not wonder if that was the thought of a troubled heart.

And did you ever walk out on that lonely desert island on which you were wrecked, and say, "I am alone- alone- ALONE- no one was ever here before me?"

And did you suddenly pull up short as you noticed, in the sand, the footprints of a man?

I remember very well passing through that experience; and when I looked, lo! it was not merely the footprints of a man that I saw, but I thought I knew whose feet had left those imprints; they were the marks of One who had been crucified; for there was the print of the nails.

So I thought to myself, "If he has been here, it is a desert island no longer. Since his blessed feet once trod this wilderness way, it blossoms now like the rose, and it becomes to my troubled spirit as a very garden of the Lord.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

[Charles Spurgeon Sermon HERE](#)

Walk in the very garden of the Lord.

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Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 11: the cup of confidence in the Lord

April 1, 2020

Read Psalm 11

For the director of music. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Short and sweet yet filled with power.

Psalm 11:1—NKJV

Why did David's friends fear for his safety and tell him to flee? The word choice suggests that he runs fast and hides quickly. And not just anyone "speaks to our souls." Someone close to him was urgently pleading with him to run for his life.

The Bible teaches us that David spent time, as a young man, in the court of King Saul, his father-in-law. King Saul knew David was blessed by God, and he was jealous of him. There were times when David was loved and times when he ran for his life from that dangerous and volatile king.

God made it known that David was His chosen king, not Saul (1 Samuel 16). Although David had people that were loyal to him, not all were encouraging of his faith. Sometimes they suggested he run and hide from Saul, when God very clearly told him to stand and be brave.

Sounds similar to a New Testament story:

Matthew 16:21-23

Peter was one of Jesus's closest friends during his time on earth. He expected that Jesus would show his strength and blast His enemies before they could hurt Him.

For you [Peter] are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

Similarly, David's friends were tempting him to run and hide. "Flee like a bird to the mountains."

Are you setting your mind on the things of God or on the things of man? Who do you seek refuge in—God or the things of man?

If we set our minds on God and all that He is and was and will be, then the fears and the worries of the present melt away. Or do they?

It seems that David was still afraid, and he may, in fact, have run away to the mountains after all. Was Jesus still afraid of the cross?

Read verse 6 in the KJV

The "cup" contains the wrath of God against sin.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the night Jesus was betrayed, He prayed similar words.
Read Matthew 26:36-42

Was Jesus fearing the pain and suffering that He knew was coming? Was He also fearing His portion of the cup—the wrath of God—being poured out upon Him?

The wrath of God *was* poured out upon Jesus on the cross. Not because of anything that He did, but because of you and me. That, my friends, is love.

Do you find yourself lost in worry and fear right now? Do the things of man tempt you to look away from God? In times of trials, the world will tempt us to fall into this trap, to "flee into the mountains."

But remember David's words to the *director of music*,
Psalm 11:4 NIV

The Lord is in His church, just as He is on His throne in heaven. Do you believe this? If you do, then as long as HE is there, you and I can face anything.

Habakkuk 2:20

As I write this, we are coming upon Holy Week, and let us remember that Jesus is in His Holy Temple. Paul reminds us in Romans that Jesus prays for us from heaven. Jesus intercedes for you and for me with the Father. He is with the Father right now, interceding for us.
Romans 8:34

Therefore, as we await the healing of our land and ultimately the return of our Lord,
Jude 21

One more beautiful thought—David reminds us at the end of this psalm with similar words found in the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6. The Lord's promise that we will see His face. We will. But even now, He looks upon us. He sees us. He watches over His children, always.

Know that the Lord's face is upon you today.
Numbers 6:24-25

Questions, Thoughts, Prayers:

Psalm 13: inscribed on His hands

April 7, 2020

(Yes, I accidentally skipped Psalm 12, see why below 😊)

Read Psalm 13

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

Note: *it's interesting as I look back at these posts. I wrote these during the pandemic which makes for an interesting mindset to be studying the Psalter for sure. Also, I am a bit scattered always, but I don't believe in coincidences. This psalm, as you read it you will learn, spoke to me of Jesus and His great sacrifice on the cross for you and me . . . and the day I published was also Good Friday. And yet, I mistakenly worked on Psalm 13 when I was supposed to be working on Psalm 12. Not a coincidence. God helps me to write these, I cannot do it on my own. I do not have the will power nor the knowledge without Him.*

Therefore, my knuckle headedness is excused away, and we will celebrate divine authorship in the appointed time. Thank you, Father.

Back to Psalm 13. *This is one of my favorites. I have it memorized. 😊*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This short, sweet little poem starts with despair and ends with joy. Isn't that how our prayers go?

Whenever you look into David's psalms, you may somewhere, or another, see yourselves. You never get into a corner, but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower; and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was up above me, ready to sing his song upon his stringed instrument, even as I could sing mine.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Some versions of the Bible translate the dedication "to the director of music" as "to the Chief Musician." There are many Bible scholars who believe that David wrote these and sent them off to the worship leader of his time. But there are some who believe that these poems were written to God Himself, that God is the "Chief Musician" that David sings to.

If you think about it that way, then Psalm 13 is David's cry of anguish and fear of being abandoned. It's a prayer, and God quickly calms his heart and leaves joy in the place of fear. Does He do that for you?

Psalm 13:1a—How long LORD?

We know that the Lord walks beside us. We know that He will ultimately deliver us. We cling to these promises. But are your cries sometimes like David's? Not, "Will you deliver me, Lord?" But "When? How long, Lord?"

Do you feel this way now? As our world suffers, as we face just another trial of humanity, we are all crying out: "How long, Lord?" "When will you deliver us?"

This is Holy Week, and during this week, we ask the same—"Lord, how long?"

Jesus knows this personally. He understands. He knows this *for real*. As Jesus hung on that cross, He was completely alone. His Father, our Father, turned His face away as He had to do. The wrath of God was poured out upon Jesus's shoulders. All the sins of the world—from you and me—were on Jesus's shoulders and the Father had to hide His face.

Jesus was alone. So that you and I never have to be.
Matthew 27:46

The Father could not look upon the Son as He took my sin, your sin, our sin onto that cross. He turned away. But the Good News—because of what Jesus bore for you and me—no matter what we do, God will not abandon us. No matter where we go, He never looks away.

David had to recognize his sin, confess, and make the atonement sacrifice. Jesus was the atonement sacrifice for our sins.

Isaiah 49:14-16

This is a clear prophetic statement during the time of Isaiah (six hundred years before Jesus) of what Jesus would do on the cross. He would bear the marks of our sin, revealing His great love, on the palms of His hands.

In the Gospel of John, Thomas doubts (and why he is called Doubting Thomas),
John 20:26-29—I will not believe he is alive unless I can feel the marks of the nails on his hands.

My friends, He is alive. Do you believe this? He will never forget us. He will never turn His back on us. He can't—we are written on the palms of His hands.

Psalms 13:5

And suddenly, the author's perspective changes, and so can ours. Despite what is going on around us and because He is trustworthy.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 12: the Word of God

April 13, 2020

(and now back to the schedule)

Read Psalm 12

For the director of music. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

In Psalm 12, David speaks of the vicious words of man compared to the precious, healing, powerful, and pure Words of God.

Psalm 12:2b NKJV

A heart and a heart: one for the church, another for the change; one for Sundays, another for working days; one for the king, another for the pope. A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.

-Thomas Adams, English preacher, 1583-1652

Harsh.

Maybe David was in the court of King Saul when he wrote this psalm with all the whispering and gossiping going on around him, people stepping over one another, trying to gain the king's favor. People stepping on him possibly. Maybe he was sick and tired of those professing to love the Lord on the Sabbath acting differently at work on Monday. Or maybe he was tired of those professing to love him and follow him, only to turn around and say the same to Saul later.

A lip flatterer. A double heart.

Whatever was happening, David did not know who to listen to, nor whom to trust.

David was a soldier, a warrior, a man of war. Men loved him and followed him. But we get a sense in this psalm that he did not understand nor deal well with the gossip, slander, and backstabbing that he experienced in court. He was alone. He did not know whom to trust. This was a battle he knew nothing about. He might have preferred the sword and battle to this kind of war.

So, what did David do? He took the matter to God.

David was frustrated with the flattering lips and double-hearted people; you can hear it in his words. But then his words change as he speaks of something that *is* timeless, true, pure, unchanging, and trustworthy. He journals his prayer to God and during his prayer, he remembers. He remembers Who is faithful. He remembers Whom he can trust.

Yahweh. Jehovah. The Lord God in heaven and David's heavenly Father. When his world felt like chaos around him, David looked to his Father in heaven.

Right now, with the politics, the pandemic, the unknowns, the news, the fake news, and all the drama, we could say the same . . .

"Away from me flattering lips and double hearts! Quit trying to distract me from all the blessings that I have in my life! I will seek God's Word which is true and good and timeless."

Here is an interesting difference and a good reason to read different translations to learn all that we can about what God is saying:

Read Psalm 12:6-7 in two different translations, note differences. (I recommend the ESV and ASV in this case)

Is David talking about God's people or God's Words? Or both? Maybe David is saying both: God will preserve His people and His Word.

Despite the drama in court, David was confident in God's ability to preserve His Words, no matter who tried to mess them up. We can look back throughout time and see that the hand of God has protected the integrity of His Word.

And He will continue to do so.

We can rest in this, friends, that despite the gossip and the drama and the lies and the evil in this world, that God's Word will never fade or change.

Matthew 24:35

Isaiah 40:8

David says the Lord's word is pure and compares it to silver that has been put through the fire to burn out all the impurities. And not only once, but seven times. This silver is pure.

Has the Word of the Lord withstood the fire? Yes, time and time again.

But the difference between God's Word and silver is that God's Word has lost nothing through the burning of the fire. There were no impurities to begin with. It is the same as it was in the beginning.

My friends, during this time of fear and trials, read God's Word. If you've never done so before, I suggest starting in the New Testament with the book of John. You will meet Jesus there.

John 1:1-5

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 14: poor in spirit

April 20, 2020

Read Psalm 14

For the director of music. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 14 is titled, *The Fool Says, There is No God* (ESV); *The Unbelieving Fool* (ICB); *Folly of the Godless, and God's Final Triumph* (NKJV); and *Folly and Wickedness of Men* (NASB).

David's psalms are like journaled prayers. And in this psalm, David is frustrated and angry.

He is so frustrated that he claims there is no one good left in the world. There is no one left who loves the Lord. His poem turns back around though—like it usually does—to the goodness and faithfulness of God despite the evil all around him. A journaled prayer.

This psalm could have been written at any point in David's life, but especially when he was young and in Saul's court. David and the Jewish people had peace at times later in his life, but to a king like David, peace is probably not what we would call peace. A king's life was surely filled with stress and worry and self-doubt, for David especially. During the fifteen-ish years before he was crowned king, David was in and out of Saul's favor.

The Hebrew word for fool in this psalm is "nabal." Do you remember that name from another Old Testament story?

1 Samuel 25

Nabal was a wealthy man who disrespected and dishonored a young David and his well-known fighting soldiers. During those times, an act such as this could get all males (regardless of age) killed and all females, animals, and goods carried off as plunder. Not an uncommon thing to happen in the ancient world. In the first book of Samuel, this very thing was moments from happening while Nabal partied away the evening oblivious to what was rounding the corner behind him.

Nabal was a fool. Did David choose the word "nabal" in reference to that man in this psalm? Maybe.

When David claims, "fools say there is no God," he is not referring to people who struggle to understand God, who battle with doubts, as many of us have in our lives. And for sure he didn't mean those who never could love and accept God into their lives because of emotional or mental difficulties.

David refers to the "fool" who chooses to disregard God out of selfishness, conceit, and pride. The "I am my own god" attitude. Those are the fools,

Psalm 14:1a

The fool doesn't just say "I've got myself; I'm good" in his head, but he says it in his heart too. What an empty place that must be.

This is an interesting idea when we love someone who doesn't believe. Right? The mind and the heart.

I once saw a debate between Bill Nye the Science Guy and Ken Ham, a Creationist professor, two opposites when it comes to God, creation, evolution, and science. After watching that, I came to realize that Bill Nye will never be persuaded that there is a God with his head. In his head, he has the world all figured out. During the debate, there were times when Ken Ham tried to reach Bill's heart.

But how does one get past a mind that has decided already? Do you know someone who has reasoned away God with their mind?

All is not lost, reach the heart.

Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundreds of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Matthew 5:16

My friends, love wins over the heart, a servant's attitude. The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control.

Do you have an unbelieving loved one? Jesus is the best example we've ever been given on what to do . . . love them, serve them, walk with them through life's ups and downs. God wants head and heart, of course. He sent Jesus to reach our hearts.

David goes on to speak of his people—the poor—as he referred to others as “fools.”

This isn't the first time we've seen David refer to the Lord's people as the "poor." In the New Testament, we often see the description "the poor in spirit."

Matthew 5:3

Isaiah 66:2 (read in NIV & KJV—note different words used)

Luke 6:20

Proverbs 22:4

Psalm 34:18

The above verses are all about the "poor" or the "poor in spirit." *Poor (Bible synonyms): contrite spirit, crushed spirit, brokenhearted, humility, fear of the Lord.*

My synonyms: the one who falls short, the sinner, the one who knows they are lost without Jesus, the humble, the servant at heart.

Poverty is not only a physical issue but also a spiritual condition. A condition of the heart that requires daily dependence upon our Creator. We cannot walk this road of life without Him. People try. People try to fill that condition of the heart with other things, earthly things. Things that bring more heartache and suffering.

Revelation 3:20

Are you poor in spirit today? Does your heart need a Savior?

Choose in your heart today to love the Lord. Let that mind of ours do its own thing. Just give your heart to Jesus through a humble and broken spirit.

And let the rest go. He is trustworthy. He is capable. And He loves you.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 15: to be blameless and upright

April 24, 2020

Read Psalm 15
A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Do you identify with this person?

Are you blameless? Righteous? Truthful? Do you only do good to your neighbor? Do you always do what you say you're going to do?

Do any of us? Who does all these things? How can David claim this is who we should be?

As believers and followers of Jesus, this *is* who we should be trying to be. When we choose Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives, then we are covered by Jesus's great sacrifice on the cross. When we make that choice, the statement of our hearts is faith and commitment to seeking after God, allowing Him to fill us, mold us, and make us new, that is Grace.

Jesus took our sin, our faults, and our shortcomings on the cross; therefore, making us holy and blameless before God the Father. Some scholars call this *imputed righteousness*.

Imputed Righteousness: The Protestant Christian doctrine that a sinner is declared righteous by God purely by God's grace through faith in Christ, and thus all depends on Christ's merit and worthiness, rather than on one's own merit (Wikipedia).

David was talking about *imputed righteousness* in Psalm 15. Jesus had not walked the earth, performed miracles, loved the lost and poor in spirit, and taken all the sins of those who love Him on the cross . . . yet. But David and those who walked in the Lord prior to Jesus were still covered by Grace in God's eyes.

David is calling himself and the people of God "blameless, holy, righteous . . ." Let us not fall into a trap and think, "Wow, David thought himself perfect. He sure says he's blameless a lot and accuses others of all the bad things happening. We know David was not perfect!"

Let's look at this a little differently.

David claims blamelessness and integrity and uprightness as what God does to him as he [David] continues to try and walk in the way of the Lord. David claims this is the work of the Lord, not his own. He was pure in heart solely because God made him so.

This list of characteristics is daunting, and not something we are capable of without Grace, without the Lord. And BTW, this list of characteristics is not something the world would see as worthy either.

But God does.

Psalm 15:2-5a—NLT

David has a tough list in this psalm, and because David speaks so assuredly, we can assume he makes a habit of these character traits. He's not perfect, but his practice is to be sincere, honest, righteous, and upright. That's ultimate faith in God.

Sounds like another man in the Old Testament:
Genesis 6:9

Not perfect. Just faithful. Faithful to the law, faithful to his relationship with God.

We all make mistakes. But if we "walk with God," we recognize those things and run from them, then we take back up that faith that makes us blameless and upright and righteous before the Lord.

What does the blameless, the upright, and the righteous person have to look forward to?

Psalm 15:1—NIV (read the Message's translation of this verse—it's awesome. I'll discuss the Message in later Chapters)

The tent or the tabernacle was the temporary, movable home of the ark of the covenant. It was the ancient church of Israel. Mount Zion is where David's son Solomon would eventually build a great temple for the Lord. Mount Zion also refers to God's spiritual kingdom. The Bible is clear that one day Jesus will return and take physical possession of Mount Zion once more.

My friends, the blameless can find shelter, peace, and safety in the tent of God. The faithful can abide/reside/dwell or just plain MOVE IN to the house of God. And the righteous can take hope in the triumph of Jesus's return to the holy mountain one day.

Psalm 15:5b—Such people will stand firm forever. (NLT)

He that doeth these things shall never be moved; shall not be moved FOR EVER, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom. Temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace nor his future bliss. -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 16: the Golden Secret Psalm

May 1, 2020

Read Psalm 16 *A Miktam of David*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The Miktam/Michtam title is found in six psalms (16, 56-60) and is commonly understood to mean "golden." The Hebrew word also means "to cover," like "to cover one's mouth with a secret." Let's put the two meanings together and conclude that this is a golden nugget of a psalm that David secretly treasured in his heart.

In summary, Psalm 16 says that when we fully put our trust in the Lord, He will bring us through this life, unto death, and then into the next life where we will abide with Him forever and ever. That is His promise, and that is what David is singing about here.

David spends the first seven verses petitioning God to save him, "preserve me."
Psalm 16:1 NLT

In verse 8, David then claims this preservation. Even though David seems to be struggling and begging for help, his confidence in the Lord is unshakable.

Is this relatable?

When you present a request or a worry or fear before the Lord, do your knees wobble sometimes with uncertainty? Are you unsure that you should even ask this or if He even cares about these small things? Do you stand before Him uncertainly at first, but like a good father, as you share and give and let go, you can stand up a little straighter because of His great love?

Read Psalm 16:8 in different versions (NIV & ESV)

David's psalms are often like this: a worry, a petition, a fear shared is turned to confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God—regardless of the outcome.

But what exactly is David so worried about in this psalm?
Psalm 16:8—With you, I will not be shaken.

David states his surety. I am keeping my eyes on the Lord, always! And then with that statement comes the great, "*therefore* of joy." Like a realization, an idea that hits him, or a small voice that was always there reassuring and reminding him of what is, in fact, important in life.

Psalm 16:9a—Therefore my heart is glad

What is it that David needs?

David never wants to be without the Lord, even at the end of his life. He seeks reassurance of this promise.
Psalm 16:9b-11

And in these verses David claims that what God has always been for him, He will be forever.

Do you ever wonder about heaven? We talk to God through prayer in this life. He can be our best friend, the one we go to first, the one who sees us through hard times and good times. But in heaven, will we just have to get in line to talk with our best friend again?

What will that be like? Will our relationship with God be as personal in heaven as it is here?

Yes.

David is claiming that the relationship that he cares most about—that he treasures here in this life—will continue in the next. There will be no line of saints to get to God. He will walk right next to each of us, like He does now. Only we will see Him—finally.

We may not understand how. Many things about God are hard for our minds to comprehend.

But did God's people of the Old Testament know about heaven like we do now? Did they know about Jesus? They did not have the New Testament stories of the Bible; Jesus had not yet walked the earth.

But David knew God.

King David knew he would die. The prophet Nathan told him:
2 Samuel 7:12-13

But at the end of Psalm 16, what does this mean?

Compare Psalm 16:10 in the NIV and KJV

David knew he would die; he knew his body would decay. But he also knew, from the prophet Nathan who spoke God's word, that God would set one of David's descendants upon an eternal throne. David was reassured that his people—the Lord's people—would endure. That One would be set on the throne forever, eternally. David's son and heir Solomon would go on to build a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, but David would have known his son couldn't live forever.

David knew Nathan's prophecy was of the Messiah.

In the book of Acts, Peter spoke of this also. Peter said David knew.
Acts 2:30-32

We can rejoice with David because of Jesus's great sacrifice. We can rejoice with David because God the Father did not abandon Jesus in hell. His body did not decay.

Believe this and take heart, my friends.

See the Lord today.

I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Psalm 16:8 KJV

Let us seek the Lord as our greatest refuge. Let us hold Him in our hearts as our supreme treasure.

And remember, just like you don't have to wait on hold to talk to God here on earth . . . there are also no lines in heaven!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 17: the apple of the Lord's eye

May 12, 2020

Read Psalm 17 *A prayer of David*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Some have titled this psalm, *in the Shadow of His Wings*. My title choice is *the apple of the Lord's eye*. Both are beautiful pictures of who the Lord was to David and who He can be to you and to me.

In Psalm 17, David again calls on the Lord to defend his cause. David believes he is right; he believes in his cause and believes the Lord will uphold it.

Psalm 17:1-2 NLT

Brings up a good question to ask ourselves: how do we know our cause is the Lord's will? How do we make sure we are seeking after what is right and just, not just what feels right?

In this psalm, David was confident that what he was asking for was the right thing. He was careful to tell the truth and seek the truth, and he knew his only hope (and his best hope) would come from the Lord.

Psalm 17:3 NKJV

A good reminder, when we bring a request before God, we must first stop and calm our hearts and minds. We must expect that what we want or need at that moment may not match up with what God has planned for us. So, we must take a moment to align our heart with His—to breathe and let go.

And know that what God has planned for us is infinity better than what we feel we need at that moment. He sees the big picture. He sees the whole story—beginning to end. He knows.

Do you stop and clear your mind like that? Sometimes there's not time in moments of great need where we call out to our loving Father and He arrives—having never left at all, of course. And there are times when words are hard, and it's just our hearts that cry out in the silence.

But later, when emotions have calmed and the need is still before us, we can breathe and seek the will of God.

After all, how long was Jesus praying in the garden the night He was betrayed, the night before He died? Long enough for his devoted friends to fall asleep twice. We know He cried out with that urgent need (to the point of sweating blood in his worry and anxiety), but then?

Did He feel God's loving presence come over Him, and did He desire never to leave it? In fact, He left His prayer spot to check on His friends, then went back again to the safe, calm reassurance of His Father's presence. Because *that* is where He found peace. In the presence of God, He knew it would all be alright because God's plan is good. Always.

Matthew 26:36-46

My friends, let us cry out to God when we need Him. But then, we breathe, we listen, and we wait upon the mercy and the peace and the direction of the Lord.

Psalms 17:4 NKJV—The destroyer?!!

Do you live "by the word of the lips of God?" David's choice of words here makes it evident that he has *heard* the voice of God and has chosen to live by those words—David heard God's words from His very lips. He understood what God desired of him because he spoke to God, he knew God's heart, he lived out the Words of God.

The "paths of the destroyer" sounds like a place we all should avoid with urgency. Other Bible translations say: cruel and evil people (NLT), paths of violence (NASB), and paths of the cruel man (GNV). Whoever he or they are let's stay away from that path.

Instead, I will seek the "word of the lips of the Lord."

Read Psalm 17:7-8 in different translations and note differences. (I recommend NIV, NASB, ASV)

Why the different versions of verse 7? Bible scholars have tried to translate David's words from ancient Hebrew into English, and trying to find the perfect word is hard and impossible sometimes. But the different translations can help us to paint an even more vivid picture of what David was saying.

- the wonders of your great love, your lovingkindness, your marvelous lovingkindness!
- keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.

What an awesome picture of the relationship that David had with our Lord.

The wonder of extraordinary love is that God should make it such an ordinary thing, that he should give to us "marvelous lovingkindness," and yet should give it so often that it becomes a daily blessing, and yet remains marvelous still.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

No one knows for sure what event or time David is writing Psalm 17, but most believe it was during the time that David was hunted by King Saul. If you study the Old Testament account of these years of David's life, you will learn that David had ample opportunity to kill Saul. But he didn't only because he knew a time would come when God would remove Saul as king and give the crown to David. All in God's time.

He waited for God. How did he know this? David had an intimate relationship with the Lord.

David walked with the Lord. He knew God's expectations of him; he trusted in God's plan. He knew these things with great certainty because he walked with the Lord. In fact, he heard these things from the lips of the Lord.

Do you walk with the Lord?

Psalm 17:15—I love the International Children's Bible (ICB) for the translation of this verse.

David set himself apart from others of this world, "as for me . . ."

And finally, David speaks of heaven as the time he can shake off all worry, fear, and pain of this world and be fully in God's presence forevermore. David's speaks like he longs for the day when he can walk side by side with God in heaven. Face to face.

But until that day, David would continue to walk with the Lord in this life. And so shall we.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 18: the grateful retrospect

May 26, 2020

Psalm 18

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said:

This.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

As one of the longest psalms in the Psalter, this is a gem. There is so much in this psalm. In fact, I have the entirety of it highlighted in the Bible app!

First, like many others, this psalm is dedicated *to the director of music, or to the Chief Musician*. David dedicated this song to the worship director of his time but also to God Himself as the "Chief Musician." This psalm is a good example of that.

Interestingly, the words of Psalm 18 are found in another place in the Old Testament. David seems to have written this and sung it to the Father/Chief Musician upon the end of his struggle with Saul (Psalm 18) and then again at the end of his life.

2 Samuel 22 records David's last words.

A side note: if you are a history buff, read on to Chapter 23 (of 2 Samuel). The Bible remembers David's mighty warriors; "the three" and "the thirty." Mighty warriors, yes (if you read some of the crazy battles of the three, they were more like the Avengers or superheroes), but these guys were fully devoted to David. They followed him his whole life; on the run, hiding in caves, as well, living finally in the palace. That's dedication.

They were men of valor and dedicated to David, but they were created by and set into David's life by God.

The words of this psalm are a testimony to David's life, and his utmost faith in the Lord. David does not talk about his own royalty, nor does he attribute victories to his own ability. It's all God! You can tell through these words (mentioned twice in the Bible!) that David counted his greatest accomplishment as his relationship with God. Wow.

Bible scholars believe that David was a boy when he was anointed king by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 16). Some say under fifteen years old, and others say even closer to ten—which is why his father Jesse would not have presented him before Samuel as one of his sons who could possibly become king. David took on Goliath in the battle with the Philistines (1 Samuel 17) still just a boy. He was there to deliver supplies out to the battlefield to his three eldest brothers who were obviously of fighting age (Jewish history would say over twenty years old). But remember there were four brothers between him and these older ones. It's very likely then that David was fifteen years old when he faced down the giant warrior of the Philistines.

The Bible records that David became king of Judah at thirty years old (2 Samuel 5:4).

Therefore, from age ten to thirty David was just trying to trust in God. He was God's chosen one to lead the people of Judah. But through the most formative years of life, David was in hiding, running, fighting . . . probably anxious, afraid and lost. But God walked beside him.

David would say that's all he needed. But he also had a few friends who just happened to be some of the greatest warriors remembered in the Bible. God made sure David's back was covered.

Psalms 18:1-2—read in a different translation.

Commentators like to talk about the "list of 9 titles" that David gave to God just in these two verses of this wonderful psalm.

Keep in mind these are nine different Hebrew words translated into English: *my strength, the LORD is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God is my rock, my refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Here are some different Bible translations of these same Hebrew words: *my buckler, my high tower, my mountain, my steadfastness, my defender, my helper, my hope.*

Rather the whole is one long, loving accumulation of dear names, a series of invocations, in which the restless heart murmurs to itself how rich it is and is never wearied of saying, "my delight and my defense."

-Alexander Maclaren, Scottish minister, 1826-1910

Why the different names for God? Here is a little history on ancient Hebrew, although I am no expert. LORD, Lord, and lord are three different Hebrew words.

The word "lord" in the Bible (adon) means lord or master and refers to men (see Genesis 18:12 for an example).

Lord (Adonai) is referring to God. Adonai is a name attributed to God and a plural of the word "lord" (adon). Don't know why, but it's interesting.

LORD (YHWH) is the name of God. The true pronunciation for YHWH has been lost. Ancient Jews decided the name was too sacred to say out loud and therefore have lost how it was said originally. We now translate this word as Yahweh or Jehovah. This is the most sacred name of God.

Now it gets really interesting when the Bible puts "Lord God" or "LORD God" together (or Lord God of Hosts, God of Heaven's Armies, etc.), but we will not discuss that now.

Here are some interesting articles if you want to read more:

[Ancient Hebrew- Differences on the Name of the Lord](#)

[Haaretz Archaeology- on taking God's Name in vain](#)

Scholars believe the reason that the ancient Hebrew's might have stopped saying the name YHWH (also if you write it, it cannot be erased or thrown away) is an interesting interpretation of the Commandment—*thou shalt not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*. Modern Jews won't write God either. They, instead, write "G-d."

Whatever the exact meaning of the words in David's *List of 9*, he is calling upon God in all the names he knows and listing all the ways he has been blessed. When you think of it this way, it's an incredibly meaningful poem/song then.

Psalm 18:7-15 NKJV

Verses 7-15 paint a picture of David's deliverance in retrospect. Although it's quite possible that David experienced some of these events; smoke, fire, and earthquakes, during the time he was hunted by King Saul. The Bible doesn't say. But looking back now, David sees his great and consistent delivery from the hands of his enemies by his loving and mighty Father.

One can also see the parallel of Jesus's resurrection and ultimately, His return.

It will be clear that a greater one than David is here. Reader, you will not need our aid in this respect, if you know Jesus you will readily find him in his [David's] sorrows, deliverance, and triumphs all throughout this wonderful psalm.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 18:20-24 NKJV

In verses 20-24, David is claiming blamelessness before God; sinless, and pure. How can that be? Even if we just talk about David singing this song to God as a young man when he was finally put on the throne of Judah, even then, we know he could not have been sinless. There is no way that through all those years of war and conquest that he didn't carry blood on his hands. And remember, he probably sang this song at the end of his life, after we know of his sin with Bathsheba and his ultimate betrayal of her husband, Uriah.

David was not sinless. So, what does this mean?

Here's the thing: David didn't care what other people thought of him. He only cared about his relationship and his standing with the Lord. You and I read about David's moments of weakness, and we pass human judgment.

Thankfully that is not how God works. Praise the Lord that is not how He works!

David was right before God and that is all that mattered to him. I can imagine meeting David in heaven and asking him what it was like to have his greatest sins listed in the Bible for generations of people to read . . .

He might say, "Well, God and I talked about it, and we had it all worked out."

Many princes' sin with David, but few repent with him.

-Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack, 1754

David's grief and sadness at what he'd done to Uriah are evident in a couple places in the Bible (Psalm 51, 2 Samuel 12). But he took it up with the Lord, not with men.

This is all such a good reminder to be right with God, no one else matters. Am I walking with the Lord? Does He know my heart? Do I know His? Am I close enough that when I screw up, I hear His voice and reconcile myself to Him? Am I quiet enough to hear His voice?

Psalm 18:35 NLT

Other translations say: *thy goodness, thy help, thy providence* (the Septuagint uses "*thy discipline*"). *Your gentleness has made me great.* How did God's gentleness make David great?

We are so little that if God should manifest his greatness without condescension (to willingly lower oneself to another's level), we should be trampled under his feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great . . . wow.

David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. Let us all feel this sentiment in our own hearts and confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at his feet and cry, "thy gentleness hath made me great."
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 18:46—The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 19: Creation & Scripture- God's two great works

June 4, 2020

My friends, do you need healing this morning? Is your heart hurting, confused, and angry at the state of our country? Are you unsure how to respond? Are you at a loss as to how to explain it all to your children and grandchildren? Do you have a friend who just needs to talk about it, but you feel like your head will explode if you hear any more? Or your heart will if you feel any more?

Friends, the answer is clear, and it is in this psalm. God works in this way, you know. He speaks to us when we open our hearts to Him, when we are silent long enough to hear His voice. He promises this.

Listen to Him.

Read Psalm 19

For the director of music. A psalm of David

Favorite verse or thoughts:

I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.

-CS. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms, 1958

David is not talking about heaven in this poem; he's talking about the sky and the sun, which he calls "the heavens" here. David looked up to the sky and saw the handiwork of God, his Father.

And was blessed by it.

Psalm 19:1 NKJV

No one knows for certain at what point in David's life this was written, but Charles Spurgeon reminds us of this interesting piece:

In his earliest days the psalmist, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books- nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two volumes in his library that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellence of the Author as seen in both.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we look up to the sky, and on a nice day you will often hear, "the sun is out" or "the mountain is out." I realize this may not be a thing in other parts of the world, but here we all understand this. We see the sun and the blue sky, feel the warmth of the sun, and we feel blessed.

David proclaims the sky and sun are evidence of God. Do you believe this? Do the day and the night sky speak to you? Do they reveal who God is to you?

Psalm 19:2 NKJV

This is so beautiful. The day and the night sing the praises of God, the Creator. The Hebrew word used for "pours out" is something like a great fountain. The beauty of the sun and the clouds and the expanse of the sky is a great, gushing fountain proclaiming the mightiness of the Creator.

The night sky—where would mankind be without the night sky? The moon and the stars guide our lives and have throughout time. The night sky also reminds us of our insignificance. We study the stars and the constellations; we long to understand them.

Is there something else out there? We can't possibly be alone in this great unknowable expanse. Yes, God!

Even in David's time, they knew this truth:

Psalm 19:1-2

(pick a different translation this time—how about the International Childrens Bible or even the Complete Jewish Bible)

In verses 7-9, the psalm shifts from the glory of God as revealed in His creation to the awesomeness of who He is as revealed through Scripture.

Psalm 19:7-9 Compare the NLT and the NKJV

He is wisest who reads both the world-book and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, "My Father wrote them both."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The law of the LORD is perfect . . .

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy . . .

The precepts of the LORD are right . . .

The commands of the LORD are radiant . . .

The fear of the LORD is pure . . .

The decrees of the LORD are firm . . .

Also, did you notice the shift in verse 7 to a different Hebrew name for God? In this section, David is using the most holy of names, YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah).

David felt very strongly in the beauty and sanctity of the Word of God. But let's remember that David would have only a portion of the Bible that we know today.

At that time in history, David would possibly have in his hand—or the priests in the tabernacle would have—the first five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). Historians call this book the Pentateuch—meaning "five books" in Greek. The Jewish people call this the Torah. Some may just refer to these books at "the Law."

Other scholars believe the Pentateuch weren't even "books" at this point. That David may have only had bits and pieces of each. Much of what he knew was still primarily oral history.

Spurgeon calls the portion of scripture that David would have during his life as compared to the whole that we have, "the darkest and most historical portion."

And yet, David sings of the beauty of whatever Scripture he does have. This psalm glorifies God in His awesome creation, then praises Jehovah in the holiness of His word, then asks for help as a lowly sinner, and ends with these glorious words . . .

Psalm 19:15—BTW these are words that I pray every time I hit “publish.” Be pleased in me, Oh God.

Today, as uncertainty creeps around every corner, seek the beauty of God in His creation.

As fear of illness and unrest in our world threaten to suffocate us, look to the heavens to see the handiwork of God. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Nothing that is happening today, no worry of our hearts, is new to Him.

As sadness burdens our souls at the injustice in our world and we do not know what to do or where to turn, open God's Word. The answers are there. Hope is there. The healing is there. The ability to love others is there.

God has written two great masterpieces for you and for me. They both tell us of His great love for us. They remind us that we are never alone; that He goes before us. And they draw us into a relationship with Him . . . if we let them.

Matthew 11:28—Jesus said.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 20: prepare for battle

June 27, 2020

Read Psalm 20

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 20 is considered a psalm of David, although in this case it seems the multitude are singing on his behalf, praying for victory, for safety, for strength.

The king is readying for battle.

The 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon calls this ancient Israel's "national anthem" to be sung at the outbreak of war as the king puts on his armor. David's sword, we know, was well used and rarely sat on the shelf. Some say: "hacked, not rusted." Israel fought many wars.

Psalm 20:1-3 NLT—Interlude.

The first three verses cry out for God to protect their king, to go with him and before him. The first verse alone calls to God as Yahweh—the most holy of names for the Lord—and also to the God of Israel's patriarch Jacob. Maybe the use of both names was a call upon God's holiness as well as a reminder of His great faithfulness to them in the past. Then the second verse calls for help and support from His sanctuary (holy place or tabernacle where the ark was kept) and from the hills of Zion.

Read Psalm 20:3 again in the NKJV—Selah.

Two rituals mentioned here are the *minchah* (gratitude offering) and the *olah* (blood sacrifice). Ancient Israel would have performed both before sending their king into battle. They knew what happened when they didn't prepare themselves before the Lord, when they didn't do this and, in their hearts, give the battle to the Lord first. They knew the importance of preparation.

The *minchah* or grain offering is explained in Leviticus 2 with more instructions as to how the priests should hand it and how it should be prepared in Leviticus 6 & 7.

Leviticus 2:1-2

About two thousand years prior, in the story of Cain and Abel, both brothers brought a *minchah* offering before the Lord. One was accepted, and one was not. Both brothers provided an offering before the Lord like they were supposed to. Cain brought the first fruits of the garden or field (Genesis 4:3), and Abel brought the first fruits of

the flock (Genesis 4:4). It wasn't until God provided Moses the Law (the Torah) did God command the *minchah* to be a grain offering—the first fruits of the ground.

If Abel did it wrong—even though he would not have known the Law—why was his offering accepted and his brothers was not?

Cain and Abel both brought a *minchah* (gift of tribute) before God, but Abel acted in faith.
Hebrews 11:4

God knows our hearts. God knew Abel's heart. God knew Cain's heart. He knows my heart, and He knows when my offering is from a place of faith and gratitude.

A good reminder that our gifts to the Lord must come from our heart.

The *olah* sacrifice (burnt offering) is described in Leviticus 1 and again in Leviticus 6 & 7. The requirements for this sacrifice are also very specific. The blood sacrifices of ancient Israel are hard for us to understand, and we certainly try not to envision them. Thankfully we do not live in a time when the Lord requires animal sacrifice anymore.

Also, an interesting note, the first *olah* sacrifice was that of Noah after the flood.
Genesis 8:20-22

Thankfully the Lord was pleased with Noah's burnt sacrifice upon that mountain after the flood. Thankfully, for all of us, the Lord accepted Noah's sacrifice.

And thankfully we have this promise.

Bible commentators pause here and remember the sacrifice of the cross. Was Jesus our *olah* offering before the Lord?
John 1:29

SELAH . . . pause, breathe, wonder.

Remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice (Selah). Psalm 20:3 KJV

"SELAH." It is well to pause at the cross before we march onward to battle, and with the psalmist cry, "Selah." We are too much in a hurry to make good haste. A little pausing might greatly help our speed. Stay, good man, there is a haste which hinders; rest awhile, meditate on the burnt sacrifice, and put thy heart right for the stern work which lieth before thee.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

We are not required to offer the sacrifices of old, but what does the Lord ask of you to give to him today? He does call us to sacrifice ourselves to Him anew each morning.

And like the Israelites before going into battle, we must prepare ourselves each day by being right with God. By making sure we go with the Lord's favor.

What do you offer the Lord today? Do you go with His favor?

As the world suffers. As neighbor fights neighbor. As sickness and racial tension and anger and bitterness suffocate us, what does the Lord require of me today? What does He require of you?

We face battle today, my friends. Go forth with the favor of the Lord.
Micah 6:8

Galatians 5:22-23

Psalm 20:7

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 21: praise & rejoice

July 7, 2020

Read Psalm 21

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a beautiful little praise psalm.

Psalm 20 was a prayer for protection of the king as David and his fighting men prepared for battle. It is logical then, that Psalm 21 is a praise for that answered prayer of safe keeping or success in battle.

Psalm 20:1-2 NLT—Interlude.

It is evidently the fit companion of Psalm twenty and is in its proper position next to it. Psalm twenty anticipates what this regards as realized. If we pray day to day for a benefit and receive it, we must, ere the sun goes down, praise God for that mercy, or we deserve to be denied the next time.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Can you just hear the overflowing joy coming from these words? To think that this psalm has been read and sung in Israel's house of worship for 3000 years is amazing . . . and powerful.

And a good reminder that God has seen it all. There is nothing new going on in this world. Our God is in control. That is comforting today.

But let us not forget that the words we read today have brought comfort, peace, and joy to God's people throughout history. When we read God's Word, remember that others are also reading it, looking for answers, for peace and hope.

And, my friends, that is what God wants for us. He wants us to read the words he gave us. He wants us to look for Him in these words, and to find Him there; to find peace and joy and great, great love.

Psalm 21:3-12 NLT—The unfailing love of the Most High! (verse 7)

Maybe you can hear the echo of their voices and the words planned for you to hear today from your loving heavenly Father . . .

Why are God's people rejoicing? Because God saves.

David sings of physical salvation. He sings of God delivering him and his people from the hands of their enemies. Maybe you can sing of physical salvation as well. God's grace is a spiritual AND a physical salvation.

The Lord saved us from sin and death; He has released us from the bondage of sin. But we also have a real enemy, real darkness fights for our souls.

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul talks about putting on the *Armor of God* to protect us against evil. Ephesians 6:12

So, knowing that God saves us physically and spiritually, let us rejoice! Let us rejoice always! Philippians 4:4-7

David reminds us in this psalm to find joy in "His presence." Verse 6 says this:

For you make him most blessed forever; you make him joyful with gladness in your presence.
Psalm 21:6 NASB

So where do Christians find joy? In the presence of the Father. But how exactly does one come into the presence of the Father? By sharing our life with Him. Every bit of our lives. Not just our really big prayers, the ones that we deemed important enough to seek God's help, but also the little prayers throughout our day. If we only seek God in times of crises, we will never truly know Him.

What would you think if your children or grandchildren only came to you in their time of urgent need?

Share your heart with your loving, faithful Father in heaven. He is the best confidant, the most trustworthy, the best of friends. He is always there, always listening, always loving. When you feel like He is far away or distant, you have moved. Not Him.

Like a good parent, God's desire is to know His children, to be involved in every aspect of our lives. Be in God's presence, my friends. All day. He is there when you are worried. He is there when you are lonely. He is there when you screw up. He is there in moments of joy.

He is waiting. Open your heart and come into His presence.
Philippians 4:4-7

Do you struggle with finding peace, especially now? Then come into the presence of the Father. In the presence of the Father, you will find joy, peace, strength, and love.

You will also find that the Lord gives you the desires of your heart. But what does this even mean? Certainly, God doesn't always answer our prayers exactly as we ask them. David knew this. After his sin with Bathsheba and ultimate betrayal of her husband, Uriah, there was a child (2 Samuel 12). The child suffered, and the Bible says that David prayed day and night for his son, refusing to eat and sleep. But God took the child to heaven. God did not answer David's prayer the way he wanted.

How does this same man claim the following in verse 2?

You have granted him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.
Psalm 21:2

That's a hard one to answer. But we know that David trusted in the Lord with all his heart. He knew that what God did was right and always for the good of those who love him.

David lived in the presence of the Father.

David knew, trusted, and leaned on the Father for strength and protection and joy throughout his life. Before and after battle. During sickness and death. At the loss of his son, and the great betrayal of another son.

How?
Psalm 3:3

Psalm 5:3

Psalm 8:1

Psalm 9:1-2

Psalm 13:5-6

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 19:14

David walked with God. He lived in the presence of the Father.

Come into God's presence today. Share your day with Him. Share your worry, your joy, and your struggles with Him today. And He will *be* the desire of your heart.

Psalm 21:12—Rise up, O LORD, in all your power!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 22: the psalm of the cross

July 20, 2020

Read Psalm 22

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this psalm.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

If you love Jesus, then you recognize the first words and many of the latter statements in this psalm. Perhaps the words cause your heart to sting a bit, as they do mine.

David cried these words long before his "Greater Son" did so on the cross. What was happening in his life that would cause him to cry out to God in such a tormented way? Not only can you feel the fear and pain in his words, but there's a great cry of abandonment, of being cast aside, like when someone you love turns their back on you.

Not just—"God, where are you?" But—"My God, my God, why?"

Psalm 22:1 NIV

Let us remember that David was chosen by God to be king of His people when he was possibly ten years old. And then, David feared for his life for twenty years before he was finally crowned king of Judah around the age of thirty. He lived in caves; he ran for his life. There were probably many times when he could have cried these words to God.

Friends, do you have a prayer that you've prayed for many years? Have you prayed for the salvation of someone you love? For healing? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Have you felt like He turned His back on you?

Here's the deal: My God, your God, David's God has not and will never abandon you, will never turn His back on you, will never cast you aside. And here's why we can speak with confidence . . .

Matthew 27:45-46

Jesus was a Jew. He would have grown up hearing and memorizing the Scriptures, especially the songs of David. Jesus quoted David's words when He was dying on the cross. Did He recite the whole thing? Were there other words He spoke to the Father in His time of greatest need?

Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 22, and He knew it. But friends, here is the piece we must now remember, although it is hard to hear:

It was necessary that [Jesus] should feel the loss of his Father's smile- for the condemned in hell must have tasted that bitterness and therefore the Father closed the eye of his love, put the hand of justice before the smile of his face, and left his son to cry, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Jesus was not a sinner; He had never known that sting of guilt and regret. But He took it all. He carried the weight of my sin and your sin and the sins of the world onto His shoulder that day 2000 years ago.

And the Father turned away.

For that couple of agonizing hours, Jesus was utterly alone and abandoned . . . with the weight of my sin on His shoulders. As horrible as this was, it is done, and Jesus fulfilled God's perfect and loving plan of redemption for His children.

And that is why Bible commentators have titled this psalm, "The Psalm of the Cross." Whatever David was experiencing when he wrote this psalm pales in comparison to what was done on the cross that day for you and for me.

There are more things that point to Jesus on the cross, prophecies of how it would happen. David would not have known this, but the Jewish people of Jesus's time would have recognized it, and certainly, (although maybe after the fact) Jesus's own disciples.

Psalm 22:16-18

Jesus knew this psalm. Jesus knew what was coming for Him, His whole life. He knew this not because of David's psalm, but because He had always been with the Father. How horrible. But also, how much true and genuine love?

David goes on to remember that God has been faithful. There have been other psalms like this beginning with great pain, fear, or a plea for help only to turn to reminders of God's faithfulness. And therefore, a good reminder for us also that when we feel alone, like God isn't listening or answering, to remember the times that He has been faithful. He was faithful; He will be faithful.

Despite his fear and worry, David remembered and clung to God's faithfulness to him.

Psalm 22:3-5 again in the ESV.

David speaks of the glory of God throughout the rest of the psalm. The Lord will reign, and all the nations will praise Him. Did Jesus recite these words too while He suffered on the cross? Although God had turned His face away, Jesus still had the words of the Lord in His heart. He knew the promises.

Psalm 22:30-31 in the ESV again

What a beautiful tragic reminder to us to read the Word of God. As Jesus suffered on the cross and the Father turned away, He held those words and promises in His heart.

Let us do the same. If you have not read the Bible, my friends, can I encourage you to start today? Start at the beginning. Sure, you will get bogged down in parts, and it will take you more than a year. But you will meet God there, in His Word.

Also, let us memorize Scripture. Ancient Israel knew the power behind reciting scripture. Why have we lost this? In times of trial and fear and worry, remember God's faithfulness. Recite His words and His promises. Here's one to start us off,
Joshua 1:9

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 23: My Good Shepherd

July 29, 2020

Read Psalm 23 (or just recite it! 😊)
A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

We all know these words. Maybe we even have these words memorized. Psalm 23 is familiar, but do you remember Psalm 22?

Psalm 22:1-2—My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" that we come to "The LORD is my Shepherd." We must by experience know the value of blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the sweetness of the Good Shepherd's care.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

At the beginning of Psalm 22, David cries out in fear of abandonment, but by the end, once again, he remembers God's faithfulness to him. We also remember that Jesus spoke David's words from Psalm 22 to the Father as He hung on the cross.
 Matthew 27:46

Jesus cried David's words from Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is the "Psalm of the Cross," and Psalm 23 is very clearly the "Psalm of the Good Shepherd."

We have all seen pictures of Jesus depicted as a Shepherd carrying a lamb or reaching for one that has fallen just over the edge of a cliff. We all have heard of Jesus as the Savior of the lost, the One we run to when we're afraid, the One who can shield and protect us . . . our Good Shepherd.

And Jesus's sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate act of a Good Shepherd.

To know Psalm 22 just prior adds to our understanding of Psalm 23. Doesn't it? David cried out in fear of being abandoned, only to then acknowledge the faithfulness of the Good Shepherd. The One who never leaves, nor abandons His sheep.

Psalm 23 is probably the most well-known set of verses in the Bible.

Psalm 23 brings words of comfort during suffering and death. The last words that many have heard in this life. In fear and pain, these are the words that believers say. These are the words that pastors or priests or chaplains

have said over the dead or the dying, over disaster sites and battles, in great fear and pain. These are the words that we cry out to our God even when other words fail us. Especially when other words fail us.

What does it mean to call God, the Creator of the universe, a Good Shepherd? And not only *the* Good Shepherd, but *my* Good Shepherd?

In ancient civilizations, the shepherd was a lowly job. In fact, there's a reason it was given to the youngest son, like David. Being a shepherd was long, lonely work. Dirty work. Constant, 24-hour work.

Yet our God, the great God who created the universe, became the Good Shepherd to care for you and for me.

Psalm 23:1-3 NKJV

Translation: God is all that I need. He knows when I need rest and peace, and He gives it to me. He set my feet on the best path for me, and He cares for my soul.

A Good Shepherd.

Does your soul long for those "green pastures" and "quiet waters" sometimes? Right now? Are they elusive? Never here or around long enough for any refreshing to happen?

Don't go looking for the "green pastures" and "quiet waters." Stop trying to find peace in things around you.

My friends, if you can't find the green pastures and quiet waters, you are looking for the wrong thing. Instead, look for the Good Shepherd, and He will take you there. He will refresh your soul.

Psalm 23:4 NKJV

The "valley of the shadow of death" or some translations say the "valley of deep darkness" or the "darkest valley." Whatever the words used, the point is the Shepherd will lead His sheep **THROUGH** the valley. The verse does not say "as I sit and wait for help in the valley" or "as I'm alone and afraid and stuck in the valley of death."

No, the statement is clear that we will walk *through* the valley *with* the Shepherd. Such a beautiful, refreshing, reassuring thought. There is a valley that we will walk through, but when we walk with the Shepherd, He knows the way and will lead us to the other side.

Interestingly, the psalm switches from the Good Shepherd as "He" in third person to "You" in second person. David no longer speaks *of* the Shepherd to others, but now speaks *to* the Shepherd Himself.

Psalm 23:4b-6

David cannot help himself but switch to an overwhelming thankfulness for God's constant faithfulness in his life, and for his people. He felt the Lord's presence and felt safe there, and he knew the Lord blessed his future

and the future of those who love him. That is what this psalm is all about, and what the psalms of David constantly remind us.

God is faithful. When you feel lost and afraid or that He is not listening or present, remember God's faithfulness. Rest in the promise that He was, is, and always will be faithful.

Hebrews 10:23

Deuteronomy 7:9

Lamentations 3:21-23

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 24: the King of glory

August 25, 2020

Read Psalm 24 (in the NLT if you can)

A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a beautiful little psalm! The New Living Translation is what Bible scholars call a "Dynamic Equivalency" translation. As I said in the intro, there are two types of Bible translations; those which seek to translate word for word called "Formal Equivalence" (ESV, NASB) and those which seek to translate ideas instead called "Dynamic Equivalence" (NIV, NLT). Here's an interesting article. [Blue Letter Bible- Bible Translations](#)

Some Bible scholars believe this psalm was written around the time King David finally brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. David made sure that the moving of the Ark was a time of celebration, joy, and honor to God, all acts of great worship to the Lord.

2 Samuel 6:13-15

Psalm 24 could very well be a piece of that time of celebration, but also more than that. Maybe David writes of the literal ascension of the Ark (the throne of God on earth for the ancient nomadic Israelites) but he also sings of the ascension of the Lord, the King of Glory, onto His heavenly throne of power over all that He has created.

Psalm 24:1—ESV The earth is the LORD's.

This single verse brings the children of God such peace and reassurance.

Do you sometimes feel like Satan is in control? That evil is lurking all around, hiding around every corner?

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul refers to Satan as the "god of this age."

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4

Do you ever feel like Satan is running the show? Do you ever look around and only see darkness and sadness? Is the devil, in fact, the "god of this age?"

Take heart, my friends.

John 1:3

Isaiah 42:5

Job 12:7-10

Although it may feel like Satan is in control, he is not. God gave life and breath to everything that has lived or ever will live. Man makes choices that cause sin, suffering, and pain, but God is still in control of all things. He shows you His great love and reassurance in the sunrise and sunset, in the moon and the stars. Take heart and look at the beauty all around you.

Psalm 24:3-4 NKJV

Do you feel worthy to "stand in his holy place?" Who has a right to stand before God in His holy place? What does this even mean?

It's interesting that this psalm established God as Creator and ruler over all things, but then zeros in on the heart. The great Creator of the universe cares most of all about our hearts. He knows our hearts. He wants our hearts to be His, and His alone.

The covenant of the New Testament through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed things from during David's time. Paul points out this, Romans 3:21-23

In other words, no one can stand in His holy place without Jesus.

Thanks to Jesus's "clean hands" and "pure heart," we can stand on the Lord's holy hill; we can ascend into His presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ could ascend into the hill of the Lord because his hands were clean and his heart was pure, and if we by faith in him are conformed to his image we shall enter too.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 24:5-6 in the ESV

Here David is possibly referring to part of the story in 2 Samuel 6 about Obed-Edom and his family, but again, his meaning is also *so* much greater than that.
2 Samuel 6:11

Being in the presence of the Lord does not mean that we have perfect lives. We know this. But what it does mean is that His presence is all that we need, blessing enough. That when we look back on our lives, the times when we felt peace, true joy, and hope, were those times when we were walking with the Lord. Thankfully we don't need to carry an Ark around and dance in front of it. But when we walk with the Lord, when He is truly

present in our lives, we do look different. We feel different on the inside, and to others we look and act differently than the world.

The final section of Psalm 24 is a great celebration of the Lord returning to His people. What a beautiful way to end this little song.

When the King of England wishes to enter the city of London through Temple Bar, the gate closed against him, the herald demands entrance. "Open the gate!" From within a voice is heard, "Who is there?" The herald answers, "The king of England!" The gate at once is opened, and the king passes, amidst the joyful acclamations of his people. -Christmas Evans, Baptist minister, 1766-1838

Read Psalm 24:7-10 NKJV

Some Bible commentators suggest that Jewish tradition had Psalm 24 read in worship the first day of the week (Sunday). So, some suggest it's possible that this psalm was read or sung as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem beginning what we call Holy Week on Palm Sunday. How wonderful.

Open up! Let the King of glory enter! The Lord of Heaven's Armies—He is the King of glory!

Psalm 24 is a celebration of the King's return to His temple; the Ark of the Covenant finally entered Jerusalem, Jesus ascended into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday—and ultimately into heaven. Someday, when God Himself comes down to rule on earth, will we all sing this song again as the gates are opened finally for YHWH—Yahweh?

Will you open your heart to Him today?

Revelation 3:20

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 25: whispers from heaven

September 21, 2020

Read Psalm 25 *Of David*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A psalm of David. David is pictured in this psalm as a faithful miniature. His holy trust, his many conflicts, his great transgression, his bitter repentance, and his deep distresses are all here; so that we see the very heart of "a man after God's own heart."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David faced many crises in his life as young man and as king, so it is hard to identify at what point this was written. Although he does speak of "the sins and rebellion" of his youth, we can maybe assume this was written sometime later in his life.

Psalm 25 is an acrostic poem, which means each line begins with a letter from the Hebrew alphabet and follows the appropriate order—like A to Z. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and 22 verses in this psalm.

Why?

To bring beauty and poetry to the Bible? God created beautiful things, including poetry, why wouldn't He want to include some in His Bible?

To help with memorization? Charles Spurgeon calls Psalm 25, "an alphabet song."

Whatever the reason, it was clearly intentional. What a wonderful reminder that every word and story in the Bible is true and deliberately placed there by the hand of God.

Psalm 25:1-2a—I trust in You.

Do you think David was reminding God who he (David) trusts in? Or do you think David was reminding himself? Sometimes, especially in moments of weakness, we just have to say it repeatedly. And hope that it will sink in.

Have there been times in your life when you've cried out these words to the Lord? "I do trust you, Lord, even when I don't feel it." Maybe you said it again and again.

Making this statement out loud, claiming God's faithfulness, during times of crises is so important. We must call on the name of the Lord, in whom we trust, who knows all and loves without pause. We must boldly call on the name of the Lord—always—even when we feel distant and even when we doubt.

But in that cry to our loving Father there is a tender caress of the heart, a surrender of all that is painful and of this world, the small voice of the Father's Spirit . . . "Yes, let it go. I am here. I am trustworthy.

Psalms 32:10 ICB

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

Jeremiah 17:7 KJV

Jesus reminds us of this very thing in the New Testament, when the leader of the synagogue, Jairus, begged Him to heal his very sick daughter. Do you know the story? Jesus got sidetracked (or did He?) along the way by the woman who desperately wanted to touch His cloak and be healed. Jairus must have been a wreck and agonizing with fear for his daughter, after all he had fallen at Jesus's feet to beg for help. That certainly did not happen often with the leader of the synagogue. In that society, he would've been a powerful man. Then to have Jesus not walk fast enough. And then to get sidetracked by that woman.

But Jesus knew. He *knew* how Jairus felt.

Mark 5:35-36

Can't you just imagine—Jesus placed a hand on the trembling man's shoulder, looked him in the eye, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

Just believe. Have faith.

That's what this entire psalm is about—faith. David knew to call on the name of the Lord when he was afraid.

Psalms 25:4-5 ICB—I love the International Children's Bible here.

David calls often upon his salvation. He had clearly given his life over to the Lord as a young boy, and then regularly throughout his life, as we see in the psalms. He speaks of his salvation. David speaks of his eternal salvation. But he also speaks of the comfort and saving grace a relationship with the God of the universe brings.

King David continues by asking God to remember his mercy and kindness of old. But he says it in an interesting way. Let's compare a number of versions of verse 6. It gives a bigger picture of David's meaning in this verse.

Psalms 25:6—Compare the NIV, NLT, KJV, etc.

Lovingkindness (KJV) is an all-encompassing word to describe the character of God. But David says "lovingkindnesses" in plural. Then he went on to claim these wonderous deeds as "ancient" or "of old"—from the beginning. What does he mean?

The Hebrew word for lovingkindness is *hesed*. *Hesed* speaks of God's covenant love to His people. There is no English word that directly translates the meaning of *hesed* (or *chesed*). Bible translations use lovingkindness, mercy, steadfast love, unflinching love, etc. It is love without strings attached. You are not loved by God because of anything you have done. You are loved by God because of who He is. This is the love that is hard to understand, hard to explain, and impossible to reciprocate. *Hesed*.

David's psalms are filled with this word.

David continued with a plea for God to remember His own faithfulness, these great lovingkindnesses that have come, not only all his life, but since the beginning of time. David clings, with faith, to God's goodness and faithfulness forever. And he begs God not to forget His faithfulness to him.

A more correct translation would be "from eternity." David was a sound believer in the doctrine of God's eternal love. the Lord's lovingkindnesses are no novelties.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Interestingly, after David pleads for God to "remember," he begs God to forget.
Psalm 25:7—Do not remember . . .

David's sins weighed upon his heart. He cried out to God here to forgive him and to remember him. "Please, Father, don't turn your back on me. Remember me, not my sins. Remember me in your goodness and faithfulness and great, great *hesed* love."

Thankfully, God remembers us despite our sin and despite the evil in this world. He does not turn His back on us, not because of our own goodness, but because of His. He is faithful, always. Of old.
Read Psalm 25:8-10 in a different translation

David was not perfect. He was a sinner, and his sins are plastered on the pages of the Bible for generations upon generations to read. But David knew he was sinner; he also knew that God was faithful to him, despite his sin. That, my friends, is a humble heart, and what God expects of us.

Thankfully God does not expect perfection. God expects a humble heart.

Meek spirits are in high favor with the Father of the meek and lowly Jesus, for he sees in them the image of his only begotten Son. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 25:11—For your name's sake, pardon me.

Our sins are great. David's sins were many. David knows the freedom and peace that comes from saying, "LORD, I know that I am a great sinner, but you are an even greater Savior. I humbly submit myself to you and ask you to pardon my sins and shortcomings."

As if this psalm couldn't get any better, let's look at verse 14 in a couple different translations:

Psalm 25:14—Note differences in the NIV, KJV, ASV

Translation—God will teach us stuff. He will reveal things to us. We draw near to Him, and He will pull us even closer to His side. Whether it's a "secret" or a "friendship" with confidence, that place sounds like a good place to be.

The reward for drawing near to the Lord with a humble heart that fears Him is a secret whispering friendship with Him. Wow!

The rest of Psalm 25 reminds us that King David was in distress, something was happening, and he was calling out for help from his heavenly Father. His feet were caught in a snare. But though his feet were caught, and his world felt like it was falling around him, David knew what he needed most was God.

Read Psalm 25:16-21 in a new translation- I know I keep saying this, but it's fun!

David had many enemies, even within his own house, but the thing that David feared most was that God would turn His back on him.

That is faith. What a blessing this little alphabet psalm is. What a gem.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 26: standing upon level ground

September 29, 2020

Read Psalm 26 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Question for the day—

Do we seek the acceptance of God or are we chasing after who or what the world says we should be?

Because, quite honestly, in the eyes of the world, we are forever unworthy. Never enough. Never strong enough. Never beautiful enough. Never good enough.

Fortunately, as a son or daughter of the King, none of that worldly stuff is the Lord's measure for us.

Make one claim, my friends, and live by it. Every moment or every day.

Joshua 24:15

David is a good example to seek to follow in this regard. We often see words like these in the psalms. David knew that the will of the Father was more important than his own, or others around him. This psalm once again testifies to David's desire to always be seeking the Father's will for his life and his people to the detriment of relationships around him, and even within his own house.

Remember the story of David dancing and sacrificing before the Lord as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6)? Michal, Saul's daughter and one of David's wives, was embarrassed by him, 2 Samuel 6:16-22

Take David's advice and shamelessly dance and sing before the Lord today, my friends. Raise your hands and sing, bask in the glory of God's creation, and do it all as your Father in heaven watches you.

And when it's hard to dance and celebrate, then remember Psalm 26,

Psalm 26:3—Compare the NASB and the NLT

When the celebrating is over and something like Michal's voice tries to take you down, fear or worry grips your heart, or you just plain feel unworthy of anything good anymore, remember God's unfailing love, his lovingkindness, his steadfast love.

God's love is never far away. The comfort of His arms and presence is always within reach. We just must remember.

Revelation 3:20—Read that one until it sinks in. 😊

My friends, Jesus is never farther away than the other side of the door of your heart. And when you invite Him in, He's not just dropping by to say "hi." He's coming to dinner.

David goes on to discuss his certainty of the path he had chosen, that of the Lord.
Psalm 26:4-6—NIV

Let us just stop here for a moment.

David does not say "I have never met any of these people." He says, "I do not *sit* with these people; I don't call them friends; and I certainly will not congregate with them."

That's quite a distinction.

Sometimes we can find ourselves attracted to sinners. We listen to them. We invite them in. Maybe we do so to try and share our faith with them. God wants us to do that. We should be kind and loving to all. But we cannot "sit" and "dine" with all. Not because we are better than them, but because we are not strong enough. What happens when we open the door to sin?

Once we open the door to dining and entertaining people like this, we could be led astray. Soon enough we join in. We look up to them. We laugh with them. We start to sound like them. And forget our path with the Lord.

God certainly gives us some people the ability to be strong enough, whether in the moment or in their character, to face these people or situations head on with strength and resolve. For most of us, He instructs us to flee from, to run away from sin and roads that can lead to our destruction.

Psalm 26:11—compare the ICB and the NLT

David is not claiming that he is without sin. He just spent ten verses calling upon his great need for God's help and mercy. It's almost like at this point, after pouring his heart out to God, he says—"Okay, Father, I've let it all go, and now I know you go with me."

Yet, by no means is he [David] a boaster, or a self-righteous vaunter of his own strength for he cries for redemption and pleads for mercy. Our integrity is not absolute nor inherent, it is a work of grace in us, and is marred by human infirmity; we must, therefore, resort to the redeeming blood and to the throne of mercy, confessing that though we are saints among men, we must still bow as sinners before God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And finally, David ends with this beautiful statement,
Psalm 26: 12—NLT. Now I stand on solid ground.

David has not slipped, though he has enemies closing in, but he is afraid. David sees the strife and evil all around him, yet he knows upon Whom he stands. And upon Whom he can trust.

And because the Lord is faithful to uphold him, to keep his foot from slipping, David will sing praises to the Lord amongst a great crowd. He will shout and dance and sing to the Lord. And he will not care who is watching because the One that matters is looking on in love.

So, my friends, today and every day forward let us choose.
Joshua 24:15

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 27: hide and seek

October 5, 2020

Read Psalm 27 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

My friends, may you find joy in this little psalm!

Yet again, King David is in some sort of distress. But look at how this psalm begins and ends.
Psalm 27:1

Psalm 27:14

As we face trials in this life, let us remember that God is the one and only Light and Salvation. When darkness creeps around us, God is our light. Look up to see His light. When facing a pandemic or financial problems or a country tearing itself apart or neighbor fighting neighbor or just the uncertainty of the future, God is our Light in the darkness. And He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

As Christians, as followers of Jesus, we always have hope. We always have a Light in the darkness of the world.

The Bible refers to God as light, but this is the only direct time God is named "Light," according to Bible scholars. In the New Testament, however, light is used to refer to the Messiah,
John 1:1-5

David refers to God as his light, his salvation, and his strength.

Do you allow God to be your strength?

David was a great warrior. There are countless stories in the Old Testament of David's courage and strength. The Bible also records information about David's mighty warriors; the "three" and the "thirty" listed in 2 Samuel 23. These men of courage and glory in battle were loyal to David. They followed David, why?

Because of his faith, for sure.

But also—David was strong, a leader, steadfast enough that great warriors looked up to him and would put their lives on the line to protect him and his name.

Yet, David did not find strength in himself, nor in his 3 or 30 Mighty Warriors.

David found his strength in the Lord.

Too often we lean on ourselves, our wisdom, our own strength. We look outward for help sometimes. But do we look upward? God is our light, our salvation, and our strength.

David had great faith.

Psalm 27:3 NKJV

What faith.

Friends, who is on our side? When the world is in chaos around us, be confident. When it feels as if all are against us, do not fear.

Exodus 14:14

The Israelites heard these words through Moses as they faced the stormy Red Sea before them and the chariots of Egypt's fighting men behind them.

How in the world could they be confident? How can we?

In this study of the Psalter, we know where David found his confidence,

Psalm 27:4 NIV—This only do I seek.

Not twenty things I need—or these couple of needs. But this ONE thing do I need in my life: to know God, to dwell in His presence.

But we get distracted, don't we? We get overwhelmed or bored or prideful.

What really matters?

Psalm 27:5—I love the NLT of this verse

Seek after the Lord only, in the good times and the bad. When enemies surround us and war breaks out at our doorstep, dwell on the Lord. When we are dwelling on the Lord, He will keep us safe. He will protect us and hold us up, even setting us on a rock. The Rock.

What does it mean to seek after the Lord? My friends, when kids play hide and seek, the seeker is active. She is not waiting; she is urgently running around, listening for, and searching.

The only difference is that God is not hiding from us.

And finally,

Psalm 27:13-14 NKJV—Wait on the LORD.

David leans upon his salvation. He is saved. He knows that he will dwell with the Father after his life is over. But at the end of this psalm, we see David recognize that it is hopeless when we do not see the Lord in THIS life. In the land of the living.

Do not lose hope; do not despair. But seek the Lord; actively seek the Lord. For this life, and for the next. And He will shelter you and place you upon The Rock in this life.

Thank you, Father, for this beautiful life-giving little song. Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 28: curses & an inheritance

October 8, 2020

Read Psalm 28 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Hello, my friends. Let's talk about faith today.

The dictionary translates *faith* as: complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Or *Wikipedia's* definition for *faith (Christian)*: believing in God's promises, trusting in his faithfulness, and relying on God's character and faithfulness to act.

Often, we expect faith to have a feeling. Do you feel something when God is with you? Do you believe and then walk in His light like it's a curtain surrounding you and nothing will knock you down? Do you feel something? Always?

Sometimes there is a feeling to walking with God. A peace. A joy.

But when it doesn't have a "feeling" or we feel like we have lost faith, do we become afraid? Do we start to fall? Do we fear that God has deserted us? Do we cling to hopelessness instead?

Faith in God often has no human feeling. Rather faith in God is a complete letting go of ourselves and then a reliance and confidence in God's faithfulness throughout time and individually in our lives.

My friends, are you feeling hopeless? Are you worrying about politics, elections, the state of the world? Are you worried about the economy? Are you worrying about what the future will be like for your kids or grandkids?

Do you feel as if you've lost your faith?

Note how David started this psalm. He was afraid, maybe hopeless. He was not in a good place; he was worried and knew he would not survive long without the Lord.

Psalm 28:1 NLT

But what does David do when he's worried, when he cannot sleep at night? When he's sad?

Psalm 28:2 ICB

King David, the man that history records as a "man after God's own heart," sings about the goodness of the Lord. That's what he does when he's afraid—he cries out to God in praise, in song, lifting his hands to the Lord.

The strength of a saint is not in his or her inner feelings. Our strength is actually when we call upon the Lord, "Lord, you are my Rock! I need you!"

"Father, do not turn away from me. Hear me. See me. I am afraid."

That is surrendering in faith to God. Because God is faithful. When we are faithless, He remains faithful. God's faithfulness is not a reflection of our own.

And friends, He is THE Rock. If we're going to put our faith in anything, may it be THE Rock.

Although Psalm 28 is not listed as one of the major "Imprecatory Psalms," it does have some of the same wording. Bible scholars divide the psalms up by themes. Imprecatory or imprecation means a spoken curse. These psalms are the chapters when the psalmist is calling upon God to judge the wicked or to bring destruction on Israel's enemies.

Psalm 28 has some of the same language:
Read verses 3-5 again, what do you notice?

David cries out for justice in this psalm. Sometimes this "cursing my enemies" attitude seems harsh.

If the Jews cursed more bitterly than the pagans this was, I think, at least in part because they took right and wrong more seriously.

-C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms

Lewis goes on to say that this attitude, this passion for righteousness and commitment to justice, is far better than indifference. Do you agree?

Then the prayer of curses becomes a song of praise. God has heard his prayer. He has answered and provided the strength needed. So let the praising begin.

Sometimes David's prayers go this way—"help me with these things please!" And it's almost as if David gets that fear off his chest, can finally take a breath again, and then he remembers who God is. And his prayers become different as David remembers God's faithfulness.

If God has been faithful (as He has), why would He stop now? God has been faithful to His children throughout time. God is faithful today. God will remain faithful.

God is always listening. His ear is bent toward His children, like a loving Father. He hears our needs before we even speak them,

Psalm 116:2

Because remembering God's faithfulness stops the fear and the worry in its tracks. He is faithful even when we have lost our faith. When we fear and worry, He is faithful.

2 Timothy 2:13

Let's finish up this sweet little psalm with a thought: we are God's inheritance. Right? When David calls out, Psalm 28:9 NIV—Save Your people. Bless Your inheritance.

That's us, friends!

I once heard a pastor say that God paves the streets of heaven with gold and builds the gates out of gemstones. But those are not His treasures. What is His greatest treasure? What does He fill His kingdom with?

His children. God's inheritance, His treasure is His children. That's us, and that's who He gathers to Himself.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 29: the glory of the LORD in the storm

October 26, 2020

Read Psalm 29
A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Praise, praise, praise.

Praise in the storm.

God is in the storm. God, the Creator, is a storm.

And . . . the name the psalm references repeatedly is the most holy name for God.

The LORD (all caps) is YHWH, Yahweh or Jehovah. It is used eighteen times in these eleven verses. The name Yahweh is the covenant name of God. In the Old Testament, and even today, Jewish people do not speak this name out of reverence to God. Modern Jews write "G-d," when referring the Hebrew name for God.

The Lord gave Himself this name,
Isaiah 42:8—Note LORD in all capital letters.

The Hebrew word is simply four letters, YHWH.

This is the famous tetragrammaton, or name of four letters, which we write Jehovah, Yehovah, Yehveh, Yeveh, Jhuh, Javah, etc. The letters are YHWH. The Jews never pronounce it, and the true pronunciation is utterly unknown. -Adam Clark, English Bible scholar, 1762-1832

Whatever the reason, the context of this psalm is evident. David is praising God.

Praise the LORD! For He is worthy of being praised. Shout for joy for the LORD reigns! Worship the LORD in the storm.

Can you just hear it? Can you picture? Maybe the people were praising the Lord as a real storm blew around them. Maybe David bowed in a real storm as he wrote these words. Maybe he saw God in this storm or heard His voice.

So often we say, "God is with me in this storm." But what if God is the storm? What if all we need to do is lift our feet up and ride in His arms? That is a beautiful idea—and scary.

In fact, this psalm speaks so clearly –there are storms. Do you walk through a storm right now?

God is not only IN the storm; He is master of the storm.

What do we do? How do we survive? How do we put one foot in front of the other when everyday blends into the next and there seems to be no end? When grief and fear suffocate us?

Look at these different translations for verse 1 and 2,
Psalm 29:1-2 KJV and NLT

What can we give to the God of the universe? What do we even have to offer?
Our praise. Our worship. We honor Him with praise.

In the storm, we lift our hands in praise to the glory and strength and might of the Lord.

God's voice in the storm.

The voice of the LORD is over the waters
The voice of the LORD is powerful
The voice of the LORD is majestic
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars
The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning
The voice of the LORD shakes the desert
The voice of the LORD twists the oaks

Storms are scary.

Thunder is not only poetically but also instructively called "the voice of God," since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God's speech to Adam's sons.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Below the storm is panic, fear, worry. But above the storm is praise. In the storm . . . is the voice of God.
Matthew 14:22-32

In the story of Jesus walking on water is such a good reminder as we face storms. Jesus didn't calm the storm as soon as He saw they were afraid. He didn't calm the storm before He started walking the distance out to them. He didn't calm the storm as Peter panicked and began to sink. He didn't even calm the storm as He took Peter by the hand to stand on the water with Him.

Once He got into the boat with them all, then He calmed the storm.

My friends, Jesus literally walked on water during a storm to show His brothers that He was there WITHIN the storm. That He had control of the storm. That He was not afraid of the storm.

For us, we can take what Jesus was teaching Peter and apply it to our lives when we face storms, as we face storms today. Jesus walks with us. Jesus could calm the storm right then and there. But it's almost cooler to take hold of his hand and stand on the water during the storm. Right?

Then the stormiest of storms ends like this,
Matthew 14:32-33

Okay, let's worship the Lord like the disciples did as they realized Jesus was the Son of God and Master of the Storm. Let's worship God like David and the Israelites as the Lord's voice thunders over the water and breaks the trees into pieces and shakes the desert and strips the forests bare.

In the middle of the storm, take Jesus's hand and praise Him. When the storm is over, praise Him.

Dear reader, is this not a noble psalm to be sung in stormy weather? Can you sing amid the thunder? Will you be able to sing when the last thunders are let loose, and Jesus judges quick and dead? If you are a believer, the last verse is your heritage, and surely that will set you singing

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Let's remember this closing verse today,
Psalm 29:11

As we face storms today, let these last words fill you with hope. God promises strength and peace during the storm. He may not calm it, but He will walk with you through it.

How do we take His hand and walk with Him through the storm? Where do we find the courage?

Seek the Lord every day. Praise Him for His faithfulness throughout time. He was faithful, He will be faithful. Claim it. When you find yourself at a loss for words, recite a psalm to the Lord.

He hears you, my friends. He truly does.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 30: David's Palace

November 3, 2020

Read Psalm 30

A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

At first glance, we might assume this was a psalm to commemorate the completion of God's temple in Jerusalem. At least by the title: *A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple.*

But the King James Version (KJV) says this instead: *A psalm and song at the dedication of the house of David*

The exact dates are unknown, but the first temple was built by David's son Solomon somewhere around 950 BC. The temple was subsequently destroyed, along with the entire city of Jerusalem, by the Babylonians around 500 BC.

For those history folks, here are some approximate lifetime dates: David 1040-970 BC, reign 1010-970. Solomon 1010-931 BC, reign 970-931 BC.

The prophet Nathan recorded a wonderful story in 2 Samuel 7. I love the interaction between David and God here. Take a few moments to read this chapter if you can and enjoy.

2 Samuel 7

According to 2 Samuel 7, David knew he was not the one to build a house for the Lord. God was clear about this. It is possible that David is still singing in this psalm about that future temple where the Ark of the Covenant will reside, and God's people will be able to go worship Him there. David was the type of humble man that—although he would never enjoy it himself—he could praise the Lord for the temple that would be built in the future.

But it's also possible David sings instead about his own home.

Some Bible scholars believe this psalm was written to commemorate and bless David's residence, his palace in Jerusalem. He was finally able to settle down and rule God's people from a palace. He had a home for his family. Stability. Safety.

God had brought him from the depths of a cave, living on the run and in fear for his life, to living in the splendor of a palace.

Therefore, this psalm is all about God's faithfulness and saving grace. About how God saw David through the storms of life and to the other side of peace. How wonderful!

It's almost like David is saying—"Look. See this now, this is great and beautiful and comfortable and safe. But it has not always been this way. We cannot forget how God saw us through hard times, dangerous times. God is faithful, in good times and bad times. We must never forget. We must never be too comfortable that we forget."

Many have even used this psalm to dedicate their own homes to the Lord as David once did all that time ago. Take it from David and dedicate your home to the Lord, remember that He brought you where you are, and He provided for you.

This is not a song in awe of the splendor of the palace or marveling at the workmanship of the manmade building, it is all about God—God's faithfulness and grace and provision.

Psalm 30:1 KJV—I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up.

I would render according to the benefits received. The Psalmist's praise was reasonable. He had reason to give for the praise that was in his heart. He had been drawn up like a prisoner from a dungeon, like Joseph out of the pit, and therefore he loved his deliverer. Grace has lifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears: have we no song to offer for all of this?

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David remembers God's faithfulness:

Psalm 30:2-3—NLT

David is quite sure WHO saved him and his people all these years. He is quite sure WHO he owes his thanks and gratitude to.

I've heard it said, "What if tomorrow, all you had was what you thanked God for yesterday?"

Sing and praise the Lord. Always.

Psalm 30:5—NIV and NKJV. Anger for a moment. Favor for a lifetime.

Just for a moment. This verse is evidence of the certainty of God's comfort and joy. There is a "night" for God's discipline. There is a "night" for weeping.

But . . . night does not last forever. Morning is just ahead.

Remember Lamentations 3:21-23? (I love these verses and need their reminder often!)

David goes on to remember what he has been through; he summarizes the ups and downs.

Psalm 30:6-10—NLT

David had been on the run from Saul (the previous king of Israel and David's father-in-law) for many years. He and his fighting men still fought for Israel and to protect themselves, they still stood proudly for the Lord despite having nowhere to call home. David probably felt "as secure as a mountain" at times and shattered and lost at other times.

The ups and downs of life.

Verse 10! Do you ever feel this sometimes, that these are the only words you have?
Psalm 30:10 NLT—Hear me. Help me.

Just like you and me, David had moments of wondering if God was even there. Had He turned His back? Had He forgotten His promises?

Now, at this point in his life, David has peace—with his neighbors, within his court, with his family. For the moment. David has moved his people to settle in Jerusalem. He brought the Ark into the city and placed it in the tent of worship.

All is good, and it is time to praise the Lord.
Psalm 30:11-12 again, see what changed for David?

My friends, the sobering truth is that David's palace was destroyed, along with the temples that came later. The home he finally celebrated and thanked the Lord for no longer exists.

David's palace is gone. But God is still faithful.

So, my friends, give thanks today, shout and sing praises to the Lord for the things He has done. He has been faithful throughout time. He was faithful to David. He is faithful today.

He is real and present and in control. Nothing that is happening today is unknown to Him.
Deuteronomy 7:9

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 31: mosaic of misery and mercy

November 9, 2020

Read Psalm 31

For the director of music. A psalm. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The tone of this psalm flows from faith that God will provide, into a mournful pleading for help, and back again. That is how life goes. Day by day . . . sometimes even moment by moment.

The title states *for the director of music*. Some translations say, *for the Chief Musician*. This is a song to sing in worship with other believers to the Lord Himself. And as often as this psalm is quoted throughout the Bible, we can infer that it has been memorized, recited, and treasured in the hearts of God's people.

The prophet Jeremiah quoted from it several times (Jeremiah 6:25, 20:3, 20:10, 46:5, 49:29, and Lamentations 2:22). Jonah also, from the belly of the whale (Jonah 2:8). And Stephen quoted verse 5 as he was stoned to death, the first Christian martyred (Acts 7:59).

But most importantly, our Savior Jesus quoted from this psalm on the cross,
Read Luke 23:46

This psalm was well-known and loved.

Commentators point out that Psalm 31 is not a song of praise. Not all psalms are—this one is of faith and fear. God wanted this psalm to be sung by His children when they came together, evident by the title. And if God wanted this psalm sung to Him, then He is not weary of our fear and mourning.

He wants us to sing it out to Him.

Do you believe that? That God is okay with your anger? With the times when you feel you've lost your faith? Do you feel like you can share those feelings in prayer?

Psalm 71 repeats the first couple of lines of Psalm 31. Psalm 71 isn't titled, but whoever wrote it, was drawn to the importance of David's words from Psalm 31,
Check out Psalm 71:1-4

Who do you call upon in your hour of greatest need?

Bible scholars are unsure what David was going through when he wrote this psalm; he had trouble much of his life. It could be any number of crises for him, his family, or his people.

It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 31:9-13—NIV

These verses suggest that maybe David was physically sick. And, in fact, there are some who believe David caught leprosy at some point in his life. But whether he actually had the disease, he felt like a leper.

I am like a broken vessel. (KJV) A broken pot. (NLT)

There is anguish in these words. A broken bowl is thrown out, useless. Did David feel useless? It's hard to believe that a man like David, who accomplished so much in his life, would feel useless.

Do you ever feel like a throw away, like broken pottery?

My friends, our God is good. As David wrote these words to the Lord, God answered him. God strengthened him and refocused him.

"I am a broken vessel" became—
 Psalm 31:14—But I trust in You.

I feel like we, like David, can cry out in our pain and worry and mourning. God wants to hear it; He already knows how we feel, but there is something about speaking it. Then, when we've said it, we claim God's strength, His faithfulness, His promises.

"I am broken, but I trust in You, my times are in your hands."

This prayer is beautiful, how it moves from pain to trust to joy.

David felt pain. But he deeply trusted the Lord. He trusted in the Lord's promises and His faithfulness. David's trust was rewarded with joy.

Psalm 31:19-20 NLT

How abundant are the good things (NIV), how great is the goodness (NLT) of God!

How can David claim good things and blessings after sharing so much pain, fear, and worry?

Because once he had laid those things at God's feet, he had entered into the Most Holy of Holies—the presence of God. When we truly bear our hearts and souls to the Lord, then we have walked into His arms. And in the arms of the Lord is protection, goodness, blessings, and shelter.

Read Matthew 11:28-30

Lord, pardon our complaints and fears; increase our faith, patience, love, and gratitude; teach us to rejoice in tribulation and in hope. The deliverance of Christ, with the destruction of his enemies, ought to strengthen and comfort the hearts of believers under all their afflictions here below, that having suffered courageously with their Master, they may triumphantly enter into his joy and glory.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

So, my friends, the takeaway from this psalm is to cry out to God in your pain and fear. Then, take a breath and say—"Okay, thank you for listening. Now I put my trust in you, Lord."

Then, bask in the understanding that your future is in the most capable of hands—your loving Father, Creator of the universe. Step into the Most Holy of Holies—the presence of God—and know that you have stepped into His arms.

Psalm 31:24 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 32: the gospel of forgiveness

November 16, 2020

Read Psalm 32 (in the English Standard Version—for the Selahs)

A Maskil of David

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The Hebrew word for "Maskil" or "Maschil" means "contemplation," or possibly "instruction." Some say a Maskil is a musical term, and that this psalm is an instructional sermon set to song. I suppose it could be both. Regardless, this is the first of thirteen psalms labeled the same.

Some Bible scholars link Psalm 51 and Psalm 32 together. Psalm 51 is the song that David penned after his sin with Bathsheba and against her husband, Uriah. Some believe that Psalm 51 was written first as a confession, where he promises to lead sinners to God, and Psalm 32 is David's attempt to keep his promise. This song was also sung by Jews on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), traditionally a day of fasting and prayers of confession.

Probably his deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace, that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

My friends, this beautiful psalm is a song of forgiveness and one we can meditate on even today. The psalm has three "Selah's" or musical pauses (also called "Interludes" in other versions). Within these pauses the singer would be reflecting upon his or her own heart and speaking to God there. Like little prayer breaks.

Paul writes in the New Testament book of Romans about good works versus righteousness and he shared David's words from Psalm 32,
Romans 4:6-8

Romans 3:23

Transgression (noun): an act that goes against a law, rule or code of conduct; an offense; a crime; a sin (dictionary.com)

Psalm 32:1-2 NKJV

David's sin/transgression/iniquity is forgiven. Not by anything that he did, but through the grace of forgiveness from the Lord. The Lord "covered" David's sin, "forgave" him, "does not impute," or does not hold it against him.

Seriously, David makes it sound so easy. We are all sinners. But defining our sins and speaking our sins is a whole different story.

Here's the thing, and the takeaway from this psalm, we can never enter into that Holiest of Holy place (i.e. the very presence of the God) unless we can speak our sins.

To actually open up our hearts and speak our sins to God is not an easy thing to do. But verse 3 and 4 talk about what it was like for David prior to admitting his sin. The Lord's hand was heavy upon him, even his bones were weighed down. Can't you just feel that? The heavy weight of sin. Sometimes we may not even know our sin is weighing us down, we just feel the weight of something. Or maybe we don't even really feel the weight until it is gone . . .

Psalm 32:3-4 ASV—Selah.

But . . . then the miracle of what we believe. The great key to life as a Christian, and often the thing that is hardest for people to do and even to understand.

Confession—forgiveness—grace.

Psalm 32:5 New Living Translation (I love this version here)

Have you felt the sweet forgiveness of Jesus in your own life? After pouring your heart out to the Father and begging for His grace and mercy, that sweet relief that comes over your soul—like the arms of a loving Father. As we see in this psalm and will see when we study Psalm 51, David felt this relief.

When we think of Old Testament times and the confession of sin, lots of blood and animal sacrifice come to mind. Maybe even seclusion and rituals. But was there healing? That sweet relief? Was God approachable, especially as we can know Him now? If people felt the weight of their sin, did the animal blood sacrifice lift them free again? That is hard to comprehend.

But David teaches us something else in Psalm 32.

David speaks of that peace that we now feel from the grace of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. How is this possible? David did not know Jesus.

David speaks of a deep relationship with God. He knew when he moved away from God because of sin; he knew when God turned His face and allowed consequences to happen. And then, David knew about God's forgiveness. He knew because he was close to God.

When David confessed, God cleansed him, and then he wanted to share with others. Psalm 51 is a great example of David walking this road. After his confession, he says these words to God,

Psalm 51:13-15

David had such a connection with God, and he felt that relief of forgiveness, so much so, that all he could do was share it with others.

Psalm 32:6-7 NLT—Interlude.

In the New Testament story of the Last Supper, Jesus has a similar conversation with Peter, Luke 22:31-32

Jesus is referring to Peter's denial of knowing Him; not once but three times. Jesus is offering forgiveness before the event even happened!

When we confess, God is faithful to forgive. And every time this happens, our faith grows.

Then David and Peter (as commanded by Jesus Himself) were to strengthen those around them, other believers, by telling their story.

Christians tend to hide their sin. But that is not what God calls us to do. He calls us to shout about forgiveness, not about our sin, but about how God is faithful to forgive.

The next part of Psalm 32 is so amazing. It's God, He takes the pen!

Psalm 32:8 NLT

God's advice: Don't run from me. Come to me.

Psalm 32:9 NLT—Don't be like the horse or mule people!

If this is not a perfect example of God's love! He doesn't force us to Himself; He doesn't force confession or a relationship.

God wants us to seek Him out. He wants us to come to Him on our own free will. He truly is a good, good Father.

Read this reminder in 2 Peter 3:9

But even with the love, grace, forgiveness, and patience of the Father, many still will not choose Him. Know that God is good and faithful always.

Let us not lose hope in this world filled with uncertainty and unrest. Let us remember God's faithfulness.

Deuteronomy 7:9 (let's memorize this one!)

And finally, David's final words are filled with joy and a call to worship, Psalm 32:11—Rejoice and be glad.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 33: only to praise the LORD!

November 24, 2020

Read Psalm 33

Favorite verse or thoughts:

No author is ascribed to this psalm, and some translations do not even title it. But check out how smoothly the end of Psalm 32 flows into the beginning of Psalm 33:

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!
Psalm 32:11 NIV

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Psalm 33:1 NIV

Do you think they maybe go together? Some do! Psalm 32 is ascribed to David, so this one is thought to be as well. And maybe they were once one longer poem. However, God wanted them separated and this one unsigned. So, we will leave it at that.

This is a psalm of praise; it is probably that David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penman of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them.
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

So, let's look at this lovely little praise psalm,

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous (NIV) Psalm 33:1a
Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous (KJV)
Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous (ESV)
Let the godly sing for joy to the Lord (NLT)

If you had any doubts about what God expects His children to do, read those translations of verse 1 again. Sing, rejoice, and shout!

Calling upon the saints to be cheerful; and indeed there is hardly any duty more pressed in the Old and New Testament, or less practiced. -John Trapp, English Bible commentator, 1601-1669

When we are healthy and feeling joyful, God calls us to sing and rejoice. When we are sick and sad, He clearly calls us to rejoice still. When our world struggles under a pandemic and economic strain, God calls us to rejoice. When we worry for the state of our government, He calls us to rejoice.

Could it be any clearer?

God is teaching us to rejoice—not in our circumstances—but in Him. Circumstances change, the Lord does not. This psalm is the epitome of what God expects from His children: to rejoice in Him, for Him, and because of Him.

My friends, hear the joy in this song. Not because all is well for David and his people, but because God is good and faithful.

Psalm 33:4-5 ICB—The Lord's love fills the earth!

Do you believe this? Or do you find yourself lost and hopeless at the evil in the world and how much of God's creation and His children are lost and broken? But this little gem of a psalm reminds us that,

. . . the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. (NKJV)
 . . . the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. (ESV)
 . . . the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth. (NLT)
 . . . the earth is full of his unfailing love. (NIV)

Wow, if we needed a reminder that God is in control and He has created beauty that expresses His love all around us, we need it right now during a pandemic and unrest in our world. May these words be a blessing to you from your heavenly Father. (*As I read these words again, three and half years later, it's possible that things are even worse in the world. But you know what, God is good still and He is in control. Amen.*)

This word used to describe God's love is the Hebrew word *hesed*.

But I trust in your *unfailing love*; my heart rejoices in your salvation. (NIV) Psalm 13:6
 But I have trusted in thy *mercy*; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. KJV
 But I have trusted in thy *lovingkindness*; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. ASV
 But I have trusted in your *steadfast love*; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ESV

The Hebrew word *hesed* is translated as—unfailing love, mercy, lovingkindness, steadfast love, etc. Some say that this word is the key to understanding the heart of God, yet we have a heck of a time trying to translate it. There is no one English word that directly translates. The word is only in the Old Testament but is mentioned some 250 times.

Hesed or the lovingkindness of God is what makes Him different than all other gods in history. And Jesus was the human form of that love.

Lamentations 3:21-24 (I like the ESV here)

With God's *hesed* (steadfast love) on the one hand, and on the other: comes a God who created the heavens by the breath of His mouth. He said it, and it was so. And it was good.

Psalm 33:6-9—check out how the NLT translates this.

My friends—He "locked the oceans in vast reservoirs." He breathed a word, and stars were born.

And yet, He loves His children with such tenderness that we can't even put it into a word; we cannot even describe it. *Hesed*. God's covenant of love throughout time.

He is the all-powerful Creator, the loving Father, and the plans of His heart stand forever to all generations. Do you need to hear that right now?
Read Psalm 33:10-11 again in the ESV!

Our God is in control.
Isaiah 35:4

Did you need this encouragement today? Here's some more—
Psalm 33:13-14 in the New Living Translation 😊

He sees us. Always. From His throne He sees all. And He doesn't just see us, He "observes" us. He watches us. Your loving heavenly Father watches over you.

And He knows what we do and why we do it. How? Because He created our hearts.
Jeremiah 31:3

1 John 3:1

The psalmist goes on to say,
Psalm 33:16-17 English Standard Version here

Let's not forget that David KNEW about great armies and strong warriors. He could have put his trust in those things, but he knew the fealty of trusting in anything but the Lord.

Verse 18-19 in the NLT (I just love the different translations. Just gives the Bible depth and, to me, better understanding).

The people of Israel remembered times when the Lord rescued them from death and famine. When armies failed, strong men became weak, and war horses gave false hope, those were the times when the Lord carried them through.

They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

So, today, let's put our trust in the Lord once again.
Psalm 33:20-22—Our hope in in You alone. Amazing!

Psalm 20:7—Who do we trust in?

God does not fail. He will come through. He is faithful. What an absolutely beautiful little song of praise. In worry or fear, praise the Lord for He is good.

In good times, sing of His everlasting love. In times of hopelessness, sing of His faithfulness. In times of confession, worship Him for His mercy. Rejoice and wait for the Lord.
Isaiah 40:31

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 34: a thanksgiving poem

November 29, 2020

Read Psalm 34

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This is a psalm of Thanksgiving. Good timing as I write this. Divine timing.

Are you thankful this week? I am trying to count my blessings, as I'm sure you are as well. These are tough times. Yet there have always been tough times, and God has always been faithful to see His children through them. In fact, there is evidence that David penned this Psalm of Thanksgiving from a cave.

But first . . .

I want to share a couple of things here that I've learned while researching this week, and these things blow my mind. Every time I open and study His Word, He teaches me something new. Our God is so good.

Let's talk about headings, or inscriptions as Bible scholars call them.

Psalm 34

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left. (NIV)

First, if you've read the Old Testament, you know there is more than one Philistine king named Abimelek (or Abimelech), read Moses's account of Genesis 20 & 26. The actual name of the king in this story of David (1 Samuel 21-22) is Achish. Abimelek is a term applied to several Philistine kings during Old Testament days, like Pharaoh or Caesar—meaning something like, *my father king* or *father king* or *royal father*.

Second, a question. Are these titles the inspired Word of God as the body of the psalm is? Were they original to the psalm or written in later? It's probably not a surprise that the answer is debated. Also, there are two different psalm headings to consider—authorship/historical/life event (like above NIV) or a title that summarizes main idea (below in ESV).

Psalm 34

Taste and See that the LORD is Good.

Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away. (ESV)

These differences can help to better understand the Word. Here's an interesting article from the Bible scholar and pastor, Dr. Bill Barrick, for more information. [Dr Barrick- Psalms Inscriptions](#)

But he says this in summary,

The psalm inscriptions are ancient, authoritative, and accurate. The evidence supports their inspiration. We must preserve them, correctly apportion them to their respective psalms, read them privately and publicly, and expound them as we do when they occur in the Old Testament outside the Psalter.

-Dr. Bill Barrick, Bible scholar, www.dr.barrick.org

There are times in the Bible where the inscriptions are referred to elsewhere in the text. Here is just one of those times,
 Luke 20:41-43

Jesus is speaking of Psalm 110 which has this inscription:

Psalm 110
Of David. A psalm.

David signed Psalm 110, Jesus said he did in fact write it. Inspired. So cool! Now, let's head back to the Thanksgiving Praise from a cave: Psalm 34.

As recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1--22:1, David, while running for his life from King Saul, found himself in the Philistine city of Gath. Remember: King Saul had tried to kill David three times already, and David fled for his life. He stopped at the tabernacle in Nob where he was so hungry that he ate the bread consecrated for the Lord. Goliath's sword, which David used to remove the giant's head, was apparently on display in this temple in Nob. The sword would rightfully be David's, and the priest gave it to him. He strapped it on his back and ended up in Gath.

Gath was Goliath's hometown. What in the world was he thinking? Desperation . . . plus maybe a bit crazy? Maybe he was feeling like giving up?

David escaped death at the hands of Achish by acting crazy. David ran back to Israel to the Cave of Adullam where he writes this psalm as a praise and a thanksgiving to the Lord for His provision and His faithfulness.

David speaks nothing of Achish or the sword or of being in the cave, he just sings to the Lord.

Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Was he also encouraging the others around him? Reminding them not to lose hope? They are in a cave, in hiding, afraid. But David has a story to tell, about how God is present and watching over them.

David wrote an acrostic poem here. The first letter of each line follows the Hebrew alphabet (minus one letter for some reason). This aided in memorization.

Psalm 34:1-3 in the ESV

It is a Call to Worship, to remember God's faithfulness, and to praise Him. Always. "Let everything that comes out of my mouth be of praise to the Lord."

Psalm 34:4

David had done a stupid thing by strapping that sword onto his back and walking into the enemy's castle, but God still delivered him. Here's the thing; God is a good Father, and He saw David through this encounter despite his foolishness. He feels the same way about you and me.
Psalm 34:5-7 in the NLT—I love this.

David probably wasn't feeling too good about drooling and moaning in front of the king of Gath. It was probably a low moment for him, took his pride down a few notches. But with God on his side, nothing else mattered. Not his choices. Not his fears. Not his pride.

David knew God was with him. Did David believe there was an angel with him? Or did he believe God Himself as the "angel of the Lord" was standing guard?
Psalm 34:8-10 NLT—Taste and see!

Taste and see that the Lord is good! Some believe that the God of the universe is unknowable. Too big. Too vast. Too unapproachable. Have you seen Him? Have you heard His voice? Have you “tasted of” the goodness of the Lord?

God has made it possible for men to know whether or not his word is true. The person who receives it, obeys it, and trusts its promises will shortly come to know, "Whom he has believe," having "tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:5), and as Peter said, "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 peter 2:3).
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Taste and believe. Seek the Lord; fear the Lord and have all that you need (even within a cave). Even the strongest of lions (maybe there were lions prowling around at night, or maybe he refers to his fighting men as the strong, young lions) get hungry and need the Lord.

but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
Psalm 34:10b

This is the Good News. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Share this, especially with those closest to us. When we seek the Lord, He will give us all that we need.
Read verses 11-19 in another translation!

An acrostic psalm is meant to be memorized, and these words were written to be passed on. Can't you just picture the cave and the firelight, and the people gathered around as they learned these words?

And finally, the words of verse 20 are fulfilled in John 19,
Psalm 34:20 NKJV

John 19:26-27

In New Testament times, Roman soldiers would break the legs of the dying prisoner to hasten death on the cross. When the soldiers walked toward Jesus to do the same, He was already dead.

Why do you think God fulfills these Old Testament words? Is it to reassure us of His faithfulness, even today?
Psalm 34:21-22 NLT—The Promise!

Take refuge in the Lord. ***To Take Refuge:*** *to seek protection or shelter from some source of danger or hardship in something or some place; to hide in something; to seek safety or the comfort of being safe in something.*

Proverbs 18:10

Questions, thoughts, notes:

Psalm 35: defend me, my God

December 9, 2020

Read Psalm 35 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Are you discouraged today? Alone? Do you feel like no one is on your side? No one cares about you and like you've been cast aside? Do you carry the weight of the world on your shoulders?

Are you barely making it? Just trying to put one foot in front of the other? That is how 2020 is going. Isn't it?

The whole psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience, irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The inscription of this psalm is just *Of David*. Bible scholars believe this psalm was written during the reign of King Saul and David's uncertainty of his own life and safety within the king's court.

Psalm 35 is an *Imprecatory Psalm* or what some call a "Cursing Psalm." There are quite a few in the Psalter.

God clearly loved David; He considered David "a man after His own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22). God knew his victories and his joys, his pain and his fears. God knew his failures and his sins, but He loved him still. Also, He was well acquainted with David's anger.

What looks like a man calling curses down upon his enemies is merely a psalm sharing David's pain, his heartbreak, his loneliness, and despair.

Psalm 35:1-10 NLT

This is a prayer—David's prayer to God for help. David is discouraged and afraid for his life. He walks the road that God expects of him and is constantly thwarted by evil. David knows what God wants of him but feels alone in his desire to follow Him. Sometimes as Christians we walk a lonely road, like David. It can seem like we are fighting a current that wants to sweep us away from the One we know we need.

What did David do when he felt this way? He called upon the Lord in this beautiful "Cursing Psalm."

As a believer is that our first step when something goes wrong? When we feel exhausted and like the world is pulling us in, even if all we can do is complain?

And, like David, do we expect God to act? Do we expect Him to answer? To intervene?

It is interesting that David is not asking that innocent people be hurt; he's asking for justice, for the Lord to hold evil accountable. He is making his case before the Lord.

Is it a sin for a Christian to pray for justice? Jesus told us to pray for our enemies.
Matthew 5:43-45

What did He mean? Did He mean that we should pray that they continue to be successful at their evil plans? Or did He mean we should pray for their souls to know the Lord?

In fact, Jesus gave us an example of this, didn't He?
Luke 23:33-34

Is Jesus asking the Father to forgive the criminals on either side of Him? Or the soldiers who were just following orders? Or the religious leaders who put Him there?

At Calvary, who didn't know what they were doing? Maybe the Roman soldiers had no choice but to do what they were told and probably had not yet heard the Good News. What do you think?

But what about praying for those who *do* know right from wrong? Praying for those who are persecuting us?

Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me. Plead against those who plead against me; strive with my strivers; contend with my contenders. If they urge their suite in the law court, Lord, meet them there, and beat them at their own weapons.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Here's the thing with this Cursing Psalm, we are as Believers elevated to a higher standard. However, we can love the sinner, yet call for justice upon the sin. In fact, God very clearly expects this, see Jesus's example.

David may not call for his enemies' deaths, but he does call upon the Angel of the Lord to pursue them, that they might slip and fall and see the error of their ways. Interestingly, this and the previous psalm are the only times in the Psalter when God is called upon in this way—as the Angel of the LORD.

This armed Jehovah, grasping shield and drawing spear, utters no battle shout, but whispers consolation to the trembling man crouching behind his shield. The outward sign of Divine activity, turned to the foe, is martial and menacing; the inner side is full of tender, secret breathings of comfort and love.

-Alexander Maclaren, English minister, 1826-1910

Who is the Angel of the Lord that David refers to? Sometimes the Bible speaks of AN angel of the Lord or THE Angel of the Lord. In this case, David refers to THE Angel of the LORD. The "LORD" (all caps) is the covenant name of God, YHWH or Yahweh.

THE Angel of the LORD shows up in the Old Testament as God Himself in all His power and glory. Below is a great article about the Angel of the Lord (or read the story of Hagar and God's gentleness and compassion—Genesis 16, or of Moses and the burning bush—Exodus 3).

Psalm 35:11-18 NLT

David felt he was blameless, he had done nothing to deserve this violence against him, to the point of making him feel "sick with despair." He had been kind to these people, bearing their mourning and suffering upon himself. He had even prayed for them, interceded with the Father on their behalf.

Have you loved and prayed for someone who turned their back on you? David's example is good for us. What did he do when he felt betrayed? He cried out to God. He appealed directly to the Lord to defend him, to intervene for him. "How long will you let this go on for me, God?"

David knew God heard him. He knew God cared for him. David knew God would defend him; he just didn't know when.

Do you know that Jesus ran to His Father as well?

Luke 5:16

Jesus is God incarnate; He could have taken all His stresses and worries and zapped them gone or fixed. Instead, He taught us to step away to some quiet place and reboot or "plug into" the source of all life and love and healing. Maybe His prayers sounded like David's psalms; maybe He and God just talked.

How do you reboot? How do you "plug into" the source of your life, the One who knows exactly what you need? Do you have a lonely place to withdraw to? I wonder where David's place was; where he would sit and write these prayers to God.

Psalm 35:19-28 NLT

After dumping all his frustrations on the table before God, David says, "O LORD, you know all about this."

David knew God had it under control. God would defend David; that He would defend the righteous. David believed this and claimed this.

When we are down and distressed, we need to remember this—God is Sovereign. He is in control of our lives and our futures. As Christians, fundamentally we believe that He will never leave us and will raise us up to His Glory.

But day to day . . . do we believe this? Do we remember this promise?

Isaiah 41:10

If you haven't noticed, each of the three sections ends with a sweet praise of the Father:

My whole being will exclaim "Who is like you, LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who robe them." Psalm 35:10

I will give thanks in the great assembly; among the throngs I will praise you. Psalm 35:18

My tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praises all day long. Psalm 35:28

When the world crashes in, when the weight of sin or grief or betrayal becomes too heavy, remember God's faithfulness. Remember God's love and His promises and cry out to Him.

How do we praise God all day long? Saint Augustine says this,
Who endureth to praise God all the day long? I will suggest a remedy, whereby thou mayest praise God all the day long if thou wilt. Whatever thou dost, do well, and thou praiseth God.
-St. Augustine, theologian, 354-430.

Who is the angel of the Lord? Christianity.com- [The Angel of the Lord](#)

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 36: the Greatness of God's Love

December 13, 2020

Read Psalm 36

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The title of Psalm 36 is simple and concise, yet so full of meaning.

*For the director of music.
Of David the servant of the LORD.*

The *director of music* or the *Chief Musician* in other translations was the choir leader of ancient Israel. The author being "David the servant of the LORD," signed the same way in Psalm 18. Don't you love that David never signed any psalms *Of David, King of Israel*? His signature on these psalms says a lot about what was important to him.

He wanted to give God all the glory.

The first four verses of Psalm 36 are about sin and wickedness. David paints a picture of the things that have led people away from God, things he has seen, things he has experienced. David has felt the sting of the sin of others and needs to share his experience—he has a message to tell.

Read Psalm 36:1-4 in the NLT

That's a pretty good list. The top of the list- and the reason people chose the path of wickedness—is that they have no fear of God at all. The righteous feel the burden of sin; the unrighteous do not. If we truly fear God, then sin *is* a burden that weighs us down.

What does it mean to fear God?

Fearing God is two things: real *fear* of the power of the Creator of the universe, and *awe* at the relationship that He allows us. I will link an article below answering this very question by the pastor and Bible teacher, John Piper.

We should fear in the sense that we seek refuge from God away from God's terrible wrath. God's grace in Christ is the refuge from God's wrath outside Christ. There is terror outside of Christ, and there is a different kind of trembling inside of Christ.

-Pastor John Piper

[Desiring God- Interview, what does it mean to fear the Lord](#)

Read Hebrews 12:28-29

Read 1 John 4:18

John Piper closes his (above) sermon with a powerful image of God—a warning for a child not to run from a big dog. He says this in relation to the fear of the Lord:

God is horrifically dangerous to run away from, and we should be terrified to run away from God, but if we stay with him, his growl is a growl of our protection, not destruction.

-Pastor John Piper, Desiring God

A lack of a fear of God is the foundation of sin. If we don't care what He thinks of us, or don't feel we are answerable to anyone, then sin creeps in. Sin whispers to the wicked deep within their hearts- "you are answerable to no one, only yourself, so do whatever brings you pleasure."

Therefore, the wicked man does not see his sin; he is filled with everything crooked and deceitful. He even lies awake at night thinking about how to do more and more evil. He is accountable to no one and to nothing.

Contrasted to the righteous who know they live within the presence of the Lord always.

If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Now . . . how quickly this little beauty shifts:

Read Psalm 36:5-12 (maybe in a different translation, although I like the NLT here) and note the use of *unfailing love* or *love* or *steadfast love*.

The Hebrew word *hesed* is used three times in this psalm, translated; your unfailing love (ESV), mercy and lovingkindness (KJV). *Hesed* is the covenant love of the Father for His people throughout time. Bible translators have as hard of a time translating it as we all do trying to understand it.

Why is God's *unfailing love* hard to understand?

According to David, God's *hesed* love for His children is indescribable and incomprehensible. So instead, he paints us a picture in this psalm.

God's *hesed* love-reaches the clouds or the heavens, to the skies, the highest mountains and the great deep.

It's interesting that David tries to explain the greatness of Gods' love through God's own Creation. And it's true-we can see God in this world. He's left bits of Himself all over. Just look at the beauty all around us.

God's love reaches the stars, and yet, He takes care of His children and His animals. Doesn't that say a lot about God's character? God's an animal lover! We know He has a heart for orphans and widows, and in the life of

Jesus, we see His love for children. Paints a beautiful picture of the character of God.
Read Psalm 36:7 in the NIV

Wait! God has wings?

Some Bible scholars believe this refers to the two cherubim that sit on either side of the top of the Ark of the Covenant, their wings hovering over and providing protection for the Mercy Seat.
Exodus 25:20-22

God has always provided a place of protection for His children- in His presence.

Other Bible scholars believe this verse refers to literal protection, like a mother hen protects her chicks under her wings. Jesus used this analogy. Matthew recounts when Jesus spoke to His disciples and the people that had gathered to hear Him in Jerusalem. He warned them about the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, sometimes referred to as the "Seven Woes:"
Matthew 23:37-39

In the book of Luke, Peter testifies of the final time Jesus approached Jerusalem on their way to celebrate the Passover:
Luke 19:41-42

Jesus loved the people of Jerusalem, God's chosen people of His Covenant throughout time, so much so that He wept for them as He approached the city for the last time. God loves His people so much that He sent Jesus to tell his message of the Good News.

God desires to gather His children under His wings. Isn't that so beautiful?

And not only can we take refuge under His wings, but we can "feast on the abundance of (or fullness of) his house" and "drink from His river of delights (or pleasure)."
Read Psalm 36:8-9 and note the different translations in the ESV and NKJV

Shelter under wings, rivers of pleasure, and fountains of life. How do we get all of this? It sounds so much better than anything this world offers!

David says the righteous will have all of this- in the Father's love. In "Your love, LORD," "Your faithfulness," "Your justice."

Read John 7:37-38—Remember this?

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well and asked her for a drink of water, He said:
John 4:13-14—and this?

My friends, have you ever had someone ask you if you were a Christian, only to say they could tell? This life, of doing our best to walk with Jesus, is beautiful and wonderful and filled with light. And, to the world around us, we look different, set apart.

Of course, there is sadness sometimes. And testing, grief and suffering. After all, Jesus was a man of sorrows, and He is our example.

Isaiah 53:3

A walk with God is not necessarily easy and perfect. A life of ease is not promised. But the base of a life walking with God is *joy*. "In your light we see light," as King David said nearly a thousand years before the birth of Jesus.

Read John 1:9

As we walk into this third week of Advent, heading toward the celebration of the day the Light came into the world, claim *joy*. In a world and a time of sadness and grief, look up to the light. Drink from the river of delights. Stay close to the shelter of His wings. If you cannot feel the joy, look to Creation- the night sky, the tallest mountain peak, the great deep. Look to the love a pet. Find His love and faithfulness throughout time within His word. Remember the season.

Be reminded of the Father's *hesed* love for you today.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 37: a lesson on waiting for the Lord

December 21, 2020

Read Psalm 37 *Of David*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This psalm very much reminds one in its construction of the sententious and pithy conciseness of the book of Proverbs. It does not contain any prayer, nor any direct allusion to David's own circumstances of persecution or distress. It is rather the utterance of sound practical wisdom and godliness from the lips of experience and age, such as we might suppose an elder of the church, or a father of a family, to let fall as he sat with his household gathered around him and listening to his earnest and affectionate admonitions.

-Reverend Barton Bouchier, English writer, 1794-1864

A psalm of David. So simple.

But the Reverend Bouchier is right- this one is different. The only clue of a time frame or other extenuating circumstances in David's life or of God's people is in verse 25.

Read Psalm 37:25 again.

David teaches a lesson in this psalm, rather than a praise to God or a prayer for help like in previous psalms. And according to verse 25, this is wisdom he shared in his older age.

The discussion is one we all wrestle with, the age-old question: if God is good all the time, then why do evil men prosper? And seriously, that is a question better answered with wisdom and experience.

David- with the wisdom of his older years- attempts to answer this question through another acrostic poem. These were probably written to aid in memorization as each line begins with a subsequent letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters in the alphabet and forty verses in the psalm, every other line acrostic.

Note Psalm 37:1-2 in the NLT

"Do not worry" or "do not fret," David uses this phrase a couple of times in this psalm. An interesting word choice. When someone wicked succeeds at his/her wickedness, worrying and fretting is not the word choice we might use. More like anger and frustration. Jealousy. Do you get angry when someone who is clearly no good succeeds? Maybe a promotion at work or recognition ahead of others is undeserved? How about Hollywood? Hollywood is filled with evil. Or other positions of power? The list goes on.

God's expectations? Ephesians 4:31-32

Or maybe what David is getting at is envy. Maybe it's vindictiveness. Do we seek to take things into our own hands when someone seems to get what they don't deserve?

Here's a hard question: Do we let this unfairness shake our faith in God?

This psalm probably covers all of those things. David is trying to teach his listeners to let God handle things and to keep their eyes focused on what really matters. Recognition, prosperity, wealth, and power are things of this world, *not* things of God.

Remember what Jesus said: Matthew 6:19-21

David says *stop* worrying about what others are doing or getting, instead do these things . . . and this is quite a list, my friends:

Psalm 37:3-8—the NLT is easy to understand here or the ICB makes things even simpler.

Trust in the Lord.

Do good.

Take delight in the Lord.

Commit everything to the Lord.

Trust Him.

Be still in the presence of the Lord.

Wait patiently for Him.

Don't worry.

Stop being angry.

Do not lose your temper.

Roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. Leave with Jehovah not thy present fretfulness merely, but all thy cares; in fact, submit the whole tenor of thy way to him. Cast away anxiety, resign thy will, submit thy judgment, leave all with the God of all.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Not an easy thing to do. But what peace, to just let it all go and trust in the faithfulness of our loving Father.

Read verse 4 again in the ESV

Often, we like to just focus on the last part of this verse and get mad when things don't work out the way we think they should. *Take delight in* means to be very happy about something, enjoying something very much, to take a lot of pleasure in.

God promises us something in this verse, and it's amazing. And so very simple.

If our pleasure and our happiness and our delight is *in the Lord*, He will give us more of *Himself*. God knows that He is all we need. He will sustain us when we are weak. He will make us happy when we are sad. He will provide for us when we are hungry. He will love us when we feel unlovable.

Our hearts change and begin to align with God's heart: is this the key to a happy and fulfilled life? Is that what David is saying?

And *how* do we do that? Spend time with God. Read His word, be still and quiet in His presence.

Psalm 37:9-11 ESV

David reminds us here to "wait for the Lord." Stop worrying about evil and the justice you desire . . . wait for the Lord. For a couple of reasons. One, God is faithful. He has been faithful throughout time and will be faithful until the end of time. He promises to care for His children in this life and the one to come. He is faithful.

Secondly, the Lord is patient. We should be too. Remember Peter's words:
2 Peter 3:8-9

Even though God knows the outcome, He waits. Therefore, so shall His children. We must patiently wait for His hand to move, leaning upon His love and faithfulness and strength.

Because, my friends, He *will* move upon evil. Be sure of this promise. In fact, Peter goes on:
2 Peter 3:10

Like Peter, David's psalm reminds us not to fret, but to be patient and wait on the Lord.

May we have just a bit of the Lord's patience as we wait along with Him for the day of redemption, when the Father releases all of Creation from the bonds of evil and sin. When Jesus returns to claim what is His . . . may we have just a bit of the patience that the Father has.

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him. Psalm 37:7a

Be still. Wait patiently.

Remember this: Psalm 37:23-24 NLT

The Lord delights in the details of our lives? Every detail?

The Lord *takes pleasure in, enjoys very much, finds joy in every detail of our lives* when we are walking in His will.

My friends, you *mean* something to the Creator of the universe. Your value is in Him. Do you ever feel unworthy? Truly, the reason is because you are seeking value from something other than your Creator. Go back to Him.

To Him, you are valuable.

Read Psalm 37:39-40 NLT

One thousand years later, Jesus spoke similar words as recorded by Matthew:
Matthew 5:3-10—Hear Jesus's love for you.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 38: hope for a sinner

January 3, 2021

Read Psalm 38

A psalm of David. A petition.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Don't you just feel the psalmist's pain? What a beautiful little song of petition.

Psalm 38 is one of the *Penitential Psalms* (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), full of grief and pain. And it seems David felt both physical and spiritual pain.

Here are different translations of the heading:

Psalm 38

Do not forsake me, O LORD.

A Psalm of David, for the memorial offering. (ESV)

Psalm 38

A psalm of David, asking God to remember him. (NLT)

Psalm 38

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance. (KJV)

Some say this psalm is filled with David's pain of guilt.

Read verses 1-2 in the ESV

David feels the wrath of God. That's a scary word- *wrath*. The wrath of a man sounds scary, but the wrath God?! Take cover!

Wrath: strong, stern, or fierce anger, deeply resentful; vengeance or punishment as a consequence of anger. (*dictionary.com*)

The anger of others I can bear, but not thine. As thy love is most sweet to my heart, so thy displeasure is most cutting to my conscience.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Some would run *from* God's anger, but David ran *to* God.

He feels God's hand upon him; the weight of it is heavy and painful, like arrows in his flesh. But God's anger reminds David to draw near.

"Your arrows pierce me; your hand weighs me down."

Are these words familiar?

Jesus came to this earth, not to bear the weight of His own sin, like David, but to bear the sin of the world. And when David cried to God from help, He was there. When Jesus cried to God, the Father had turned His face away.

Matthew 27:45-46

The Father turned His back on Jesus. Did you know that for three hours the land was dark? When Jesus came into the world, He brought light. But on that day—the day of His death—the world was dark.

John 8:12

Because of Jesus's sacrifice, the Light will never be turned off again. God will never turn His back on us. He did not turn His back on David.

However, the weight of Father's hand is still heavy. His arrows hurt. Because He loves us.

David felt the weight of his sin; maybe he was even physically sick over it. This verse is a beautiful description of God's conviction. God's hand presses down until we admit our need for Him and our sin and let go of the evil that entangles us.

Read verses 3-8 in the NLT

The sin David struggled with had also affected him physically. Was it a direct result of his sin? Or had he worked himself up so much he made himself sick? Have you ever done that?

God clearly shows us with the life of Job that illness/injury/disease are not always the result of sin like some would say. Job lost his fortune, his family, and his health through no fault of his own. His prayer and pleading with God sounded very different than this psalm of David.

David's sin *had* affected his health.

Sin is not harmful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it is harmful.

-Benjamin Franklin, 1702-1790

God doesn't want this for us. His word and His expectations for His children are very clear.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

Not because our God wants us to suffer or miss out on living or experiencing the beautiful things of this world that He created, but because He knows what will ultimately hurt us.

David knew this. "You hear my every sigh."

Psalms 38:9 NLT

What do you long for? Sin is momentary pleasure causing long term pain. The Lord knows what we need. And He knows what we don't need.

David's use of the Hebrew words for God in this psalm are interesting. This "Lord" (verse 9 and others when lowercase) is the Hebrew word *Adonai*. *Adonai* is the plural form of the ancient word *Adon*, which translates "master" or "ruler," and was culturally used with masters who owned slaves. The word signified dominion and ownership, but also protection and guidance.

This is surrender. Submission. He calls the shots. He has the final say.
Feel the pain in verses 10-12 NLT

How terrible. David's loved ones don't know how to help him either. They can't help him. He's pushed them all away. But he knows what he needs—Who he needs.

David felt alone in his pain. Where does he turn? To the One who never left him.
Verses 13-16 NLT—the LORD, Lord, God

David calls upon the LORD (YHWH or Yahweh), Lord (*Adonai*), and God (*Elohim*). It's as if David was rededicating himself to the Lord here. He called upon God as master and majesty, and then called upon His covenant love and faithfulness too.

Verses 17-22 NLT—Have you ever felt this pain?

You can just feel the heartache and physical pain as David jumps all over in this song. He can't go on; he's in constant pain; he can do nothing right. It's as if the whole world is imploding around this poor guy. Yet, the thing that scares him the most is the thought that God will leave him.

Psalm 38:21-22 ESV

The poor pleader was far gone and ready to expire, only speedy help would serve his term. See how sorrow quickens the opportunity of prayer! Here is one of the sweet results of affliction, it gives new life to our pleading, and drives us with eagerness to our God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Here's the thing, my friends, God did *not* leave David. David is realizing that *he* left God. His sin separated him from the One who filled him with joy and peace. He felt lost, not because God had turned His back as He had with Jesus on the cross, but because David had sinned and turned his back on God.

But when we cry to God, "where are you?" Why have you abandoned me? We are in fact moving back to God. We are opening our hearts again to our loving Father. For He never moved.

May this Penitential Psalm and following verses remind you of God's presence, of His faithfulness, His mercy, and His everlasting *hesed* love.

And BTW these are good ones to memorize!
Psalm 103:17

Zephaniah 3:17

Isaiah 54:10

Deuteronomy 7:9

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 39: just a shadow

January 9, 2021

Read Psalm 39 (in the ESV for the Selah's)
What is the Measure of My Days
To the choirmaster: to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

To the choirmaster (or director of music or chief musician). To Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

David wrote this song for use in the tabernacle worship praising the Lord. Jeduthun and his sons were Levites in charge of ministering in the tabernacle.

1 Chronicles 16:41-42

There is no indication as to the time in David's life that this was written nor the circumstances around it. Although, the content might suggest that David was older. It's only in wisdom and maturity that one learns to hold his or her tongue. Right?

Psalm 39:1-2 NLT

Some translations say: I will hold my tongue with a muzzle (KJV says: with a bridle). A muzzle is typically used to keep a dog from biting or barking. Who did David want to bite or bark at? We can safely assume that he was angry, and holding his tongue was hard to do.

Instead of using a muzzle, David went to God. The Lord would much rather we come to Him with our frustrations than share them with others. Gossip, slander, and words from anger are never a good thing.

Proverbs 21:23 NLT

James 1:26 NLT

And Jesus said:

Matthew 12:36-37 ESV

The psalms are clear examples of God's listening ear in whatever our circumstance. But the scripture is clear that we must hold our tongue, especially around unbelievers. Why is that?

Tongue sins are great sins; like sparks of fire ill words spread and do great damage.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Our anger, grief, and disappointment are never wrong. But the words that leave our mouths as a result of these feelings could be. God clearly gives us a way to deal, the best way to express ourselves while remaining in His desire for us: His listening and available ear and His Word filled with encouragement and direction. Besides it being for our own well-being. God wants us to hold our tongues when in the presence of others because He loves all of His children, even those that do not know Him yet.

If our inability to hold our tongues causes someone else to never take the step to know Him, we will have to answer to that in heaven.

Psalm 39:3-5 NLT—my life is just a breath.

As David was in the presence of non-believers, listening to them, and he got angrier and angrier. He had nothing nice to say. He was about to explode: "Igniting a fire of words." But he turned to God in his anger.

David would not speak these feelings before the wicked. He would pour them out at the foot of the throne of God.

Remember Ecclesiastes 2:11

All is vanity! Life is short. Just a breath. But David had confidence in the promises of his Father. His life had meaning to God. His worth was in the Lord. When he was angry, it was the Lord's council he sought. When life felt like a breath in the wind, he turned to God for the reminder of what was important.

Do you need comfort today? Are you longing for peace in this world we live in?
Ecclesiastes 1:2-9

Ecclesiastes is attributed to Solomon, David's son. It seems that Solomon was taught by his father. Vanity! Everything is meaningless! A breath in the wind. Moving shadows.

God is the only answer.

Like King David in his time of internal struggle, we must look to the word of God for answers, for understanding, and for peace.
2 Samuel 7:22

Deuteronomy 7:9

"My life on earth is but a breath." Then, the psalmist wanted the congregation to pause- *selah, interlude*.

In the same way, as we see turmoil, fear, and anger within the world around us, and as followers of Christ, may we pause. Take an interlude. Seek the Word of God before responding; may we "muzzle our tongues" before "igniting a fire of words."

Seek the counsel of the Lord.

Remember the vanity of life. The meaninglessness of everything under the sun. We remember that our lives are but a breath.

Psalm 39:6-11 NLT

Worldly men walk like travelers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair. Surely they are disquieted in vain. Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Is earth the "place of shadows?" Is heaven where true life begins?

Jesus taught us:

Matthew 6:19-21

Psalm 39 has been sung in praise to the Lord for a millennium now. As children of God, our lives are rooted in the promises of the Father. We work for Him, to further His Kingdom, to lead more to Christ. We store up things in heaven that cannot be stolen and will not rust—love and mercy and grace.

After reminding himself of what really matters, David goes on to plead with God, to stop the punishment, the blows, and the discipline.

This psalm is a prayer to God. Amidst David's honest pleas for help, it is possible that he remembers his sin. Or it is possible that David wonders—out loud to his Father—if the terrible situation he finds himself in is, in fact, a punishment for some sin he had yet to be forgiven for. Do you ever find that while praying, you feel that little twinge that God is pointing toward a sin you have been ignoring?

Like this—just a whisper—"let's stop right here for a moment . . . we first have some unfinished business with—"

Psalm 39:12-13

Tears speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues; they act as keys upon the wards of tender hearts, and mercy denies them nothing, if through them the weeper looks to richer drops, even to the blood of Jesus.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The end of this psalm is a good reminder. David boldly asks God not to turn away from his tears, "hold not your peace at my tears" (ESV). Listen to me. Hear me. Remember me.

For I am a stranger with you. A sojourner like my fathers. Psalm 39:12b NASB

For I am your guest- a traveler passing through, as my ancestors were before me. Psalm 39:12b NLT

For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my father were. Psalm 39:12b KJV

A sojourner. A stranger. But David knew he didn't walk alone. The Psalm reads, "I am a stranger with you." We are passing through this life together, unto the other side.

This is not our home. We are but wanderers in this life. Does that bring you comfort?

And finally, David calls again for the relief of God's pressing hand, the weight of chastisement, the lifting of a loving Father's discipline. While praying this prayer of help to the Father, David felt the weight of some unspoken sin, as often happens when we bear our hearts to God. David felt a need for confession and longed for the relief of forgiveness.

Verse 13—Leave me alone, spare me, remove your gaze (read in different translations)

Did David hope the end was near? It's clear, that whenever the end came, David wanted to be right with God.

Oh, that the day He comes to take us home, may we smile knowing our hearts are clean and our paths straight.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 40: a new song

January 29, 2021

Read Psalm 40

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A psalm of David. This is conclusive as to the authorship: lifted by the Holy Spirit into the region of prophecy, David was honored to write concerning a far greater one than himself.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 40

My Help and My Deliverer

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. (ESV)

Written *to the choir director, Chief Musician, or the director of music*, depending upon translations. This is a song, not only a personal hymn from the heart—intended to be sung in worship together.

And we will see that Jesus is found here.

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.

Psalm 40:1 NLT

In his psalms, David often speaks of "waiting for the Lord." Do you know that feeling of sharing what you need, feeling alone, down and out, and just *waiting* for the Lord to move? David does too, and he speaks of it often in the psalms.

And then the beautiful picture of God turning toward him, inclining to him. This is God closing the distance between Him and His child as He leans down to be closer, to share the safety of His presence.

What a beautiful picture.

Read verses 2-3 in the ESV

God turned His face to David. He leaned down and pulled him up from a terrible pit and set his feet on the Rock. And not only that, but David was then filled with joy. The weight of worry and fear was lifted as God took a hold of him, and he could do nothing but sing praises.

Continue with verses 4-5 ESV

"Your thoughts toward us!" The NIV says, "the things you have planned for us." But whatever the translation, God *thinks* about His children! Have you seen the world lately? How can the God of the universe have time or

energy to *think* about you and me? But He does!
Psalm 139:1-4 NLT—Truth.

God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful, very practical! Muse on them, dear reader; no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many, let not yours be few in return.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

My friends, never doubt who cares about you; who watches over you; who protects you even when you do not know you need protection. Don't put Him in a human box and try to understand how this is possible, just know. The Bible speaks Truth.

Jesus taught us this in Matthew's gospel:
Matthew 6:26

Matthew 10:30-31

The God of the universe thinks of you and watches over you. His eye is on you.

And here we go . . .

Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages of the whole of the Old Testament, a passage in which the incarnate Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly; but as it were face to face.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

My friends, this psalm is a prophecy of Jesus, and some commentators address verse 7 as the most powerful of all:

Read verse 7 in a couple different versions (I recommend ESV and NLT)

Think about it. The God of the universe didn't send someone else to help His children. He, Himself, came to help us. In a "prepared body," Jesus, the human form of God, came to earth to walk amongst us; to teach us, to show us, to lead us, to His spread love and truth.

The author of Hebrews says this:
Hebrews 10:5-7

The author of Hebrews is unknown. Many believe, and church history up to the 1800's supported, Paul is the author. But since then, scholars have said there is not enough evidence to know who wrote the book. Some suggest Luke wrote the letter after Paul gave a sermon on the subject, others say Barnabas or Priscilla. Martin Luther even suggested Apollos.

With works like this, we have faith in the Divine Authorship of Hebrews, as everything else in the Bible. The human hand is unimportant. The Holy Spirit is the author of this book.

In the above verses, Jesus quoted from Psalm 40. David spoke of the coming Messiah.

Jesus knew David's words, and He knew that someday we would read these words and take comfort in God's plan through time. The intricately woven story of God's people.

Take comfort in that today. That God sees our hearts. He does not require sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament sense, but He does require something else. Our hearts. An obedient heart.
Psalm 40:8 NLT

We learn from this verse that Jehovah values far more the obedience of the heart than all the imposing performances of ritualistic worship; and that our expiation from sin comes not to us as the result of an elaborate ceremonial, but as the effect of our great Substitute's obedience to the will of Jehovah.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read verses 9-12 in the NLT

Part of the "new song" in David's heart was to tell all the people about what God had done for him. Here David tells God, and probably reminds and reassures himself, that he shared the Good News of God's love and forgiveness and faithfulness.

But just like other psalms written by David, he doesn't get too full of himself with all that he did do for God. He swings back around to plead with God for more help, that trouble feels like it's caving in on him, and that he is a sinner.

In fact, his sin threatens to overwhelm him. He cannot see over the pile of it; he cannot get out by himself. David once again calls on his Father to save him.

But this truly is the Good News! That we can share the love of Jesus with our neighbor, only to come home and fall on our faces in confession, only for God to reach down and lift us up again. Again and again.

Read Psalm 40:13-15 in the ESV

In these verses, we are reminded that David was in trouble. He was a sinner, yes. God was faithful, always. But he was also living in fear. He doesn't say why, but we know David had periods of peace and of struggle in his life. David knew he needed God . . . always. In good times and bad.

This is David speaking, but is it also not prophetic of Jesus and how He was treated when He walked this earth, especially as He approached death?

David went from pleading for God's help and strength, to joy at his salvation, back to pleading for help again. And it happens again in the final two verses:
Psalm 40:16-17

David reminds us all here: when we are in need, when we are crying out to God, not to forget to rejoice and be glad! Do not forget to love your salvation. Do not forget to say continually, "Great is the LORD!" In the midst of worry and trial and fear and suffering rejoice.
Philippians 4:4—Rejoice always!

This is a promise throughout the Bible. Also, a command. During hard times, we are to rejoice in the Lord.

David stops again: "But as for me, I am poor in spirit and oh so needy, but God still finds time to be there for me."

In our prayers to God—prayers that can often be messy—remember to rejoice in who God is, His faithfulness, His love, and His grace. Doesn't that just help clear up our minds and our prayers?

But, like David, don't fret when your prayers go back to the worries of "the pit" because God knows and understands and will meet you wherever you are.

Aren't the psalms just so beautiful? I hope, like me, this brings you peace. Xoxo

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 41: mine own familiar friend

February 2, 2021

Read Psalm 41

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Let us not get bored with a heading like this just because we have seen it often before. To *the director of music, the choirmaster, or the Chief Musician. Of David.* These words clearly tell us what God wanted of this song. He wanted it sung, read, and recited to music in a house of worship to Him. He wanted it remembered. He wanted David to be remembered as the author. God's will.

Then it becomes our job to read it, study it, and open our hearts to what God wants to show us. May He speak to us about Psalm 41. He promises to, when we open our hearts to His word, He is present.

Isaiah 66:1-2 ESV

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints when they have had most experience of man's unkindness and treachery. David here found them so, upon a sickbed; he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Read Psalm 41:1-3 ESV

David is ill. He's losing control of his kingdom. Possibly his illness has given room for speculation of his death and who will rule after him. Having nineteen grown sons, with many different wives, probably didn't make for pleasant family dinners.

But, in all his worry and fear for his kingdom, his illness and feelings of betrayal, David *still* remembered God's faithfulness. He remembered that all he has is from God and has great faith that God will come to his aid yet again.

David claimed healing—"God has done it before, He will do it again."

Did David really have that kind of faith? Only God knows David's heart, but faith isn't always a feeling. Faith is a decision. David is sick and losing control, but he stands on his faith that God has been present before and will be again.

Psalm 41:4-9 ESV

Look at verse 4 in the KJV

David is hurting. These verses are sad. There is nothing worse than the betrayal of someone you love. 2 Samuel 15 tells the story of the heartbreaking betrayal of David's son, Absalom. Absalom desired the throne, his father's kingdom. But more than that, he broke David's heart. However, Bible commentators suggest that David maybe refers to someone else in these verses, the heartache even greater. Ahithophel joined in the conspiracy with Absalom to steal the kingdom from David.

2 Samuel 16:23 NLT—who is Ahithophel?

What betrayal.

Better to have an enemy who slaps you in the face than a friend who stabs you in the back.
-Anonymous

Ahithophel, David's trusted advisor, along with his son, betrayed him. Many people followed these two. David had worries and trouble as king. But still the Bible records that David was a *good king*, and the good are sometimes taken advantage of.

Read verse 9 in the KJV

Again, as with many of David's psalms, we see this quoted later in the Bible. Jesus said:
John 13:18

Some commentators point out that Jesus left that first bit about "trusted friend" out. Judas Iscariot was the ultimate betrayer. He walked with Jesus, learned from Jesus, saw the miracles, and still sold Him out for a day's wage. Jesus knew all this would happen, to fulfill the Scripture. Still a betrayal and a heartbreak.

Judas is a testament to the evil that most certainly exists in the world. And it's scary. But my friends take heart in the fact that it happened *all* under the watchful eyes of the Father.
Isaiah 45:11-12 NLT

You see, our God created all, but He didn't just step back and take a seat to watch. Our God has His hands in everything—in all of His creation, still. My friends, that is reassuring.

Read Psalm 41:10-12 ESV

David prays for healing so that he can have revenge. Old Testament statements like this cause us to pause as they are in stark contrast to Jesus. David usually prays to God to have revenge on his enemies, so, this statement for personal repayment is interesting. David fully believes that God set him on the throne, and he lives his life every day to honor that appointment. He took great pride in what God had chosen for him to do. Then *his son* and *close friend* betrayed him, which in David's eyes is a betrayal of God's appointment.

David is hurt and angry. But David's most important job is that which was given to him by the Creator of the universe.

I love verse 12 in the KJV

You can just feel the pride David takes in the Lord and doing the Lord's work. David stood every day "before the face of the Lord." Amazing.

Finally, the psalm ends with a doxology.

Psalm 41:13—Praise to the LORD. Amen and Amen.

This little song has so many emotions in it; illness and suffering, confession and betrayal, revenge and praise. All stuffed into one little song! But the ending just closes the whole thing up with a snap.

LORD= Jehovah, YHWH, the covenant name of God.

Jehovah is the personal name of our God. God of Israel is his covenant title and shows his special relation to his elect people. From everlasting to everlasting. The strongest way of expressing endless duration. We die, but the glory of God goes on and on without pause. Amen and Amen. So let it surely, firmly, and eternally be. Just as the people joined in the psalm by a double shout of holy affirmation; let us unite in it with all our hearts.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And that little "double shout" closes what Bible scholars call "Book One" of the Psalter (Psalm 1-41).

AMEN and AMEN.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 42: an exile in despair

February 5, 2021

BOOK TWO (Psalms 42-72)

Read Psalm 42

For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Maskil or *Maschil* is probably a musical term, although Bible scholars are not exactly sure. Psalm 42 may be a little song of instruction, using music to aid in memorization or to add to the joy of praising the Lord.

Psalm 42 begins Book Two of the Psalter, Psalms 42-72. There are some differences between the first and second books, most notably is that while David authored more than half of them, we will see some other authors as well. Psalm 42 is penned by the "sons of Korah."

The sons of Korah were Levites in charge of worship in the tabernacle and, later, the temple. Korah himself was part of a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness that cost him his life. God dealt with his rebellion in Numbers 16, have a look at that story. Number 26:11 says that despite Korah's rebellion and doom, "the line of Korah, however, did not die out."

Perhaps the sons of Korah had a different reason than some to sing and praise the Lord. They had been literally saved from going down into the pit with their fathers and others who had disobeyed God.

Preserved, we know not why, by the distinguishing favor of God, it may be surmised that after their remarkable election to mercy, they became so filled with gratitude that they dedicated themselves to sacred music in order their spared lives might be consecrated to the glory of God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 42 1-5 in the NLT

Scholars are unsure what is going on for this author or during this time in the history of Israel. This could be during the time David and his household were briefly exiled while Absalom took his father's throne. Others believe it to be written later, during the time of captivity in Babylon. Whatever the historical event, the author is far from the temple, the house of worship. He is far from home, and subsequently, feels far away from God.

In Old Testament times, you had to be in the temple (or tabernacle prior) to get the "God experience." The Israelites went to the temple to pray, to worship, to seek God. And this man—a son of Korah—led some form of these activities.

And now, in exile, his heart is broken. He feels lost and alone, and he thirsts for God.

When Jesus came, He changed all of this.
Read John 4:4-14

The metaphor of thirsting for God is so beautiful, and one we can all understand. Water is life giving and refreshing.

Certainly, this author *knew* he could talk to God anywhere—this is a prayer after all. But he was desperately missing the community of fellowship at the temple. He was missing the traditions, the structure, the music . . .

Hmmm, has anyone felt this right now during a global pandemic?

Commentators point out another difference between Book's One and Two of the Psalter: the use of “God” and “LORD.” Yahweh or Jehovah (YHWH is the word used when LORD is all caps) is the covenant name of God for His people and was the primary name used in Book One. In Book Two, as seen in this psalm, the name used is translated "God" from the Hebrew word *Elohim*. *Elohim* is the Hebrew word for “God” and suggests plurality, majesty, and greatness. Interestingly, Elohim is often shortened to just *El*.

The theme of this psalm, that many can relate to, is depression. In fact, one commentator titled it, "Spiritual Depression." The author can't eat, can't find relief, cries constantly, thinking of happier times makes him sadder, he is far from home.

But then, he speaks to his own soul.
42:5 ESV

The author knew the answers here weren't found in his sadness or his memories or grief. The answers would be found in God. So, he looked up—instead of within.

He didn't say, "My soul is cast down! Oh well, that's it. It's over for me." He knew the answer.
I love the NLT version of verses 6-11

The way to forget our miseries is to remember the God of our mercies.
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

The author of this psalm is far from home and far from the place where his soul finds comfort—the house of worship. For whatever reason, the author has found himself in the far northern mountain region of Israel, far away from Jerusalem.

My friends, when all hope is lost and great sadness threatens to suffocate one of the sons of Korah in exile, what does he do?
Psalm 42:8 NKJV

He calls upon the LORD—the reminder of the covenant made between Jehovah with his "*hesed*" love and His children from the beginning.

David has shown this in his psalms as well; when evil and despair seem to threaten our very souls, we must call upon the faithfulness of God. He was faithful; He is faithful. He will always be faithful.

To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

I will say to God my rock, "Why have you forgotten me?" Psalm 42:9a

Commentators point out that this is not a contradiction. Do you believe this? That *only* because God *is* our Rock, we can cry these things out to him? We can stand upon His strength and call to Him for help. The author calls out twice!

Psalm 42:5

Psalm 42:11

As the author gains confidence, a direct result of calling upon the Lord, and he seems to stand taller.

Remember: having faith doesn't mean that we always *feel* faithful. Sometimes we just must claim faith in God. During times of despair, we must stand on that mountain and call upon the *hesed* love of our Father; claim His faithfulness and His unfailing love. Even when we don't *feel* it.

I know I've explained this before, but I will keep on doing it! 😊 *Hesed*: Hebrew. In the Old Testament the word is used to express an essential part of the character of God—unfailing love, lovingkindness, steadfast love, loyal love, mercy.

The first time the word is used in the Bible, God is describing Himself:
Exodus 34:6-7a

It truly is our strength. The *hesed* love of our Father.
Psalm 143:8-10—I LOVE these verses!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 43: a continuation

February 8, 2021

Read Psalm 43

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Some Bible scholars believe that Psalms 42 and 43 are in fact one poem or song, and that the two might have been separated within a later Greek translation. The reason the two seem to be the same song is the similar language, but also in the three lines or refrains that link the whole:

Psalm 42:5

Psalm 42:11

Psalm 43:5

These are refrains, like the chorus in a song!

However, other commentators warn against claiming theories of error or misplacement in the Bible: like suggesting that somehow these two psalms should be one and someone made a later choice to change it. Charles Spurgeon suggests that maybe the author of this psalm added an appendix or another stanza for the song later in life.

Divine inspiration placed this psalm where it is. No errors. No misplacements.

The third stanza of this poem, or the appendix—whatever we want to call it—is a call to God as divine judge and deliverer from unjust and evil people.

Read Psalm 43:1-3 again in the NLT

The author has been treated unfairly by people who do not know or have rejected the Lord. We have seen this theme in other psalms, the call on God as Divine Judge to rain down judgment and vengeance against those who harm His children. The author isn't taking vengeance into his own hands, he is laying it at the base of the throne of his God.

I can laugh at human misrepresentation if my conscience knows that thou art on my side; thou art the only one I care for; and besides, thy verdict will not sleep, but thou wilt see practical justice done to thy slandered servant.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read verse 3 again

What a beautiful verse! The author sees only darkness and depression around him, so he calls to God to lead the way. Oh, that we would lift this prayer to God every morning. "Father, send me your Light and Truth, so that they can brighten my path and show me the way home to you."

God answered this prayer in an amazing way, didn't he?
John 8:12

John 14:6

When we needed help, God Himself, showed up! He is the Light of the world, and He is the way and the truth and the life. God is all that we need. When we cried out to God for help, He came to us Himself!

This verse—this request for God's presence as Light and Truth—turns the tide of the psalm from pleading to praise. God had arrived and strengthened the singer. And all it took was submission, the author submitted himself to the need for the Light and Truth to see his way home. So beautiful.

Common light is not strong enough to show us the road to heaven, nor will mere moral or physical truths assist to the holy hill; but the light of the Holy Spirit, and the truth as it is in Jesus, these are elevating, sanctifying, perfecting; and hence their virtue in leading us to the glorious presence of God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 43:4 NLT

Other translations say: my joy and my delight, my exceeding joy, the source of all my joy!

My friend, what is the source of your joy?

The author says: "Lord show me the way to you, you are the source of my joy that I have lost, lead me with your truth and your light to your throne, and there I will praise you."

God is not just the maintainer of our joy or the giver of joy—He is our joy.

To draw near to God, who is such a joy to us, may well be the object of our hungering and thirsting.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Once the author had found his way to God by the Light and Truth, what does he do? He offered praise with music and song upon the altar.

As Jesus became the Lamb on the cross, covering our sins centuries later, the blood sacrifice is over. Believers are still required to sacrifice on the altar of God though. The sacrifice of worship, praise, and song. When God is the joy in our hearts, then our souls will sing back to him.

Worship comes in many different forms, but its purpose is a “sacrifice on the altar of God.” How do you worship God?

worship: (*Miriam-webster dictionary*) to honor or show reverence for; to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor or devotion.

Hebrews 13:15-16

The author of this psalm was lost, and then he was led by the Light and Truth to the throne of God. There, he offered praise and worship to the only One who saves.

Psalm 43:5 NLT

Nothing had changed for the author of this psalm—except for his attitude. His circumstances were still the same: he was in exile, he was far from home and far from the temple, he was persecuted and alone. But through prayer and praise and worship, the Lord lifted his heart. The Lord had given hope to him again.

The more terrible the storm, the more necessary is the anchor.
-William S. Plumer, *American Theologian*, 1802-1880

Hebrews 6:19

God's deliverance had not arrived yet, but he hoped for it. He waited for it. The author would not allow fear to overwhelm him. He brought his worries to God, cast them at His throne, and believed. He trusted in God.

When we wait for an answer to a prayer, or we wait for healing, or we wait for redemption, may we remember that God has always been faithful.

He will provide. He will answer. He will arrive and save.

Psalm 143:8

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 44: our fathers have told us

February 15, 2021

Read Psalm 44

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The "sons of Korah" were Levites in charge of worship in the temple. They have an interesting story in the Bible and extra reason to be the ones in charge of praising God, read Numbers 16 for the story if you are unfamiliar with it. The sons of Korah (or rather that line of descendants) are seen throughout 1 & 2 Chronicles as the ones in charge of music in the tabernacle and later in the temple.

Some scholars believe this was written during the time of the Babylonian exile; others think possibly even later in history. Some say during the time of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah specifically. The time frame, therefore specific historical instances talked about are unknown with certainty, which is completely okay. Sometimes it's easier to understand and relate what God is teaching us that way.

Read Psalm 44:1-3 in a different translation

Because of faithful and careful Jewish scribes, we have the book of Psalms and the Old Testament stories. But the stories of God's faithfulness are ultimately remembered because they were *told* for thousands of years. They were spoken of in the house of worship, around the dinner table, before prayers at bedtime . . .

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us. Psalm 44:1a KJV

Did you hear about God growing up? Was He talked about in your home? Do you speak of Him now? When God is faithful, do you speak those words to the people you love?

If not, start today.
Deuteronomy 4:9

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

The commandment could not be any clearer: speak of God's goodness; speak of His faithfulness; speak of His commandments; speak of what He's done in your life.

And always remember this important piece:
Read verse 3 in the ESV

This world would teach us to speak of *our* accomplishment, how *we* avoided disaster and saved ourselves. But truly, God is faithful, and God saves— “by His right hand and His arm, and the light of His face.”

Because He loves us.

Psalm 44:4-8 NLT—Interlude. Selah. Pause.

To whom should a people look to but their king? He it is who, by virtue of his office, fights their battles for them. In the case of our King, how easy it is for him to scatter all of our foes!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The author continues to speak of God's faithfulness to save. Because God had been on Israel's side, they had pushed back and trampled their enemies.

Do you want to boast? Boast all day long in God, and what God has done for you.

Up to this point, this is a song of thankfulness, of gratitude to the One who is faithful. Praise! Then the tone changes, the first word says it all . . . *but* . . .

Psalm 44:9-16 NLT

Here the patriot bard begins to contrast the past glories of the nation's history with its present sadness and distress.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

With that one little word "but" the psalm went from remembering God's faithfulness to saying God had abandoned Israel. God had been faithful to Israel by giving them victory over those who tried to overpower them, until now. The psalmist is desperate—he knows their success in the past was solely because of God, and without him, they would be ruined.

Yet now he is hopeless.

The psalmist feels that God has turned His back. God has abandoned His people.

Hopelessness: to be unsure of God's presence, afraid that God had taken the other side, to fear that God had in fact turned His face away.

Do you feel the absence of God during hard times? Or do you feel His presence more acutely? Have you felt persecution for your beliefs, but felt God was far away during your time of need?

The believer must have times of temptation, affliction, and discouragement; the church must have seasons of persecution. At such times the people of God will be ready to fear that he has cast them off, and that his name and truth will be dishonored. But they should look above the instruments of their trouble, to God, well knowing that their worst enemies have no power against them, but what is permitted from above.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Fortunately, God know all about this. There are many verses of encouragement on this very topic from our loving Father. Here are a couple:
John 16:33

Romans 8:18-19

James 1:2-31

Peter 1:6-7

Romans 5:3-5

Of course, the author of this psalm had not heard any of these verses. They were all recorded after Jesus came and lived among us and showed us how to live and to love. Jesus's life and death are the ultimate example to the believer to model his or her life after. Jesus was persecuted; He was censored. Jesus was made fun of, and ultimately, he was tortured and killed.

When we go through hard times, God has not turned His back on us. He has not abandoned us. Like the apostle Paul said in Romans, we must remember that suffering leads to perseverance which leads to a strengthening of our character which transforms into hope.

Psalm 44:17-22 NLT

This is the author's plea: "We have done nothing wrong! We have followed your commandments! Why have you turned your back on us?"

There are times when our sin has physical, emotional, or mental consequences, those which God allows to happen. But then, there are bad things that happen to believers that are not explainable and not a direct result of sin. Israel was crying out to God how unfair it was that He was allowing these things to happen or may have had a direct hand in them happening, when they had done nothing wrong.

God can handle our, "Why, oh why did you allow this to happen?" But do you often wonder if it doesn't make Him sad?

My friends, the people of Israel, whatever time this is from, were struggling with life and death persecution.

Psalm 44:22 ESV

They faced death seemingly because of their faith. Because they were professing their faith in Jehovah, some of them were in fact being killed or carried off into slavery.

For your sake. Hard words. Because of Whom they put their faith in, they were facing death.

The apostle Paul quoted this verse in his letter to the Romans:
Romans 8:35-39

We may suffer for a little while. We *will* suffer for a little while, but our hope is not in this life. Our hope is in Jesus who has conquered all of what we fear in this world. He is our hope.

During times of persecution or pain or suffering, God has not turned His back. Nothing can separate us from Him.
Psalm 44:23-26 NLT

God does not sleep! He does not doze off.
Psalm 121:3-4

In fact, God gave us a real picture of our fear over the possibility of a distracted Savior when Jesus was sleeping in the boat as they crossed the sea. The disciples thought they were going to die, so they woke Him up and begged him to help. Jesus calms the wind and waves with his voice and then said, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have so little faith?"
See Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:38-40

All of these verses remind us of two things. One, when we love the Lord, it is okay to cry out to Him, "Where are you? Why have you left me?"

And two, He hasn't. He was there in the storm and things were under His control. He was with the Israelites when Psalm 44 was written. God is good. He is a good Father. He is the one who saves. He was, is, and always will be faithful. When we keep our eyes on Him, instead of on our own suffering, we find joy and peace and hope.
Isaiah 40:28-31

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 45: a song of Jesus

February 21, 2021

Read Psalm 45

*For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies."
Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil. A wedding song.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The title of this psalm in the ESV: *Your Throne, O God, Is Forever. To the choirmaster: according to the Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song.*

Upon first reading, the song reads like one of King Solomon's love songs. While this is very much a love song, it is not a song about a specific man or woman. It is possible the song was written for a specific king's wedding (some older commentaries suggest Solomon's wedding to Pharaoh's daughter or maybe even David's wedding to Saul's daughter, Michal), but its placement in the Psalter cannot be ignored. God wanted this poem listed and remembered amongst His Book of Psalms. Prayers and songs.

In fact, the song is so important that it has a title with five parts. To God, this is a special song. Hopefully, after we read it a few times, we can catch a glimpse of why.

Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only- they are short sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ- they are cross-eyed; well focused spiritual eyes see here Jesus only . . .
-Chares Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 45:1 in the ESV (formal equivalence translation—word for word) and the NLT (dynamic equivalence translation—meaning by meaning)

First, the author of this song claims, from the very beginning of his poem, a special inspiration. His heart overflows with a pleasing theme, beautiful words are stirred within him. This is divine inspiration. These words are words that God put into the author's heart to write with his hand, and the author knew it.

Secondly this is Messianic Psalm. Although there is a man and a woman discussed, we will come to understand that this is Jesus and His bride, the church.

Read Psalm 45:2-5 ESV

The words here do not describe a mere man. This is Jesus.
Isaiah 53:2-3

The beauty of Christ's character extended into His words and the healing touch of His hands, to His grace and His love freely given. He was and is our strength and might, splendor and majesty. His character was that of truth, humility, and righteousness. And wow, did His right hand perform some awesome deeds. His arrows still pierce our hearts. And people fall to their knees before Him.

This is no mere mortal man. It is very clearly Jesus Christ.

Our precious Christ can never be made too much of. Heaven itself is but just good enough for him. All the pomp that angels and archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers can pour at his feet is too little for him.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 45:6-7 ESV

While some commentators make a case that Psalm 45 is a wedding song for a specific Davidic king in history, one wonders what they might make of these two verses? How can they not see the prophetic Messiah here?

The author of Hebrews makes this even clearer for us . . . *God's word is amazing!*

Read Hebrews 1

Some things in the Bible can be confusing, and sometimes we just won't know who or what God is referring to until He chooses to reveal it. But then other times, He makes it clear through prophecies or through other later authors.

God is so pleased in His Son, that He anointed Him with the oil of gladness and a scepter of righteousness!

Scepter: an ornamented staff carried by rulers on ceremonial occasions as a symbol of sovereignty.
(*dicionary.com*)

Righteousness: the quality of being morally right or justifiable, acting according to divine or moral law.
(*miriam-webster.com*)

Throughout the Bible, God tells us that He will give His Son free reign as conqueror. That someday Jesus will return as the mighty warrior. But Psalm 45 gives a different picture of a Father and a Son. God, the Father, is pleased with His Son, so much so, that He blessed Him with a ruling staff of Truth and Justice and anoints Him with gladness.

Jesus is glad (happy, pleased, cheerful, joyful)!
Psalm 45:8-9 ESV

These verses, this psalm, show us again that God loves beautiful things. Jesus's palace will be the most spectacular sight we have ever seen, and He will be the sweetest smelling valiant warrior we could ever imagine. 😊 (is it weird to think about smelling Jesus?)

The King is seen with rapture, he girds himself as a warrior, robs himself as a monarch, mounts his chariots, darts his arrows, and conquers his foes. Then he ascends his throne with his scepter in his hand, fills the palace hall with perfume brought from his secret chambers, his retinue stand around him, and, fairest of all, his bride is at his right hand, with daughters of subject princes as her attendants.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Who is the King's queen? This is certainly not one of Solomon's wives, nor could it be David's wife, Michal, who makes fun of him for when he worships his God. This is the Messiah we're talking about; therefore, the beloved bride is His Holy Church.

Revelation 19:9

Revelation 21:9-10

Ephesians 5:25-27

Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. The church is at the right hand of Jesus.

Psalm 45:10-12 ESV

The queen referred to in this psalm is unknown, there may have been one originally who inspired the writing of these words. But as we study this song, we must see the deeper meaning is clearly that of the Messiah and His bride. Since we are certain that Jesus never married, and the Bible is clear that He was dedicated and faithful and committed to His followers as a husband is (or should be) to his wife, then these verses speak of Christ and the church.

Interestingly, some see the last parts of this verse, the "People of Tyre," as the inclusion and belonging of the gentile nations/people in the holy church. Remember this is the Old Testament and although we see Jesus written all over these pages, ancient Jews did not. They knew the Messiah was coming, but we see the painting of God's plan with clearer eyes.

Psalm 45:13-15 ESV

The bride is glorious within. This is what Jesus has done for us. He has made the Church, His Bride, spectacular (magnificent, marvelous, wonderful, illustrious, renowned, celebrated) from within. The Church is not perfect, but Jesus's sacrifice has made her so.

This is such a good reminder that God looks at our hearts. What is on the outside is not important, He sees our hearts.

Truth and wisdom in the hidden parts are what the Lord regards; mere skin deep beauty is nothing in His eyes. The Church is of royal extraction, of imperial dignity, for she is a king's daughter; and she has been purified

and renewed in nature; for she is glorious within.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Although some see a mere royal wedding ceremony, this is the celebration of the Church going home. She will be dressed in the finest ever made, and she will enter heaven with joy and gladness.

Joy becomes a marriage feast. What joy will that be which will be seen at the feasts of paradise when all the redeemed shall be brought home.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 45:16-17 ESV

The legacy of the King will be passed down from generation to generation. All His sons and daughters will be princes and princesses in His kingdom.

Although we could see a specific king in history or a royal wedding song here, this is also undoubtedly a Messianic Psalm. A song of Jesus and the homecoming of His people in heaven.

Then Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke:
 Luke 21:25-28 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 46: a mighty fortress is our God

March 1, 2021

Read Psalm 46

*To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah.
According to Alamoth. A Song.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 46 is titled *God is Our Fortress* (ESV).

The sons of Korah were Levites in charge of the temple worship. Maybe they wrote Psalm 46 or maybe someone else did and they were just in charge of the singing of it during worship. *Alamoth* is probably a musical term for higher pitched music, whether voice or an instrument. No one knows for sure, but some say this is a song for a girls' choir!

These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Somewhere in the mid-1500's Martin Luther wrote the words and the music for the well-loved hymn, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* or *A Mighty Fortress is our God*.

He may have written these words after a friend was executed for his faith. Maybe he and others sang these words as they faced the council of the Holy Roman Church and were called heretics for their belief that the only way to the Father was through Jesus and not a priest. But the words of his song are based upon those in Psalm 46.

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulward never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe:
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Saboath is His name,
from age to age the same;*

and He must win the battle.

*And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.*

*That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also:
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever!*

Read Psalm 46:1-3 NLT—Interlude.

What a song of faith during the scariest things imaginable. Though the "earth fade away," the "mountains crumble," or the "oceans roar and foam," we will not fear. Mountains crumbling to the sea sounds like the scariest event ever.

Psalm 46 is such a song of faith. Some psalmists call upon God as if He has turned His back. Other psalmists call upon the faithfulness of God as trials come their way. In this psalm, the people are amidst scary times, and yet they feel the real strength and presence of the Lord their God and Savior.

Read Isaiah 8:7-8

What Isaiah is referring to could be what was going on for the people of Israel when Psalm 46 was written, but it is not known for certain. This prophecy was of the Assyrian army flooding into Judah like the mighty Euphrates when it overflowed its banks. The Assyrian army, led by King Sennacherib during this time, was fierce and cruel. The Assyrian Empire controlled much of ancient Mesopotamia up until its fall to the Babylonians around 612-609 BC.

An army known for its cruelty, carrying weapons more advanced than those of the Israelites, surrounding your city, would be the scariest thing imaginable.

It is said, that when facing trials or persecution, Martin Luther would tell those around him that it was "time to sing Psalm 46!" God is our refuge, our strength, a real presence in trouble.

Then we pause, and let that sink in. *Selah . . . interlude.*

Read on with verses 4-7 NLT—Interlude

Most ancient cities had a river running either through the city or near to the city. Although Jerusalem did have a small spring outside the city, it did not have a river suitable to support the city.

So, what river does this psalm speak of? Some believe it's a reference to the Garden of Eden and the rivers there. Others see Jesus as the River of Life. Some see a prophetic glimpse of the New Jerusalem.

But truly, the reference is that where God is there is life. Water is healing and cleansing and refreshing. Who represents that? Jesus.

The earth is crumbling away in this psalm, yet there is a place that does not move, cannot be destroyed, and is protected by the Almighty. The "City of God" is the place where the Most High resides, His Holy Temple.

And the Bible has a reference to a mighty river running through the temple!
Revelation 22:1-2

The great fear of an eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact that in seasons of trial all sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure to the very end.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

If this was written during King Hezekiah's and the prophet Isaiah's time, the story is found in 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32. The Angel of the Lord—God's mighty battle angel—wiped out that entire army in the middle of the night outside the walls of Jerusalem. Some believe this Angel is God Himself.

There are other Old Testament stories of God clearly protecting the city of Jerusalem.

But there are also stories of the city falling. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first temple in 586 BC. The Romans destroyed the second in 70 AD.

The Center for Israel's Educations' website says this:

Indiana University Professor, Bernard Frischer estimates that since 2000 BCE, the city was destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked another 52 times, recaptured 44 times, been the scene of 20 revolts, many riots, and endured half a dozen separate periods of violent terrorist attacks during the past century, with the city peacefully changing hands only twice.

[Jerusalem Timeline](#)

Safety and protection aren't found in the city of Jerusalem alone.

God is with us, always, whether a man-made city crumbles around us or stands in victory. Maybe the author is talking about the New Jerusalem. Is this a prophetic picture of the end of days?

In a vision to John, Jesus said this:
Revelation 3:11-12

Revelation 21:1-4

Here are a couple of translations of verse 7:

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. NIV
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. KJV
The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. NLT

Selah/ Interlude

"Pause here" and revel in the strength and presence of our Lord.

We could just do a study of all the Names of God in this psalm, but let's just stop for a moment. The Hebrew name that means "God with us" we know well:
Matthew 1:22-23

"God with us," who is King of kings, and Lord of lords; who has all creatures in heaven and earth at his command, whom all the hosts of angels obey; he is on the side of his people, and therefore they have nothing to fear from all the hosts and armies of men; seeing more are they that are for them than they that are against them.

-John Gill, English pastor, 1697-1771

Immanuel= God with us= Jesus.
Revelation 21:3 NLT

The Hebrew word here for "God himself," Immanuel.
Psalm 46:8-11 NLT—Interlude.

God's people are involved in some sort of battle. Whether they are in fear of King Sennacherib and his 100k fighting Assyrians or some other time in history, they are living through something terrifying. But they are trying to trust the Lord; they believe that He fights for them, that "Immanuel" is real and present in their time of need. *God with us.*

Psalm 46 was written in third person, from the author's perspective, until verse 10, when God speaks!!!
Psalm 46:10—Be still and know that I am God!

Now we have God's voice. Many believe this verse means something like, being quiet in the presence of God and listening for His voice. While that is a good thing, scholars say the Hebrew word for "be still" means something different.

rapa- to slacken, let down, cease, to drop, be weak, faint- i.e. two people fighting and dropping their weapons.

To be in the middle of battle and be called to cease and throw down your weapon, must mean something is happening; surrender is called, or victory is had.

Picture this: the terrible Assyrians, Israel trying to survive with strength of weapon, when God Himself steps into the battle. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Is He speaking to His own people or the enemy? All weapons drop. Wow.

Oh, and by the way, the LORD of Heaven's Armies stands on that field. The LORD of Hosts. The LORD Almighty. Immanuel. God with us.

Jesus is God's mighty battle angel. He stands with us now. He fights for us. And one day, He will return in all His glory to bring God's children home and to serve justice upon evil.

We have only to "be still" and put our trust in Him.
Revelation 19:11-16

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 47: a prophecy

March 5, 2021

Read Psalm 47

*God is King Over All the Earth
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah. NLT

Some Bible scholars believe this psalm is a continuation of the previous, others disagree. Some believe the "sons of Korah" are the authors here, others clearly hear David's voice and see the descendants of Korah as performers or musicians.

What we will agree upon is that God wanted this song exactly where He placed it. He wanted it sung in His temple and read in His Word by His people throughout time. The authors and performers are clearly celebrating a great victory and giving God the glory for it.

*Whether the immediate subject of this Psalm be the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obed Edom to Mount Zion, or the celebration of some memorable victory, it would be hard to decide.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892*

For centuries now, this psalm is sung during the "Feast of Trumpets" (Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the Jewish calendar). The celebration of a new year. Originally, trumpets were a big part of this celebration; like God winning a victory in battle or the ark finally ascending into the temple or Jesus ascending His throne at the end of days!

Psalm 47:1-4 NLT—Interlude

The call is to everyone. Come everyone. Clap and shout and praise God. Not just the Israelites, but everyone.

The Hebrew word in verse 2 is interesting in English, here are two different translations of that same word:

For the LORD Most high is awesome, the great King over all the earth. Psalm 47:2 NIV
For the LORD Most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. Psalm 47:2 KJV

Our God is King over all kings through time and forevermore. There is none above Him. That makes Him "terrible" and "awesome" at the same time.

*. . . none can resist his power or stand before his vengeance; yet as these terrors are wielded on the behalf of his subjects, they are fit reasons for rejoicing. Omnipotence, which is terrible to crush, is almighty to protect.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892*

Psalm 47:3 KJV

Here, the author is sure in his faith that God will do great things for His people. God will be King over all. He will have vengeance for His people.

When the world persecutes the children of God for their beliefs, we take heart in God's promises, in His truths and in His faithfulness.

Jesus said,
John 15:18-19

And truly, if God is for us, no one can stand against us. But it is still hard to live in a world that we know we do not belong in. Jesus, who did nothing but speak love and truth in His time here, was persecuted and hated by some, then tortured and killed. His life is a reminder to stay strong.

God will do what He said He would do.

Psalm 47:4 NLT

Here the author is talking about Canaan, the Promised Land of God's people. In the Old Testament, God promised this "land flowing with milk and honey" to His children from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Moses to Joshua, the story is long and hard.

Genesis 15:18

Exodus 6:8

Joshua 1:4 ESV

But how long did they wander around the desert first? How long before they lost faith in its existence? How many of them made it into the Promised Land? How often did they grumble about how hard it was to get there?

God made the expectations of entrance into their inheritance very clear, from the beginning. As He does for us. We have an inheritance as His children, not on earth, but in heaven. His expectations are still clear.

Deuteronomy 6:5

And when Jesus came,
Matthew 22:37-40

We are given the same inheritance with the same expectations, yet it is still hard. How long do we wander? How long do we fight with our own selfishness? How long until we submit to our Father and wait upon His provision?

Once the people had settled within the Promised Land of Canaan, the Lord was still having to remind them and demand their attention:

Joshua 24:15

God chose us. He loves us and will provide for us . . . but He demands that we choose.

Psalm 47:5-9 NLT

God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of the trumpet. It is worthy that this mention of the shout, and the voice of the trumpet, serves to connect together past and future events in the history of the church and of the world, and carry our thoughts forward to Christ's coming to judgment.

-Charles Wordsworth, Scottish bishop, 1806-1892

These verses sing of God taking His throne, the Great King ascending the steps with shouts of joy from all the peoples of the earth. This is not merely the celebration of the ark entering the temple or a victory on the battlefield; this is prophetic. This is Jesus.

Matthew 25:31

Revelation 22:1

Revelation 11:15

Revelation 1:7-8

The words "sing praises" is one Hebrew word. How cool is that?

Read Psalm 47:8-9 in the KJV

Here all the nations have come together to celebrate. All princes and peoples are present together.

1 Corinthians 12:13

Something great had happened for the people of Israel. Something so wonderful that they were shouting and singing and praising the Lord. Even the nations around them were there and celebrating with them.

Who are the "shields of the earth?" Are these great warriors or strong men of renowned deeds?

No one knows for sure. But truly this is a prophecy of the coming of the Lord. All peoples, all nations, all tribes will worship, shout, and sing to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In this amazing little song- written thousands of years ago- we very clearly see Jesus and the future of God's people. God has a hand in all of time, and that brings us peace today.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 48: Mount Zion- yesterday, today, tomorrow

March 8, 2021

Read Psalm 48

A song. A psalm of the sons of Korah.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Zion, the City of Our God in the ESV. *The Beauty and Glory of Zion* in the NASB. *Zion Exalted* in the HCSB.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song: some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory (2 Chr. 17), others of Sennacherib's defeat, when his army lay siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for aught I know, it might be penned by David on occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that but that it might serve any other similar occasion in aftertimes, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Heb. 12:22), 'the Jerusalem which is above' (Gal. 4:26).

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

This psalm, like Psalms 46 and 47, is a great celebration of some miraculous circumstances. But these circumstances, thanks fully to the Holy Spirit, also give us a picture of times to come when our Lord will reign on earth, when all will know Him and bow to Him.

Maybe we will all be together singing this song upon Christ's return . . .

Read Psalm 48:1-3 in a new translation

Today, Mount Zion is a hill outside the walls of the "Old City" of Jerusalem. In Old Testament times, this term sometimes referred to an actual hill, the highest point in ancient Israel, but other times it referred to the entire city itself. And it is widely believed that the current "Mount Zion," where one can visit historical sites (or replicas of), is not in the same place that it was during Old Testament times.

Originally, Mount Zion is where David built his palace which became known as the City of David, Jerusalem. Today's "Mount Zion" in the city of Jerusalem was believed to be built by Christian Crusaders.

Interestingly, Flavius Josephus (a Roman Jewish historian, 37 AD) documented what the city was like prior to its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD. His accounts of ancient history help us to see places where Bible history and secular history texts line up. His works are hard to read, having been translated from Greek to Latin to English, but are still interesting. [Flavius Josephus info](#)

Hebrews 12:22-23

How great is Jehovah and most worthy of praise! God resides with His people. He is present and real within His Holy City. The author of this psalm felt God's presence within the city, and because of God's great love for His chosen people, the whole earth rejoices!

Certainly, the church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Jesus said to John as recorded in the book of Revelation:
Revelation 3:12

Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart, in which God is great, in which he is all. There God is known.
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

The KJV says, "the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."

Never has the actual city of Jerusalem been considered "the joy of the whole earth." Ancient history, modern history, and current events reveal a different picture of what it's like to live in or near this city itself. The author was clearly speaking prophetically under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 48:4-8 NLT—Interlude.

Here the author slips into an example of God's saving power. Some commentators use these verses to point to a specific time in history, but what is most important for us is that God *will* save. God will fight for us, whether it's a storm, a powerful navy, or all the kings of the earth joined together. God is on our side.

When the Israelites ran for their lives with the Red Sea at their feet and angry armed Egyptian warriors behind them,
Exodus 14:13-14

God is our loving Father and our fierce defender. He is the "LORD of hosts," mighty and powerful, and He is also "our God," loving and present.
Psalm 48:8 KJV—Selah.

"As we have heard . . . so we have seen."

Have you heard of God doing great things in other people's lives, but He is yet to respond to what you need? Have you heard of God's saving or healing or redemptive power, but you have yet to see it in yourself or someone you love?
Micah 7:7

"As we have heard . . . so we have seen."

When you are stuck in between, wait on the Lord, and you will see.

Selah . . . Interlude.

Take a moment and let that all sink in.

Psalm 48:9-11 NLT

We have heard of your love, O God; we have seen examples of your love, O God. And now, we think about/we meditate on your unfailing love, your covenant *hesed* love that you have poured out on your children.

Because I have heard of and seen God's unfailing love, I will praise Him for the rest of my days. But I will also speak of His love and faithfulness. Just like His disciples, they heard Him speak, they saw the miracles and His sacrifice of love.

Matthew 28:16-20

Hear, see, meditate on, praise, and speak of.

This God, who has now done such great things for us, is unchangeable in his love to us, and his care for us. If he is our God, he will lead us and keep us even to the last.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 48:12-14 NLT

The author here wants us to look to the strength of the city. See the many towers and citadels; see the strength of the walls; see the power.

But here is the key: "For that is what God is like."

All these things that make the city great come from God. Jerusalem's glory and strength come from God. Tell this to the next generation. And He will walk with us through the end of life.

Between Bible translations, there are some differences. Look at verse 14:

That this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever. Psalm 48:14 ESV
 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death. Psalm 48:14 KJV
 For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and he will guide us until we die.
 Psalm 48:14 NLT

Whatever the author in this psalm was trying to say about God and the end of life, we know without a doubt that God walks with us through death and into life everlasting.

Read Psalm 48:14 in the NIV

Psalm 23:4

Revelation 21:3-4

Matthew 28:20b

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 49: the Good News

March 12, 2021

Read Psalm 49

*Why Should I Fear in Times of Trouble?
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Why should I fear in times of trouble? For the choir director. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

The Sons of Korah are believed to have led worship in the tabernacle and later the temple in Jerusalem.
2 Chronicles 20:19

Interestingly, Kohath was a son of Levi. The Levites were given the job of caring for and ministering in the tabernacle (Numbers 3). Kohath and his descendants had the job of carrying and setting up the very special inner sanctuary and its artifacts (including the Ark) as they wandered in the wilderness (Numbers 4:15). Korah, the grandson of Kohath, began to run with a nasty, grumbling crowd (Numbers 16).

Korah's life did not end well, but his "sons" (future generations) had reason to worship and praise and sing to the Lord in remembrance. That was their job in the tabernacle and temple.

Psalm 49 is called a "didactic psalm;" a teaching or instructing psalm. Psalm 49 is also a prophetic psalm and speaks of redemption. And it sounds a lot like the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Some believe the psalm's sound and wording date it to the time of David or just after, but the timing doesn't really matter.

Read Psalm 49:1-4 in the NLT

These first four verses are a call to pay attention, something important is being shared, and the author is super excited about it. Maybe these verses reveal the prophetic nature of the song—one can only shout for attention once touched by the Holy Spirit!

Jesus said,
Matthew 11:15

Not Jew or Gentile, believer or unbeliever, rich or poor, black or white, but "all you people," "everyone in the world," "all peoples."

Psalm 49:3a

Inspired and therefore lifted beyond himself, the prophet is not praising his own attainments, but extoling the divine Spirit which spoke in him. He knew that the Spirit of truth and wisdom spoke through him. He who is not sure that his matter is good has no right to ask a hearing.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 49:3b—and the second half of this verse.

If we are willing and open, the Holy Spirit will give us wisdom. But it doesn't stop there; God wants us to meditate upon His Word, to consider what He is saying, to truly understand.

Psalm 49:5-9 NLT

Verse 5 begins this section and the entirety of the psalm with great faith. The author of this psalm is about to share prophetic words from God, but he is quite certain of his own standing.

Why should I fear when trouble comes, when enemies surround me? NIV

The author will answer this very question later in the psalm, but he clearly excludes himself from the "them" and "they" of the rest of the poem.

While material possessions are not necessarily the problem, as human beings we get easily entangled with the "stuff" of this world. This is a form of idolatry; when one puts their "trust in wealth" and "boasts of great riches."

No earthly thing can purchase your life or the life of someone you love. For unbelievers, this must be terrifying. To end your life with all the stuff in the world, and to leave the world with none of it.

However, our souls are bought and redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

This can be fully understood in the New Testament when Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler and shows us how God sees our hearts. Not material possessions, but what is in our hearts.

Mark 10:17-27

Who knows what this rich young ruler ended up doing! Jesus loved him and knew his heart. He knew how hard the man tried to do the right thing, but also saw that his wealth and status were an idol stuck between him and his relationship with God. While the disciples seemed to lose hope because of this young man, Jesus reminded them—and us—that all things are possible with God.

Psalm 49:10-13 NLT—Interlude.

Psalm 49 paints a picture of the person who puts everything they have, heart and soul, into this life, this world. We all know how that story goes. This isn't just about the rich young ruler though; this is about the poor man who longs for more than he has. It's about the person who chases fame and notoriety. The one who desires youth and beauty. It's about the person who wants to follow God but cannot leave behind all that he has to do so.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

Ecclesiastes 1:12-14

Ecclesiastes 2:11

King Solomon, the richest man to ever live, wrote these words toward the end of his life. As Solomon pondered the meaning, or meaninglessness, of life in the Book of Ecclesiastes, he came to the following conclusion at the very end:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

And Jesus said,
Matthew 6:19-21

We cannot buy God's favor. Money will not buy a second more of life. Wealth will not bring back a loved one. No amount of money buys God's forgiveness.

But God doesn't want our money or our possessions; He wants our hearts. If He asks us to give up our worldly possessions, it is because they are in the way of us giving our hearts to Him.

Psalm 49:14-15 NLT—Interlude.

And here, my friends, is the Good News of the Gospel as told by a Son of Korah hundreds of years before Christ:

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Psalm 49:15 KJV
But God will redeem my life from the realm of the dead: he will surely take me to himself. Psalm 49:15 NIV
But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Psalm 49:15 ESV

The world will lead every person to the grave, to hell, to Sheol, like a flock of sheep. Death will be their shepherd. Satan will hold their hands as he leads them with a smile to an eternity of torment.

But God has ransomed His children through the blood of Jesus Christ. The author of Psalm 49 had no understanding of how this promise would play out. He didn't know that literally our souls would be purchased by the blood of the Lamb of God.

But here we are—the price was paid, and the choice is ours.

"But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of the grave."

Psalm 49:16-20 NLT

Do not lose hope. Do not run after the things of this world, because they are all temporary.

1 Timothy 6:7 KJV

Seek first the Kingdom of God, and He will care for all our needs. We have the Good News of the Gospel. We know with certainty that our God has redeemed our souls already, and we have nothing to fear.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 50: God speaks

March 15, 2021

Read Psalm 50
God Himself is Judge
A Psalm of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Some translations title this psalm: *God as Judge* or *God the Judge of the Righteous and the Wicked*.

Asaph, along with Heman and Ethan, were chosen among the Levites as musicians and worship leaders.
1 Chronicles 15:16-17

1 Chronicles 16:7-8

2 Chronicles 29:30

Asaph, "the seer" or prophet, authored, produced, or performed twelve psalms in the Psalter.

It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The Mighty One and His Judgment
Psalm 50:1-6 NLT

The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! What a way to start this song. Hebrew writers often lumped many names together for God, maybe as a way to add extra reverence and shouts of praise.

The Mighty One, God, Jehovah- *El, Elohiym, Yahweh*

Verse one is so beautiful and so powerful. Our mighty covenant God has spoken, and He has called all His people together from one side of the world to the other. No matter color or culture or country, God has called us all together as one body.

And when God approaches His children . . . He is not silent!

This beautiful picture is clearly a day to come when Jesus will return, and God will come forth to judge the earth and all that is in it.

This psalm is a psalm of instruction. It tells of the coming of Christ and the day of judgment, in which God will call men to account; and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment."

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Hebrews 12:29

God will call His children forth first; yes, someday we will stand before the throne of judgment. We will answer for our deeds on earth, not for our salvation, but for the rewards of perseverance in this life.

Revelation 1:7-8

Revelation 20:11-12

So, if one day, we will stand before this awesome throne of God—the Mighty One, Jehovah—then let's run the race. Let's be faithful; let's persevere to the end.

Hebrews 12:1-3

He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Selah/Interlude. Pause and reflect on the power and faithfulness of God.

Psalm 50:7-15 NLT

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to love God and our neighbor better than all burnt offerings. We are here warned not to rest in these performances. And let us beware of resting in any form. God demands the heart, and how can human inventions please him, when repentance, faith, and holiness are neglected?"

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

God is not rebuking the sacrifices of His people if they come from the heart and with purpose. But empty sacrifice becomes ritualistic, and God knows our hearts. He wants our love and devotion and obedience first. That's why Jesus knew the Pharisees so well. On the outside, they looked good. They were the religious leaders of the people; looked up to and followed. Jesus exposed them for what they were (Matthew 12:22-37; 23).

Some commentators see this section as a prophecy of the end of animal sacrifice. It is not that God is saying the Israelites are doing the sacrificing wrong, after all, Israel had hundreds of years of practice at this. But He is

saying the sacrifice is not acceptable. Is God speaking of His New Covenant?
Psalm 50:14-15 NLT

Maybe, but the most important thing to remember is that God sees our hearts. He wants our hearts.
Psalm 50:16-21 NLT

God now speaks to the evil of the present. He calls out those who claim a faith in God, but do not/have never held it within their hearts. These folks can "recite His decrees" and pretend to "obey His covenant," all while speaking wickedness and committing evil acts (He calls out specific broken commandments even—adultery, stealing, slander).

Remember that our God is patient, so patient. But He *will* act upon evil.

So, we must remain faithful; be the sheep among goats, the believing among unbelievers, His children living amongst the children of the world . . .
2 Peter 3:8-10

This amazing Psalm, written in God's own voice, calls us to remember which side we are on. Are we sheep or are we goats? Are we of this world or are we set apart?

Choose.
Psalm 50:22-23 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 51: a broken spirit

March 19, 2021

Read Psalm 51

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Well, here we are, the place where King David's sin and great pain is exposed to generations and generations of believers. And we wonder why?

That is the question: why are we drawn to this? Does this make us angry or sad? Does this deepen our faith in God or make us question it? If David is in fact "a man after God's own heart," then what happened?

Read 2 Samuel 11-12 for the story of David, Uriah, Bathsheba, Nathan, and an unnamed baby boy.

Note verse 1 of this story in 2 Samuel 11. Some commentators, including Nathan himself as he wrote in his own words, point out that David should have been off fighting with his men, like he had always done. David was a soldier, a great warrior. He had no business being home while his men were out in battle.

2 Samuel 11:1

David should have been with his armies, but he was home instead. Was he bored? Did his boredom lead to wandering eyes? Whatever happened, his wandering eyes led to adultery which led to murder and a huge cover up for his sin, even to the loss of a child.

This story is sad. Was Bathsheba forced to do what David asked? Did she go to him willingly? But that does not matter at all; she never had a choice. If she found David desirable or not, it wouldn't have even crossed her mind to say no. The choice was never hers to make as a woman.

And Uriah was just doing his job. We don't know if he was a good husband, but the Bible records that he was a good soldier and faithful patriot—following orders, caring for others, fighting to the death for his people, his commanders, and his king.

And then, there was a child who suffered. What a sad mess.

But here's the thing: history records all kinds of things like this. No other monarch in history would have thought twice about killing off one of his soldiers to take a woman for his own. A baby born to a king with a woman married to one of his captains—there are movies about such things! Powerful men never cared who they hurt, why is this story different?

In that day, and if any other king but David, Nathan would have lost his head for confronting a king's wickedness. Kings could do what they wanted without consequence. King David is the only one who would

respond in this way.
Psalm 51:1-2 NLT

In Nathan's account of the story (as written in 2 Samuel), he had just finished telling David that God knew what he had done and that there were going to be consequences for his choices. Nathan had great faith in his God, but he possibly stood there expecting to face the wrath of a king.

Instead, David responded like this;
2 Samuel 12:13

No, "she seduced me" or "that's what happens when I'm bored and can't find anything to do." No, blaming his actions on someone else. David knew he screwed up.

So, in true David fashion, he called upon God's unfailing love, His mercy, and lovingkindness, the covenant *hesed* love that the Lord had poured out on His people since the time of Abraham. David was an Old Testament believer. He didn't know about the New Covenant of Jesus's death and resurrection.

He did what he knew how to do: he cried out to God and begged for His mercy.
Psalm 51:3-9 NLT

David recognized and claimed his sins. In fact, it almost seems a relief to him to acknowledge and lay his sin at the foot of the throne of God. Some say a year had passed between his affair with Bathsheba and Nathan's confrontation. That's a long time.

David admitted his sin, and then he goes on to say to God that he sinned "against you, and you alone."

But wait!

David committed sin against Bathsheba, certainly against Uriah, against their families, against his own family, and on and on. What does he mean when he says the sin was against God and God alone?

Some say that a king answered only to God. A king could choose a married woman for himself. A king could have his own soldier killed if he wanted to. And therefore, a king would only have to stand before the throne of God and answer for his deeds after death. While this is probably part of it, we know that David valued human life; he valued God's creation. David loved God and knew right from wrong, even as king.

I believe that David realized—or finally accepted—at that moment, that God had been present when he took Bathsheba. God had been in the room when David wrote the letter to Joab to have Uriah killed. God was on the battlefield with Uriah when he died.

God is present when we sin. That changes things.

David realized that his sin had cut him off from God, the *most* important relationship in his life. Maybe for a whole year, he has been running and hiding and covering up the sin he committed. Maybe he recognized it, maybe he didn't, but when Nathan confronted him, it was all over. He realized that his sin had put a wedge between himself and God.

God was his joy.

Our sin separates us from God. When we confess our sin and acknowledge that we have sinned, to the one we wronged and certainly to God, then He is "faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Psalm 51:10-12 KJV

In these three verses, David begs for the mercy of God. He doesn't say "clean my heart." David asks God to create a new heart for him. David begs God not to cast him away, like when Cain murdered his brother Abel in Genesis 4. He also begs God not to take His Spirit away, like He did with King Saul (1 Samuel 16:14).

David's greatest fear was God turning His back.

The Spirit is my wisdom; leave me not to my folly, he is my strength, O desert me not to my own weakness. Drive me not away from thee, neither do thou go away from me. Keep up the union between us, which is my only hope of salvation.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Sin steals our joy. Sin steals the joy of our salvation because it cuts us off from God. And what a dark place that is.

Psalm 51:13-19 NIV

David's first order of business was to teach others and lead them back to God. His sin had gotten in the way of his leading the people in the way of the Lord. And little did David know that his sin and repentance would continue to lead sinners back to God thousands of years later.

Psalm 51:17 NLT

David knew what many religious leaders today fail to see—God doesn't need sacrifices. He wants our hearts. David would have offered the sacrifice required for sin, but his heart was the sacrifice. His broken spirit was the sacrifice.

Isaiah 66:1-2

Ephesians 5:1-2

Remember how God saw David's heart from the beginning? This is our Mighty God who saves. He doesn't desire empty sacrifice or the monotony of religious practices. He sees our hearts. He wants our hearts to be His. 1 Samuel 16:7

Finally, David closes his repentance psalm with a plea for God to not punish his people because of his sin. Who knows what had been going on for the people of Jerusalem during the year that David had turned from God. But now that David had given God his heart, he pleads that God's wrath be turned away from His children.

What a beautiful Psalm this is. What a testament to the brokenness of man and the mercy of a loving God. And we've answered our question from the beginning; "What does David's great sin teach us today?"

Clearly through the mess David made with his wandering eyes, twenty-five hundred years later we can see a way out of our own sin. Nothing is too big for God to handle.

All He desires is our hearts.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 52: God's faithfulness during evil times

March 23, 2021

Read Psalm 52

The Steadfast Love of God Endures

*To the choirmaster. A Maskil of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul,
"David has come to the house of Ahimelech."*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The Steadfast Love of God Endures.

The title in the ESV means so much more when we understand the historical setting of Psalm 52. This psalm is a poem of meditation, and a song that the choirmaster would perform in the tabernacle or temple.

This is a psalm to remind the children of God that throughout time He was, is, and will always be present in hard times. And that He *will* deal with evil.

It's a reminder in the worst circumstances to breathe, to calm down, and to let God move.
Matthew 4:37-40

Read 1 Samuel 21-22 for the story of Doeg, "the foreigner."

Here's the gist: David and his men were staying far away from the crazy King Saul. They were hungry and without weapons. David went to seek out Ahimelech the lead priest of the temple in Nob. It seems that David was being a bit sneaky, or maybe he was being careful, because he knew there could be a lurking traitor (and there was). Or maybe he was just trying to protect himself and his men. Who knows for sure. But Ahimelech the priest gave him food and an important weapon. Doeg was snooping nearby. He went to Saul and told on Ahimelech. King Saul summoned Ahimelech and called his actions out. Ahimelech the priest did not lie. King Saul, being filled with that evil spirit, asked one of his soldiers to kill the treacherous priest who "chose David over him." None of his soldiers would kill the priest. But Doeg raised his hand. Doeg killed Ahimelech and 85 other priests that day. Then he went into the priest's city and murdered all who lived there—men, women, children, babies, and animals. Horrible.

Someone escaped and ran to David. David wrote this Psalm.

In 1996, I clearly remember the beginning of what seems to be "normal" happening now: two school shootings back-to-back. One right here in Washington State and the other in Scotland where an entire classroom of Kindergarteners and their teacher were murdered. That tragedy struck me so hard that all I could do was write about it. I still have that poem; it's hard to read even now.

King David was many accomplished things, not least of which, a writer. When he felt bottled up with so much pain and worry and heartache, he picked up a pen and wrote.

This is that song.
Psalm 52:1-3 NLT—Interlude.

"Why do you boast, O mighty man, O great warrior, you hero?"

Is there some simmering anger behind those words?

But David doesn't then say, "I'm coming for you!" He could have said that. David was a mighty warrior, with many strong followers who could have easily taken out a man like Doeg.

Instead, the key in this psalm, is waiting on and trusting in God's final say, God's judgement. Someone who would murder unarmed, untrained priests, then their families and animals deserved the worst punishment.

But David knew that God would handle that.

How often do we try to take things into our own hands? Are we good at letting go when someone hurts us and trusting that God will handle it?

When we hang on to bitterness and anger, it only eats us up inside. David must have known this. After all, he wasn't completely honest with Ahimelech, and he could have blamed himself for their murders. Maybe he did for a time. Maybe he yelled and screamed and threatened to take it into his own hands for a few days around the back of that cave he was hiding in. Maybe his fighting men tried to encourage him to or dissuade him not to.

David probably even argued with God.

But . . . when he had calmed down, the words he wrote are the resignation of and faith in the sovereignty of God.

The tyrant's fury cannot dry up the perennial stream of divine mercy. If priests be slain their Master lives. If Doeg for a while triumphs, the Lord will outlive him, and right the wrongs which he has done.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Maybe David repeated words he'd written before in his exile. After all, David was a different kind of warrior, and maybe words like these were heard around his campfire:

Psalm 18:1-2

SELAH. Let us pause and look at the proud blustering liar. Doeg is gone, but other dogs bark at the Lord's people. Saul's cattle master is buried, but the devil still has his drovers, who fain would hurry the saints like sheep to the slaughter.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 52:4-5 NLT

Have we "destroyed others with our words?"

David speaks of plotting, lies, and a "razor" tongue. Doeg's lies and evil words led to the death of innocent people. What pain have our tongues caused?

Proverbs 15:28

Matthew 15:10-11

James 1:19-20

James encourages us, as believers, to listen and think about what we say. This is not human nature. As humans, we are quick to demand justice, to be right, to be heard. According to the Words of God above, we need to let go and let God.

Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

The words that David used to describe what God will do to people like Doeg are harsh: strike down, snatch from home, uproot from the land of the living.

God will do these things. All we must do is trust in Him. He will handle evil. We must handle our tongues and our hearts—and wait for God.

Psalm 52:6-9 NLT

His name alone can be our refuge and strong tower. It is very good for us to wait on that saving name; there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits, when disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty, when tempted to use any crooked courses for our relief, than to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

God's Word is clear: when the world crumbles around us, we put our trust in God. When the wicked seem to win, we trust in God. When good comes our way, we give thanks to God. When we screw up and hurt others with lies and a razor-sharp tongue, we ask for forgiveness and put our trust in God.

Isaiah 26:4

The last two verses of Psalm 52 are amazing. Check them out in different versions.

Psalm 52:8-9 KJV

Psalm 52:8-9 MSG

David turns his voice back to God. He speaks to the One who has never failed him. The One who has walked beside him during the darkest of times.

Some commentators suggest that maybe David saw an olive tree flourishing in or near the house of God in Nob. Olive trees can live for thousands of years and still fruit. They live through drought and fire. It's a small, strong tree that provides fruit that sustains. The leaves are used for tea, olives for food, and oil for good health. Maybe the olive tree reminded David of Ahimelech.

But David's heart is calm. He has once again put his trust in the Lord and in the promises of His covenant throughout time. He remembers the covenant and God's *hesed* love, and he remembers that he is never alone.

Let us remember this psalm when we see evil in this world. Evil came into this world when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, and there will be evil in this world until Jesus returns. There were evil men like Doeg during David's time, and there are still evil men today.

When that evil begins to drown us, remember God's unfailing love and faithfulness throughout time and even today.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Romans 8:38-39

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 53

March 26, 2021

Read Psalm 53

There Is None Who Does Good

To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Read Psalm 14 if you can.

Psalm 14

The Fool Says, There is No God

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 53

There Is None Who Does Good.

To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

These two songs are almost identical: both written by David, and both given to the choir director to be sung during worship.

Bible scholars believe *Mahalath* is a musical term. A *Maskil* or *Maschil* means a meditative poem.

It is not a copy of the fourteenth Psalm, emended and revised by a foreign hand; it is another edition by the same author, emphasized in certain parts, and rewritten for another purpose.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Nothing in God's Word is an accident. Nothing is accidentally said twice. God wanted this psalm restated and placed in His Word again.

And seriously, when God says things twice, we probably better pay close attention!

Will we ever know why David repeated himself here? Or does it even matter? Maybe what's more important is just that He meant for us to take a closer look.

Some commentators suggest that David rewrote the song for a special occasion, maybe a celebration or maybe a national emergency.

Psalm 53:1 NLT

The Hebrew word for "fool" is *nabal*. This word signifies someone who has chosen not to believe, not someone who is "foolish" or just doesn't understand God. After all, no one is fully capable of understanding God. Those of us who love the Lord and have chosen to have faith and believe know there are many things that we cannot explain, we just "know." That is faith.

The Old Testament story of David's interaction with someone named Nabal really helps us understand the meaning of this word (1 Samuel 25). Nabal, of the Old Testament, was a "fool" and filled with pride. He made several stupid decisions that almost cost him, his family, and servants their lives at David's hand. And it wasn't because Nabal was incapable of knowing right from wrong. The man chose his foolish behavior.

Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."

How does someone not see a Creator in the design of the universe? How does someone not see God in the complexity of mankind? How does someone not see God in morality and the human conscience?

It's simple: they have chosen not to. *Nabal*. A fool.

Paul says something similar in his letter to the Christians in Rome,
Romans 1:20-22

"A fool says in their hearts, there is no God!" This isn't just a rationalizing away of God in the mind, it's a choice of the heart. To have faith when it's hard to understand is to give God our hearts.

This is why Jesus said we must receive God like a child:
Luke 18:16-17

God knows our hearts, and He desires a devotion of the heart. Children give their hearts easily. With joy, they just believe in stuff. Faith like a child.

Psalm 53:2-3 NLT

Paul repeats these words again to the Romans,
Romans 3:10-12

But Paul goes on to explain these verses with a New Covenant understanding,
Romans 3:20

Romans 3:23-24

No one is "good enough." All have sinned and fall short in the sight of God.

When God looks down from heaven, what does He see? Brokenness, sadness, pain, sin. These are not things that He wants for His children.

Psalm 53:4-5

Here, the song shifts from the brokenness of us all, to the undisputable fact that God will come to defend His children. God looks down from heaven and watches over all. He sees sin and sadness and pain. Not one who does good.

But He also see His children. The ones who acknowledge Him with their hearts. Those are the ones He watches over, He rescues, and He defends.

This is the Good News and the message of Jesus Christ:
Romans 10:9-11

Those "fools" who chose otherwise will experience terror. They will be scattered and broken. Make no mistake, that is a scary thought, and one that we want to make sure and be on the right side of.

Psalm 53:5 KJV

Verse 5 is one of the differences between Psalm 14 and Psalm 53. Some Bible commentators suggest that Israel was being attacked or threatened in some way because of the wording of this verse.

David calls upon a promise God made to His people when they were following Him and being obedient. God promised to "create fear, where there was no fear" in their enemies. It happened many times in the Old Testament.

Leviticus 26:36-37 ESV

Was Jerusalem under attack at the time David rewrote this Psalm? Or maybe were they celebrating a time in the past when God had done this?

"Create fear, where there is no fear" (see Joshua 10; 2 Kings 18-19). 1 Samuel 14 is another story of a great victory won by Jonathan and his men where God "created fear where there was no fear." Jonathan was King Saul's son and David's best friend. Was David remembering the friend of his youth when he rewrote this song?

Psalm 53:6 NLT

The "restoration of Mount Zion" is ultimately the return of the Savior to His people. God's people have always rested in the fact that God will return. He has not abandoned us. He will come back and claim what is His. God will restore His people, and we will shout for joy upon His return.

Revelation 22:12-13

Acts 1:9-11

Revelation 1:7-8

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 54: God is my deliverer

March 30, 2021

Read Psalm 54

The Lord Upholds My Life

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "Is not David hiding among us?"

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 54 is a contemplative song, a *Maskil* or *Maschil*, written by David. According to the title, this is a song with stringed instruments, and sings of another time David was betrayed.

The Bible records the Ziphites betraying David and his men to King Saul on two different occasions.

1 Samuel 23:19-20

1 Samuel 26:1-2

Bible scholars believe David wrote Psalm 54 after he learned the Ziphites had betrayed him in the first instance, as recorded in 1 Samuel 23. Read the stories in 1 Samuel 23 & 26.

David was uncertain of his standing in the court, in hiding, or literally running from Saul for eight to ten years of his life. He became king after Saul's death when he was around thirty years old. History records that David was between twenty and twenty-two when he ran from place to place trying to escape the craziness of his father-in-law (also his best friend's father, not to mention the anointed king over his people). The Bible records a couple of times when David could have killed King Saul with his own hands and been done with the whole affair. But David knew this was not God's plan, and so, he continued to run, hide, and wait upon the Lord's timing.

David had some trustworthy folks around him during this time, people who were committed to him. The Bible talks about his mighty warriors (the "Three" and the "Thirty," 2 Samuel 23), also his brothers and their households joined him at some point.

But throughout that difficult time, and the rest of his life as well, David sought out God first. This psalm is one of those instances.

When he was unsure what to do, he asked God. When he was afraid, he went to God. When people betrayed him even though he had done nothing wrong, he went to God.

Psalm 54:1-3—Selah.

David begins this psalm with two things: he calls upon the name of God and upon His strength. David believed there was nothing more reassuring, nothing safer, nothing more powerful than God's name. David knew the name of God because David had a personal relationship with Him.

Who do you call upon when you are in need? Whose strength do you rely upon? There is One who is strong enough, who is always present and always listening for the cry of His children.

It's interesting that many Old Testament writers said things like "hear me, God," "listen to me, God."

Here are a couple of examples; When Nehemiah heard there were still a remnant of God's people in Jerusalem during the exile,
Nehemiah 1:5-6a

The prophet Isaiah called upon God to save the people from the evil Assyrian king,
Isaiah 37:17

When Daniel prayed for God's people to be released from captivity in Babylon,
Daniel 9:18-19

God's eyes are never closed, and He always hears. What does this mean then?

Sometimes in the most desperate of times, in the dead of night, in our greatest time of need, isn't it just enough to know that someone is listening?

The Ziphites were Israelites. They were David's countrymen, but they had clearly taken a side between David and King Saul. David was God's chosen king over Israel. He just awaited for the moment that God would place him over Saul. There were people who knew this and believed God's Word, and there were people who did not and followed Saul.

These people of Ziph had "no regard for God."

Interestingly, both times the Ziphites betrayed him, David had an opportunity to attack and kill Saul (1 Samuel 24, 26). David was just a man; he was only human. He probably considered taking Saul's life and ending all the running and hiding. But he knew, because he had a personal relationship with God, that it was not time.

David gives us, repeatedly, a reminder to wait on the Lord. Are you in a season of pain? Of sadness? Of unknowns? All we can do during those times is seek the Lord first . . . and wait.

Psalms 54:4-7

The reigning Lord, the great Adonai is in the camp of my defenders. Here was a greater champion than any of the three mighties, or than all the valiant men who chose David for their captain. The Psalmist was very confident, he felt so thoroughly that his heart was on the Lord's side that he was sure God was on his side.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David calls upon the Name of the Lord and upon His strength. Then he stands firm on the faithfulness of God. He knows that God is his help, and that God will sustain him.

When we pray, let's be bold like David. When we call upon the Lord for help, let's stand with surety upon God's faithfulness. He will help. He will heal. He will save us. God is faithful, then, now, and always.

And then, after claiming God's faithfulness, praise Him.

This little Psalm teaches us so much about prayer.

"God, I call upon your name and your strength. Hear me, see me, know me. You are the only One I need. You are faithful to me. I wait for your timing, and I praise your Name forever."

The Lord will in due time save his people, and in the meantime, he sustains them, and bears them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1772-1714

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 55: cast your burden on the Lord

April 2, 2021

Read Psalm 55

*Cast Your Burden on the LORD
To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.
A Maskil of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This is another contemplative psalm, a meditation, a *maskil* or *maschil*, written for the choir director and meant for worship with a background of instruments.

There is nothing that firmly links this psalm to a specific event in David's life. But upon reading it, clearly, he is not safe; he is in great distress. Someone close to him has betrayed him. He remembers his time running and hiding in the wilderness, so the setting is probably during his reign as king.

Whatever is going on for David, he is afraid and hurt and very angry.

Commentators think this was possibly written during the time of David's son Absalom's rebellion against him, when his friend and trusted advisor, Ahithophel, also betrayed him. That story is found in 2 Samuel 15-18.

It would be idle to fix a time and find an occasion for this Psalm with any dogmatism. It reads like a song of the time of Absalom and Ahithophel. It was after David had enjoyed peaceful worship, when he was or had just been a dweller in a city, and when he remembered his former roaming in the wilderness. Although it seems to us to relate to that mournful era when the King was betrayed by his trusted counsellor. The spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing on the glowing canvas of the Psalm. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 55:1-3 NLT

Can't you just feel David's fear? He cries to God: listen to me! Don't ignore me! Listen and answer me!

He is overwhelmed and about to break. You can hear the turmoil in his head and heart. He is distressed to the point that he is afraid God is not even listening.

The greatest fear to a believer, like David, is that God will or had turned His back. When Jesus was dying on the cross, the Father did turn away,
Mark 15:33-34

At that moment, God had turned his face from his Son. It's not that God stopped loving his Son, it's that Jesus had taken all the sins of the world onto his shoulders. God could not look upon him. There is not a more terrible place to be—David knew this, we know this—than to be where God isn't, to be where God does not see you.

The Reverend Billy Graham said it this way,

But in reality, His words point to something far different. They point to the fact that when Jesus died on the cross, all our sins—without exception—were transferred to Him. He was without sin, for He was God in human flesh. But as He died all our sins were placed on Him, and He became the final and complete sacrifice for our sins. And in that moment, He was banished from the presence of God, for sin cannot exist in God's presence. His cry speaks of this truth; He endured the separation from God that you and I deserve.

-Billy Graham, Reverend, 1918-2018

King David did not know of Jesus and His great sacrifice for us all, but Jesus died for him as well. And because of His sacrifice, believers will never face separation from God.

Psalm 55:4-8 NLT

David is panicking. He is afraid for his life. He wishes for escape. It's interesting that David didn't ask for strength to face this trial, he asks for escape. David needed to get away. And the place he wanted to "get away to" was the wilderness. Maybe he was seeking to fly back in time to when he hid in the wilderness from King Saul, where God was faithful to him repeatedly.

Selah/Interlude.

Did he stop and contemplate a time when God was faithful in the wilderness? Did he stop to calm himself by visualizing a place that he felt close to God's arms of safety? Was it the noise and clamor of the city that he wanted to run from, to a place he could talk quietly with God, breathe in peace again?

Even a king wishes to run away for a time.

But he could not. Rebellion was at his doorstep. The lives and the livelihoods of his people were at stake. Same goes for us, as believers. We weather the storms rather than run from them. We weather the storms because God uses them to reveal Himself, His love, and His faithfulness to those around us, who are watching.

And in the storm, we stand upon the strength of God.

We are all too apt to utter this vain desire, for vain it is; no wings of doves or eagles could bear us away from the sorrows of a trembling heart. Inward grief knows nothing of peace. Moreover, it is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 55:9-11 NLT

The city of Jerusalem is in chaos. 2 Samuel 15-17 speaks of a time when this happened; when David's son caused mistrust and then rebellion with his words, and David's friend and counselor caused confusion and chaos with his.

Alas, poor Jerusalem, to be thus the victim of sin and shame! Virtue reviled and vice regnant! Her solemn assemblies broken up, her priests fled, her king banished, and troops of reckless villains parading her streets, sunning themselves on her walls, and vomiting their blasphemies in her sacred shrines.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

2 Samuel 15:31b

And how quickly did Ahithophel and Absalom fall.

Psalm 55:12-14 NLT

The bitterness of a friend's betrayal. David could fight against an enemy, but the heartbreak of a friend's betrayal is too much. This is a man David walked with and talked with; a man that David fellowshiped and worshipped with in the temple.

Betrayal.

Psalm 55 speaks of David's pain, fear, and sadness over a friend's betrayal, but it clearly foreshadows another betrayal.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He washed the disciples' feet, including the one who would betray Him.
 John 13:19

Jesus quoted David's words from Psalm 41, another song of betrayal. Judas Iscariot walked with the Messiah; he saw the miracles; he witnessed the love.

Psalm 55:15 NLT

It's interesting that David no longer calls out his former friend in this harsh verse. Is he talking about someone else? Are there some who he asks God to curse harshly, but not others? We will not know for certain, but David's words here are a call upon God for vengeance.

Whatever is happening is so deeply troubling that David calls for the ultimate punishment. He calls upon the curse that Moses used to end the rebellion of Korah. A time when the ground opened up and swallowed these men and their possessions!

Numbers 16:30

David called for God to have vengeance, to thwart the plans of evil, and to rescue His people. David saw this betrayal as the ultimate dishonor to God Himself. After all, God promised the throne to David. It is in the Word;

the people knew it and believed it. Ahithophel and Absalom knew what God said, knew He chose David. So, when they sought their own gain and to supplant David, they were ultimately fighting the will God.
Psalm 55:16-19 NLT

"As for me, I will call upon the LORD."

David stops and talks to himself for a moment. It's as if he straightens up from his pleading posture, wipes his eyes, and says: "but whatever happens, I will still choose God." David knew how the story ends, and he had faith in God's faithfulness. Come what may.

As this exemplifies the contrast of their characters, so it will foretell the contrast of their ends--the righteous shall ascend to their God, the wicked shall sink to ruin. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Come what may, I will call upon the Lord morning, noon, and night. He hears me. He keeps me safe. He has ransomed my life.

David speaks of enemies in the previous section, but now he speaks of one, his former companion. David is worried for his people, but here, he shows his own broken heart.

Psalm 55:20-21—check these verses out in The Message

David ended his song with a return to the faithfulness of the Lord.

Psalm 55:22-23—Cast your cares on the LORD and He will take care of you.

Let us pause and remember: God does not intend us to live our lives alone. He created us for relationship with Him. The hole we often feel in our hearts is meant only for Him.

Are you burdened today? Do you carry the sting of betrayal? Are you worried about the evil around you? Do the sins of the world weigh heaving upon your heart? Do you wish to fly away on dove's wings?

Let the words of Jesus bring you peace and let it go:

Matthew 11:28-30

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 56: a silent dove in a distant place

April 5, 2021

Read Psalm 56

*For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks."
Of David. A miktam.
When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

To the director of music, a song in remembrance of hard times. Sung to a specific tune: *A Dove on Distant Oaks* (NIV), *The Silent Dove in Distant Lands* (NKJV), *The Dove on Far-off Terebinths* (ESV). *The Terebinths* is a cashew like tree.

A miktam or *michtam* is another musical term, some believe means "golden" others say may be a word that means "to cover," like something in secret. Like a "golden secret" song!

Read 1 Samuel 21:10-15 for the story of David in Gath.

If you remember this time in history, David had received help from the priest in Nob, food and a weapon. The priests and their families were later murdered by Doeg the Edomite who was trying to impress Saul.

To those Bible history buffs, here's a fun fact: the sword that the priest in Nob gave David to defend himself with was none other than the sword he had taken from the giant Philistine named Goliath. David had used that sword to cut off Goliath's head. When David was refreshed and had the weapon at his side, he continued to flee from Saul.

And where did he carry that sword to you may ask? To Gath, one of the royal cities of the Philistines. In fact, Gath was Goliath's hometown. Huh, oops . . .

Did he forget that? Probably not. That event would be a highlight in David's list of great battles.

Maybe he felt that was the best place to hide. Was he hiding near Gath because it was the last place that Saul would look for him? Only to be found by Philistine soldiers—carrying the weapon that defeated their great warrior, Goliath?

Whatever exactly happened, Gath was probably the scariest place to be.

Psalm 34 was written after David escaped from Gath. Psalm 56 was written to God while he was still captive. Read Psalm 56:1-4—this is a good one to memorize!

David is alone, afraid, and in enemy hands. But he puts that aside and trusts in the Lord.

"When I am afraid, I will trust you. I praise you because you have promised to always watch over me. I trust you, God."

What a beautiful reminder for us that when this life is hard, lean into the promises and faithfulness of God. We have nothing to be afraid of because we are children of the One True King.

Psalm 56:4

These words are repeated throughout the Bible, in David's Psalms and in the New Testament.

Hebrews 13:6

Romans 8:31

The truth is, as believers, the whole world *can* be against us. We could find ourselves in enemy territory carrying the sword of the enemy on our hip. "Mere mortals" *can* hurt us.

In his commentary on this psalm, Charles Spurgeon points out the idea that we often, as believers, live in a sort of "twilight" where light and dark exist at the same time. We can be afraid while trusting God simultaneously. We can be full of fear and still praise God.

Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals or spirituals, from devils or men, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David says, "when I am afraid, I will trust in God." Then he says, "I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?"

Even a great warrior, God's chosen king over Israel, a "man after My Own heart," was afraid sometimes. David took that fear to the Lord, and the Lord always gave him back courage.

Has God done that for you? Keep calling on Him, and He will.

Psalm 56:5-8—read this in the NLT

David is in physical distress. But he is also under constant stress, pressure, and worry. He cannot escape this worry and stress, but God is David's best friend, and the One he turns to when he's had enough.

Whatever is happening to David in the hands of the Philistines is not a vacation. It's physical violence and emotional strain. But God is David's defender, and David knows that God will come to his aid. God is faithful and God will defend His children. David prays for God to "bring them down."

While God does rescue David from the Philistines, He doesn't "bring them down" during this time. However, He does later, when David is king.

Psalm 56:8—read this one in the NASB

God doesn't need a bottle to store our tears in or a book to write important stuff down in. He is God. But this verse isn't the only one that shows that God cares about us *that* much that He keeps track. He *does* know our tears. He *does* know our wanderings and our miseries and our sorrows.

Jesus said,
Matthew 10:29-31

Revelation 5:8

We perhaps are so confused by a long course of trouble, that we hardly know where we have or where we have not been; but the omniscient and considerate Father of our spirits remembers all in detail; for he has counted them over as men count their gold, for even the trial of our faith is precious in his sight.

Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 56:9-11 NLT

How does David have such confidence in the Lord? How does he *know* that God is on his side?

I think there are two reasons: (1) because God says so in His Word and (2) because God has been faithful to him before.

You and I can stand upon that same faith that God is on our side because it says so in His Word. God has promised to defend His children; He has promised that evil will not remain forever; He has promised to love us and be there for us, and He has promised that we will be with Him some day in heaven.

So truly, as children of the Most High, we have nothing to be afraid of.

Psalm 56:12-13 NLT

David writes with certainty of his deliverance. Can you claim this same faith?

God turned David's fear and trials into strength and trust, and David was already sure of his salvation and planning his sacrifice to the Lord in thanksgiving. How wonderful!

Be sure of your salvation, my friend. Thank and praise God for it.

Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path that only faith can tread
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And Jesus said,
John 8:12

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 57: a golden psalm

April 9, 2021

Read Psalm 57

Let Your Glory Be over All the Earth

To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy.

A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 57 is a song to the tune of *Altaschith* or "Destroy Not."

A *miktam* or *michtam* is a "golden psalm," a "jewel psalm," or a "hidden psalm." Any of these meanings make sense for the time written. Maybe these "jewels" are David's favorite songs, and the title means "hide these in our hearts for understanding."

David fled from King Saul during most of his 20's, and he ended up in two different caves, according to the Bible. Scholars are unsure which cave David was in when he wrote this psalm. Read the two stories here:

1 Samuel 22 (David in the cave of Adullam)

1 Samuel 24 (David in the cave of En Gedi).

Interestingly, David had several opportunities to take matters into his own hands and end his running by killing Saul. But David had a personal relationship with God. David knew it was not God's will for Saul to die at his hands.

1 Samuel 26:9-11a

"Do not destroy" or "Destroy Not." Psalms 57, 58, 59, and 75 are set to this specific tune. Some commentators refer to these Psalms as the "Destroy Not Psalms."

Psalm 57:1-3 NLT

If David is in the Cave of Adullam, then he has just escaped from the king of the Philistines. He is alone and desperate. Now he's hiding from Saul and his soldiers *and* the Philistines from Gath!

In the still darkness of that cave, he cries to God for help. God is his protection—not the cave, not his own strength, not his own will power. God is who David needs.

When we cannot see the sunshine of God's face, it is blessed to cower down within the shadow of his wings. Until these calamities be overpassed. Evil will pass away, and the eternal wings will abide over us until then. Blessed be God, our calamities are a matter of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Jesus used this analogy about the Jewish people;
 Matthew 23:37

David's great faith is such a reminder to us nearly three millennia later: God Most High will fulfill His purpose in us.

It will happen.

Despite the circumstances swirling around us that confuse and disorient us. Despite the pain and the evil lurking all around us, God *will* see His purpose to completion in you and me. He did in David despite years and years of persecution and trial. He will do the same for you and me.
 Psalm 57:3—read this in The Message

God is faithful. His "generous love," His "unfailing love," His "lovingkindness;" God's *hesed* covenant love given to Abraham, poured out upon David, is available to you and to me.

Psalm 57:4

David is certain that those hunting him are stronger than he is. He talks of them in this verse as being the ultimate hunter with the strongest of weapons. Were there really lions prowling around outside the cave at night? Or is this a metaphor for David's fear? Whatever the reference, those seeking David's life are powerful and scary, but their words are the worst of all.

Psalm 57:5 KJV

This is the refrain or the chorus of the song, repeated at the end. Interestingly, David just shared the metaphor of a lion's den, then he steps free from the den and shouts praise to God. Or maybe he just stands in its midst and shouts anyway.

David is standing in the pit with lions and all he needs to do for strength and reassurance is to look up.
 2 Timothy 1:7

James 5:13

Colossians 3:2

God has filled His Word with examples of men and women who faced the trials of the world with joy, love, purpose, and hope. That is from God and God alone.

Psalm 57:6 NLT—Interlude.

God saw to it that David's enemies fell into their own traps. Of course, this wasn't always evident to David at the time. He was twenty years old, alone, and fleeing for his life. Much later he could look back and see how God protected him and how his enemies fell into their own traps they laid for him.

But David wrote this song knowing God *would* do this. Such faith.

That's it, that's the key, maybe you have seen God's faithfulness evident in your life. Maybe it's immediate. Maybe you can look back and see how God came through for you. Or maybe you're in the midst of the unknown right now.

If you are, claim God's faithfulness and know God *will* come through for you.

Psalm 57:7-11 NLT

How can David have such confidence when he is in the midst of trials?

David is confident that all he needs is God. Even if God does not deliver him yet, they walk side by side. He is never alone.

We are never alone.

David is singing of God's faithfulness even before being delivered. Then he has such confidence that he vows upon this deliverance to "sing your praises among the nations!" And wow, is that still coming true. David's songs are still celebrated around the world today.

God's faithfulness, His unfailing love is higher than the heavens and reaches beyond the clouds. And all of that is a gift to us. Claim it.

Psalm 57:7-11 The Message

When David was driven out in the heathen lands he would not only not worship their gods. but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavor to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savor of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still praising God among the people and

singing to him among the nations; for all good people make use of his words in praising God.
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Sing the praises of God, and He will overflow your heart with peace, joy, and hope.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 58: waiting for the Lord's judgment

April 12, 2021

Read Psalm 58

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A song for the choir director with a specific tune in mind. A *miktam* or *michtam* is a literary or musical term of some sorts. But the tune *Altaschith*: Do Not Destroy or Destroy Not is found ascribed to four psalms; 57, 58, 59, and 75.

While Bible scholars are not in agreement on the meaning of either *miktam* or *altaschith*, we can still discuss some of their theories. Charles Spurgeon calls the *miktam* of David "his Golden Secret." Some refer to *miktam* as some sort of engraving. Were the words engraved or etched onto the walls of the cave David was hiding in? Were these songs meant to be etched into our hearts like a most treasured secret jewel?

The *altaschith* or Destroy Not Psalms were written when David had the opportunity to harm King Saul, to take matters into his own hands, but he didn't. He left the judgment to God, in God's timing. Does the inscription refer to one of those times David did not destroy Saul or were they written later during Absalom's betrayal?

Whatever the exact meaning or reason, these songs are lumped together in God's Word by the titles, and therefore, were probably written around the same time. Jewish tradition would then place them during David's 20's, running for his life, hiding from Saul and his soldiers. He was alone and desperate, but certain that his God walked beside him and would rescue him.

The English minister Matthew Henry makes this interesting assumption:

It is the probable conjecture of some that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law, upon which he was condemned unheard, and attainted as a traitor, by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and then proclaimed, 'qui caput garit lupinum- an outlawed wolf,' whom any man might kill and no man might protect. The elders, in order to curry favor with Saul, having passed this bill of attainder, it is supposed that David penned this psalm on the occasion. -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Read 1 Samuel 24 and 26 for the stories of David's opportunities to take matters into his own hands yet remembered God's decree.

Psalm 58:1-5 NLT

David was affected by the corruption in his own government in many ways. So much so, that he's writing a song to call it out for what it is.

Maybe, while hiding in the cave, a messenger came with news of a meeting condemning David as a traitor. David was outraged. He was angry about the unfairness of it all. There are people who speak out evil and lies, and then there are the silent ones that just go along with the lies. Sometimes the latter are the most painful. David felt betrayed by his own people

David discusses the idea of original sin; that we are born sinful. These evil men who have persecuted him, have always been full of sin and lies. And their lies hurt others; they lead people astray. Their lies are deadly.

But the right One was on David's side. This is where having a relationship with God is so important. He is the only One that matters. What He thinks about us is the only thing that matters. When we stand before Him someday, it won't matter what other people thought or said or did, it will only matter that our hearts were in the right place with the Lord.

Psalm 58:6-9 NLT

David calls to God for help. David calls for the justice of God rather than of sinful, evil men. His words here are harsh. But what he calls for is what God will do at the end of days.

Breaking teeth and smashing jaws takes away the bite of the beast.

One can well understand how the banished son of Jesse, while poisoned by the venomous slander of his foes, and worried by their cruel power, should appeal to heaven for a speedy and complete riddance from his enemies. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The "stillborn child who never sees the sun" is a shocking reference. Here David states that it would better that these people had never even been born. Are there people in history like that?

God *will* sweep them away.

David is angry and calls upon God's promise of judgment. He may not have seen that judgment, but he believed in it. And it stayed his own hand.

Psalm 58:10-11 NLT

The godly will rejoice in the justice of the Lord. Someday we will see this, but our rejoicing will be in God, because of His goodness and His faithfulness.

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He will have no hand in meting out, neither will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgments of God, and he shall rejoice to see justice triumphant.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The righteous will shout for joy when God removes evil from this world. We wait upon this very promise. We should never soften this understanding in our own hearts or when we speak of God to others. Because God *will* punish evil.

God is goodness and kindness and faithfulness. He knows what He's doing.
Isaiah 55:8-9 NLT

1 Chronicles 16:33-34 NLT

Revelation 12:12 NLT

David is alone and afraid. He sings to God to ease his heart. He complains about the unfairness of things and about the frustration and anger he feels toward those who persecute him. He calls upon God to bring justice. Then he rests in the fact that God will.

Even if it was not at that very moment, nor ten years later, David knew that God would judge the wicked of the earth. He waited on the Lord.

Wait for the Lord.
Daniel 7:13-14

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 59

April 17, 2021

Read Psalm 59

Deliver Me from My Enemies

To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 59 is a song for the choir director of the temple to a tune, *Altaschith*- "Do Not Destroy" or "Destroy Not." A *Miktam* or *Michtam* which is a sort of literary or musical term that Bible scholars don't totally understand because the word is ancient and unused anymore.

But the 19th century English pastor Charles Spurgeon calls the handful of psalms with this title: *David's Golden Secret Psalms*.

The historical scene can be found in 1 Samuel 19:11-18. This psalm may be the earliest one written during David's days of fleeing from Saul. David was young—maybe twenty years old—and thus began his decade long struggle as a fugitive.

Saul is king over the people of Israel. He is also David's father-in-law and the father of his best friend. David had a high rank in Saul's army and led men into battle where "tens of thousands" were destroyed. He killed the famous giant of the Philistines, Goliath, when he was a teenager. He was also sometimes the musician that Saul called upon to sing and play music for him.

And now, after all of that, he had to run.
Psalm 59:1-5 NLT—Interlude.

Rescue me! Protect me! Save me! Help me!

Here we see David's heart and his deep relationship with God. Who do you call upon during your time of need? Do you cry out similar words?

Psalm 59:1 KJV

David calls upon the Lord using several different Hebrew names in Psalm 59: God, LORD, LORD God of Heaven's Armies, God of Israel. How beautiful is that?

Saul had more cause to fear than David had, for the invincible weapon of prayer was being used against him, and heaven was being aroused to give him battle.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

We, as believers, have the most invaluable weapon at our disposal, the Name of the Lord. We know Him. We know His Name. We can call upon Him at any time. We are never alone.

David was in hiding, far away from home, with an army after him. Afraid? Yes. But hopeless? No, he had God on his side.

Psalm 59:6-10 NLT

David compares the men that Saul sent to attack him as wild dogs. In ancient eastern cities, wild dogs were dangerous, vicious scavengers—a metaphor that the Israelites understood. But these specific dogs *spoke*, as well. They spread lies and hollered insults.

David is angry at their disregard for God. He sees their attack on him as an attack on the Lord. He has done no wrong, and he is in fact God's chosen one to rule over Israel at the proper time. Therefore, the fact that these men would seek to kill him by following Saul's order is an attack against God.

And David does not deal well with blasphemy against his God.

He knows that when a man believes he answers to none but himself, bad things happen.

When men have none to call them to account, there is no accounting to what they will do. He who neither fears God nor regards man set out on errands of oppression with gusto and uses language concerning it of the most atrociously cruel sort. David must have been in a singular plight when he could hear the foul talk and hideous braggings of Saul's black guards around his house.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

But God is our strength in difficult times. God was David's strength—like a high tower, a fortress. In His unfailing love, His faithfulness throughout time, His lovingkindness, His covenant *hesed* love, David is protected. So are we.

Psalm 59:11-13 NLT—Interlude.

David prays a soldier's prayer here. God is his shield and his high tower, his mighty fortress—a soldier's prayer. David also asks God to have vengeance and deliver, but always and only for the glory of God. David asks that his deliverance be God's will and God's doing, so that the people of Israel and the whole world will know the name of the Lord.

It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our defense, our high place, in whom we shall be safe.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

59:14-15 NLT

David repeats his thoughts from verse 6. He compares, again, those hunting him to a pack of wild dogs. But these wild dogs go to bed hungry.

Psalm 59:16-17 NLT

David is just beginning his life on the run, yet he sings of God's power and unfailing love. He sings of God's strength and deliverance. How? How does he have such faith?

David always praised the Lord. In fear, in worry, in running and fleeing, David praised the Lord. Oh, to have such courage and devotion. Let us praise the Lord.

May this psalm from the heart of David inspire us all to love God more deeply, to know God more deeply, and to tell others about that covenant *hesed* unfailing love.

Isaiah 54:10

Zephaniah 3:17

John 3:16

Romans 8:37-39

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 60: hope in the Lord

Read Psalm 60

He Will Tread Down Our Foes

To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a long and interesting heading.

A song for the choirmaster to be used for worship in the temple. A *miktam* or *michtam* of David: one of David's golden psalms; his most treasured songs. The *miktam* is a song of instruction, and something to be remembered and kept in the heart of the people. Set to a tune: *Shushan Eduth* or "Lily of the Testimony" or "The Lily of the Covenant."

The historical time frame is interesting. The battles referred to in this heading place the timeline early in David's reign. He was king, but young and still going into battle himself. In his early reign as king, David had to deal with the surrounding peoples who wanted to hurt the Israelites. Things eventually became peaceful for him later in life, but early on, there was lots of fighting, lots of bloodshed, lots of unrest around Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 8 records many successes in battle and includes a section on David's trusted officials. 2 Samuel 10 records David's success over Ammon and Syria. 1 Chronicles 18 gives more details about some of these victories, his officials, and specifically mentions the "Valley of Salt."

However, none of these chapters mention a defeat like that which Psalm 60 laments. This shouldn't be a surprise, defeats are not written and sung about usually. But with all the fighting and all the unrest, there were for sure moments of failure, loss, and fear. For sure, there were times when David doubted that he was doing the right thing and was in fear for the lives of his men and himself, in fear of going against the will of God.

This Psalm is just that; a setback, a plea for help, a fear of being abandoned.

Read Psalm 60:1-4 in a different translation

Don't you love that God would include this in His Word? Life isn't all success and victory.

David had suffered a defeat, but to him a defeat meant that God was displeased. This is how confident David was in his relationship with God: God would not allow him to be defeated.

The Israelites were broken and confused, and David was shaken and afraid. But he goes back to God knowing, believing in, and resting in God's ultimate faithfulness. The banner is still raised. The people still trusted in God. They would still stand upon the faithfulness of God's promises.

Selah/ Interlude. Stop, pause, think about this.

Do you still raise your banner for God even in the dark times? When the world weighs you down, when suffering makes it hard to stand, do you still hold your hands up to your Father in heaven?

Unfurl our banners in the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have given us the gospel; the very fact that he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ involves the certainty of victory.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 60:5-8 NLT

No matter how bad things are, the answer is to give it all over to God in prayer, and then to remember God's faithfulness. God has been faithful. He has answered prayers. If He has, then why do we worry and wonder if He will again?

Shechem, the Valley of Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah—the land of Israel holds a special place in God's heart. We know this. David knew this. David knew that God had given the land to the Israelites because His Word says so, and because David knew God personally.

The nations of Moab, Edom, and Philistia were the constant threat during this time. David's words call upon God to do what He said He would do and subjugate these nations under Israel.

David remembered God's promises.

David does that a lot in his psalms, a good example for us. When we don't know what to pray or our thoughts are all jumbled up or we are lost and afraid, repeat God's Words and promises in prayer. This is why knowing and memorizing scripture is so important.

Psalm 60:9-12 NLT

The "fortified city" was the great pride of the ancient Edomites—the rock fortress of Petra. The city itself was built into the rock of a hillside and controlled trade between northern Africa and Mesopotamia.

David had defeated the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, but he could not conquer the fortified rock city of Petra. Joab and his brother Abishai led David's army and killed 12,000 soldiers of Edom trying to get into this city.

"Human help is useless . . ."

No strength of arms, not the strongest fighting men, nor battle of wills could bring peace to the land. Only through God's help would an end to the fighting be possible.

David knew, through his personal relationship with God, that He did not desire for Israel to just talk about the problems between nations. God had called David to subdue the nations around Israel.

The end of this psalm is a prophecy: "God will do mighty things. He will trample down our enemies."

That is great faith. Are you fighting a battle and it feels like you are being swept away? Are you fighting to enter your own rock fortress of Petra? Do you feel the enemy is winning and holding you down? Do you feel called by God, but due to oppression, you cannot stand?

Take heart. Sing the promises of God. Prophecy of your deliverance.
Philippians 1:6

Hope in God is the best principle of true courage.
Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 61: the Rock that is higher than I

April 14, 2021

Read Psalm 61

Lead Me to the Rock

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

To the chief musician upon *Neginah*. This Hebrew word is singular and means some sort of stringed instrument, like a harp. But because it's just one instrument, maybe this is a song meant for private worship. Just time between David and God.

The time in history is unknown for sure, but most scholars believe that David is king (verse 6) and that he is outside Jerusalem and longing for home (verse 2). Maybe David wrote this from the hill he was in exile upon during the betrayal of his son Absalom. The sad story of David's son Absalom can be read in 2 Samuel 15-18.

This Psalm is a pearl. It is little, but precious. To many a mourner it has furnished utterance when the mind could not have devised a speech for itself.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 61:1-4 NLT—Interlude.

David opens his prayer in a great cry to God to hear him. Listen to me. Hear me.

Do you ever wonder if God is listening or if He even hears us? Do you ever think—there are so many terrible things going on in the world, how or why would He listen to me? That is *not* how God works. He hears all; He sees all. He knows all. And the thought that He can't, is just us putting limits on God.

The truth is that He wants to hear what's on our hearts, what worries us, what makes us afraid. That is the relationship that He wants with all of His children.

David knew this.

Pharisees may rest in their prayers; true believers are eager for an answer to them: ritualist may be satisfied when they have "said or sung" their litanies and collects, but living children of God will never rest till their supplications have entered the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David felt like he needed to beg God to hear him, maybe because he was far away from home. During Absalom's rebellion David was in exile across the Jordan river some twenty miles from the city of Jerusalem.

Wherever he was, David felt like he was calling to God "from the ends of the earth." Too far away from the tabernacle, too far away from home, his place of comfort and peace. His routine.

The Lord was David's Rock.

Jesus said,
Matthew 7:24-25

Jesus is our rock. The one who is "higher than I."

David remembers that God has been faithful. Maybe he remembers running from King Saul in his younger years, maybe he remembers other times of great need, but here he is again. He needs rescuing, and is certain that because God did it before, He will do it again.

Do you believe that? He was faithful, so He will be faithful again? Why is that so hard for us?
Deuteronomy 7:9

Sweet is it beyond expression to remember the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in our former days, for he is unchangeable, and therefore will continue to guard us from all evil.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

I will rest in the shelter of Your wings.

Selah. Interlude.

Psalm 61:5-8 NLT

David goes from "hear me, God!" to "You have heard my vows." But isn't that how it goes when we spend time talking to God? We may start with worry and fear and heartache, then we pass that burden over to God, and He fills us with something else—

A reminder of His faithfulness. Rest in His assurances. Peace in His presence.

Note, God is a witness to all of our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Here David goes on to ask for something that seems outlandish to us, but it is what God promised to David. He speaks of God's promise to lead His chosen people through David's descendants.

The Old Testament has many references and prophecies of Jesus being born through the line of David. He is often referred to as the "Greater Son" or just the "Son of David." Many of these prophecies were after David's life was over. But here are a couple that David would've known:

Genesis 49:8-12

2 Samuel 7:11-16

David, despite his many sufferings, had a long reign as king over Israel. God watched over him and blessed him. He was blessed with many sons and daughters. He was blessed with loyal friends. And he was blessed eventually with some semblance of peace.

Maybe David was praying for himself in these verses, his lineage. That the people were finally in Jerusalem, they were settled. The ark was settled in the tabernacle. There was peace. Maybe he prayed for that to continue through him and his descendants.

Or maybe David did know that what God meant by these verses was something else. He and God were close. There are so many references to Jesus, the Greater Son of David, in David's songs. Maybe he did know. Maybe God revealed Jesus to David.

Psalm 61:7 KJV

Psalm 61:7 NASB2020

Psalm 61:7 NIV

This is a blessing over Jesus. David was speaking about a Son down his family line, the promise of a "Greater Son."

David opened his song with a cry for help. He closes his song with a promise,
Psalm 61:8 KJV

David's vow was to sing praises to God's name every single day. Let's renew our vows to God every morning. Every day let us wake up and remember God's faithfulness and let us sing of His love.

God daily performs his promises, let us daily perform our vows: he keeps his covenant, let us not forget ours.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 62: a song of silence

April 18, 2021

Read Psalm 62

My Soul Waits for God Alone

To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

There are some who believe David dedicated his songs to the Lord God Himself. To God as *the Choirmaster*. Jeduthun was a musician appointed by David to lead praise to the Lord in the tabernacle.

1 Chronicles 16:39-42

There are no indicators that point to a specific time in David's life except that he is king and, in this psalm, giving orders regarding worship in the tabernacle.

Psalm 62 is a song of God's faithfulness and steadfast love.

Psalm 62:1-4 NLT—Interlude.

"I wait quietly before God."

Some psalms open with shouts of praise or pleas for mercy, not this one. David's heart is quiet. As in other psalms, David does not put his trust in men, nor in himself. David does not trust in his own strength or the strength of men.

God, and God alone, provide him with strength, deliverance, and salvation.

The original is 'only to God is my soul silent.' The presence of God alone could awe his heart into quietude, submission, rest, and acquiescence; but when that was felt, not a rebellious word or thought broke the peaceful silence. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1832-1892

Commentators point out that the Hebrew word *Ak* appears six times in this psalm. Commentators say that this word is almost untranslatable. What that means to us is that the true meaning of the word is lost, but what we can know is that David uses it a lot in this psalm. It is usually translated as *only*, *alone*, or *truly*.

Only God can save. Only God is trustworthy. Only God is a refuge.

Psalm 62:4b NLT

Flattery. Someone is crooked, but David can see right through them. He teaches us to be silent in times like this. The best approach in dealing with gossips, slanderers, or false friends is talking only to God about it, and otherwise keeping our mouths shut.

Not easy to do, in fact, let's pause on that. *Selah, Interlude* pause and reflect upon God's faithfulness.

Psalm 62:5-8 NLT—Interlude.

What beautiful verses about waiting for the Lord. We know, as David knew, that God is faithful. God will see all of our problems and worries through. He will finish what He started. But we must wait. We must rest in the promise that God is faithful and will do this. It is not up to us—not when or how. We just put our trust in the Lord and wait.

God promises He will be faithful.
Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah 40 are the words of God through the prophet Isaiah sent to King Hezekiah. The prophetic words signal that very bad times are ahead for the people. But God's words to the people are those of reassurance in His faithfulness and love.

To wait on the Lord. God is our hope. Our rock. Our salvation. Our fortress. Our victory. Our refuge.

Psalm 62:8 NLT—Interlude.

Verse 8 shows us that whatever was going on for David during this time, there were still good and faithful, God fearing-folks who followed him. He wasn't alone.

Psalm 62:9-12

Commentators point out that the words translated "common people" and "powerful" here, or "low born" and "high born" in other translations, are just two different Hebrew words for "man" or "mankind." Some have tried to understand a different meaning between "low estate" and "high estate," but maybe David was just using poetry to write, like writer vary word choice.

Either way, all are "vapors in the wind;" "lighter than a breath of air;" "less than a vapor."
James 4:14 KJV

While David knew riches and comfort, he also knew poverty and simplicity. In that sense, he was a different kind of monarch. He points out here some things that are the fall of man: the trust in and love of wealth, the desire for wealth, the dishonesty that so often comes around money.

Maybe Paul referenced this verse when he wrote to Timothy,
1 Timothy 6:17-19

Those last words: "So that they may take hold of the life that is truly life!"

The KJV translates this verse as:
1 Timothy 6:19 KJV

All the other translations that I studied seem to refer to this life; "gaining life that is truly life (MSG)," "take hold of the life which is life indeed (RSV)," "take hold of that which is truly life (ESV)," "so that they may take hold of life that is real (HCSB)," "so that they may experience true life (NLT)."

What David and Paul in his letter to Timothy may be referring to the idea of what Jesus spoke of:
Matthew 6:19-20

David, Paul, and Jesus were talking about our true life in heaven. How we choose to live our lives on earth most definitely affects our eternal lives in ways that we do not understand. But also, as you can see with the varying translations, there is a "true life" and "a life worth living" while we are here on earth. David knew this. Paul knew this. Jesus spoke of this.

So, let's walk this life with our eyes on heaven while also remembering that God will provide for us with a "life that is real and worth living" here on earth. Or simply: God will give us purpose here.

Psalms 62:11-12 NIV

And this is what is truly on David's heart. He ends his song with a summary of God in his eyes. The two things that David knows about God are His power and His mercy.

David ends with his favorite description of God, the beautiful Old Testament word *hesed*: *lovingkindness, mercy, faithfulness, God's covenant love throughout time.*

Isn't it amazing, this picture of God's *hesed* love mixed with the power of a Creator God?

Man, neither helps us nor rewards us; God will do both. In him power and grace are eternally resident; our faith should therefore patiently hope and quietly wait, for we shall surely see the salvation of God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The 5 Solas of the Protestant Reformation: *Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Soli Deo Gloria, Sola Scriptura.*

In grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, God's glory alone, scripture alone.

Philippians 4:13

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 63: I thirst for You

April 21, 2021

Read Psalm 63

A psalm of David. When he was in the desert of Judah.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

My Soul Thirsts for You. *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.*

David spent quite a bit of time in the "wilderness of Judah" (the Judean Desert), which is a desert of rolling, barren hills and deep ravines. The area must've had good hiding places for David, but certainly, the conditions were not five stars.

Bible scholars are unsure if this psalm was written prior to David becoming king when he was running for his life from Saul or later in life when David is king and briefly hides from the betrayal of his son Absalom.

1 Samuel 22-23 tells the story of David's early exile in the Judean Desert. 2 Samuel 15-16 is the story of Absalom's rebellion and David's brief escape also into the Judean Desert.

Psalm 63:1-5 NLT

Psalm 63:1 NKJV—so beautiful.

David starts his day early, and he starts it with God. David is a "man after God's own heart," God said so Himself (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). The reminder of this, that God said this about David, should cause us to desire a similar relationship.

So, let's be like David and seek God first thing in the morning.

Observe the eagerness implied with the time mentioned; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up at cockcrow to meet his God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

While David hides in the hot, arid desert, there is nothing that he desires more than God. May we seek our Father similarly. May we seek God earnestly, early in the morning. What better way to begin our day, then with our Father first—before anything else becomes important.

Are you thirsty? Are you walking through a desert? Are you hiding in the wilderness? David might tell you that those are the places and times where the face of God was most evident and seen most clearly when eyes and heart are open to Him. When all other distractions are gone.

Psalm 63:3 HCSB—so simple.

David says that the Lord's faithful love, His lovingkindness, His unfailing love, God's *hesed* covenant love was more important to him than his own life. David would not last a second with God.

Can we say the same?

Psalm 63:6-8 NLT

David begins his morning with God and meditates on his word during the night. I don't imagine that David slept much. Whether he was twenty years old and hiding alone in a cave with the weight of worry on his shoulders, or he was fifty and the weight of managing a kingdom and his son's betrayal upon his heart. Many of David's psalms speak of this need for God first thing in the morning and at night while trying to sleep.

And not just "sometime in the night."

Read the English Standard Version here of Psalm 63:6

There were probably three different "watches in the night." Someone had to stay up and watch over the camp of sleeping individuals. David was awake during them all and using that time to speak with God and think about God.

That is probably something we can relate to. Do you see the "watches of the night" while you struggle to get comfortable enough or stop thinking and worrying long enough to close your eyes? Do you glance at the clock and see the times when three shift changes might have happened?

David did and his recommendation: meditate on God and His Word, think about Him.

God is our helper. God will give us joy within in the shadow of His wings. We can cling to Him during our dark days or nights, because He is strong, and His hold is secure.

Psalm 63:9-11 NLT

David sought God out for comfort and defense, but he still had men seeking to kill him. Whether he was facing Saul and all the king's men or Absalom and his rebellion of thousands of soldiers, David was still worried and afraid. He was still hiding. He was still far from home.

This section of verses is a prophecy of sorts. David knew that God would be faithful to His promises. David just needed to wait. In either of the timelines, God did provide David safety, defense, and victory. Saul died by the sword, his own sword actually. Those who followed Saul perished and were "food for jackals"—the scavengers of the middle east. Absalom died by the spear and some twenty thousand of his followers on the battlefield, also food for scavengers.

God was faithful to David.

Whatever the circumstances, these verses are David expressing his faith in God's deliverance. In God's time, David would be defended and reinstated as the chosen king of Israel.

David had great faith in an even greater God.

In David's songs, within suffering he will still rejoice in God. While he waits for God, he will praise Him and glorify Him and trust in Him. Strength of arms? Didn't matter and not enough. Strength of will? Not even a thing in these scary circumstances. Strength in a good, all-powerful, faithful God? Absolutely and always.

James 1:2-4

Romans 5:1-5

Romans 8:18

Romans 8:28

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 64

May 3, 2021

Read Psalm 64

For the director music. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Hide Me from the Wicked. To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. (ESV)

Oppressed by the Wicked but Rejoicing in the LORD. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David (NKJV)

Psalm 64 gives no indication of a particular time in David's life. The song is dedicated to the worship director of the tabernacle.

This whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm.

-Matthew Henry, English Minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 64:1-4—read in the NLT

David opens his song with a call upon God to listen, to hear him. God is always listening, but aren't there times when we all cry those same words? God, are you even there? Are you listening? Where are you?

Or maybe, like in the case of this song, we are instead saying, "Okay, God, are you ready to listen now? I have something to say."

Psalm 64:1 ESV—this is awesome.

Dread: to anticipate with great apprehension or fear.

David didn't pray for deliverance from his enemies in this verse, he prayed for deliverance from fear. David was a soldier. He knew what "dread" was and what it could do to the bravest of warriors. And here, in this song, David is beyond afraid and is praying for deliverance from that fear.

Many people suffer day in and day out with fear, even the great king and soldier David did. Maybe we need to take David's lead here and pray more for deliverance from fear and dread, rather than the thing itself.

In the garden of Gethsemane on the night Jesus was betrayed, He spent hours in prayer with the Father (Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46). Jesus prayed for God to change His plans, that He wouldn't have to suffer

and die. But He also submitted to the Father's will. Jesus prayed for strength. He was God, but He was human. He knew everything, yet He was still afraid.

Did Jesus pray for strength and for deliverance from fear?

2 Timothy 1:7

Romans 8:15

John 14:26

Joshua 1:9—as the Israelites are about to follow Joshua into the Promise Land finally.

Even if there are mobs and gangs of evil doers who speak slander against us, God told us and has always told His children to not be afraid. Even if they have tongues as sharp as swords and words that pierce like arrows, God commanded His children to be brave and to stand upon our faith in the one true God.

Psalm 64:5-6 NLT

David is not worrying about one man but many, enough that he is ganged up upon. They believe they are not accountable to anyone, even God. These men are determined to destroy David.

Psalm 64:7-10 NLT

"But God!" David's enemies didn't know his God. His God has arrows too, and a plan. And David's God is always faithful. These two words show David's great faith but show an even greater God. Do we have faith like this? To know that things are hard, and the road ahead may look and feel bleak, but God . . .

But God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, that is, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Romans 12:19

Deuteronomy 32:34-35 KJV

God is faithful, and God will move. His timing and His will are perfect. Sometimes it's hard to wait and trust. David knew this. God has a Master Plan. And, in this Master Plan, He will save and defend us, He will have vengeance, and He will be glorified.

The wicked asked "who will see?" God will see. God will move. Then "everyone will see."

Psalm 64:9—compare the ESV and the Message here.

David once again has gone from fear and praying for help with his fear, to remembering God's faithfulness and the strength of His defense, to knowing that ultimately others will come to know the Lord because of the present sufferings, and finally, praising the Lord.

Psalm 64:10 ESV

God's people will sing for joy and run to His arms for safety.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 65

May 7, 2021

Read Psalm 65 O God of Our Salvation

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A Psalm of David; A Song. This is both a poem and a song, and it is meant for the worship director to use during times of praise in the tabernacle. A song to a God who saves.

A Psalm and a song of David. The Hebrew calls it a Shur and a Mizmor, a combination of psalm and song, which may be best described by the term, "A Lyrical Poem."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Neither the title nor anything within this lyrical poem give any indication of a time or event that led David to write this. There is some thought because of the tone of the song that a great victory was won or a bountiful harvest. Some commentators also believe this to be a prophetic psalm of the end of times.

Psalm 65:1-4—read in a different version

Here are different translations of verse 1:

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed. KJV
There will be silence before You and praise in Zion, God, and the vow will be fulfilled for You. NASB2020
Silence is praise to you, Zion-dwelling God, and also obedience. You hear the prayer in it all. MSG

Is this not a beautiful prophetic verse of the end of times? When God Himself shows up in Jerusalem and all of His children are waiting with great expectation for that moment?

The praises of the saints wait for a signal from the divine Lord, and when He shows His face, they burst forth at once.

We shall continue to wait on, tuning our harps, amid the tears of the earth; but O what harmonies will those be which we will pour forth, when the home bringing is come, and the King shall appear in his glory.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God hears our prayers and our praise. He even hears when we are silent. Even "silence is praise to you" as the verse is translated in the Message. Whether David and the people of his time were talking about a great celebration and thanks to the Lord in the tabernacle on Mount Zion, he was also, whether he realized it or not, referring to the day when we will be present and preparing to praise the Father Himself.

As God's children, we need to remember our vows because some day we will stand before Him. Did we not vow to follow God when we accepted Jesus Christ into our lives? Did we not make a promise of a life in dedication to the Father upon our day of baptism? God is always faithful to us, "for you answer our prayers," let's remember to be faithful to Him in the vows that we took.

Psalm 65:3 NKJV

While David understood and believed in the blood sacrifice and atonement for sin of the Old Testament, he did not know that God would provide another sacrifice, Himself in human form, centuries later.

1 John 2:1-2

God provided the atoning sacrifice just as He said He would, another promise fulfilled.

Psalm 65:5-8 NLT

David speaks of God's faithfulness. God has done "awesome deeds," "awe-inspiring works," "awesome and righteous deeds" for the people of Israel in the past, as David reminds the people often. Remembering God's faithfulness is the best way to battle life's worries and fears.

God has been faithful. God is faithful. Therefore, God will always be faithful.

The child of God in seasons of trouble should fly at once to him who stills the seas: nothing is too hard for him.
-Charles Spurgeon, English pastor, 1834-1892

And David clearly isn't just talking about Israel: "everyone on earth," "those who live at the ends of the earth."

Psalm 65:8

What beautiful words: you formed the mountains, you quieted the raging ocean, and even silenced the noise of people! All of creation sings to its Creator!

Psalm 65:9-13 NLT

These verses sing thankfulness to the Lord for a bountiful harvest. David is giving all the glory to God. The farmer may have plowed the field and planted the seed, but God watered the land. He brought the sun and protected the growing plants.

Remember James 1:17

This is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving. We might stop here and ask, "well, what about all the bad stuff, the evil that happens on earth under the watch of the same God?" David has many other songs about that. God does not cause bad things to happen. He does not cause the suffering of His children.

But He is the One who provides all the good things. Because that is who He is—a good and loving Father. Remember these words that Jesus spoke as recorded in the book of Matthew?

Matthew 7:9-11

Could God stop the evil in the world? Yes, of course He could. If He is a good and loving Father, why doesn't He? Good question. These are hard questions to wrestle with and to ask God when we speak with Him. Ask the hard questions; read His Word. The answers are there. The answers are in a relationship with Him.

The ending of this praise song reminds us of the great Creator God. All things are His and all things look to Him. He created the earth and was pleased. He loves what He created. And all of creation waits for the day when it is released once again to be what He created it to be.

Romans 8:19-21 NLT

Romans 8:19-21 The Message

Despite what we see going on around us or how others explain God and creation and evil, we know that God is good and all that is good comes from Him. We know that He created the earth and all that is in it, and one day, all that is will be made new again as He intended it to be in the beginning.

All, all is for the Lord; the world is a hymn to the Eternal, blessed is he who, hearing, joins in it, and makes one singer in the mighty chorus.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 66

May 14, 2021

Read Psalm 66

*How Awesome Are Your Deeds
To the choirmaster. A Song. A Psalm.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 66 is a song of praise. God has been good to the people of Israel, and God has been good personally to the author. This psalm is not signed. Some scholars believe it matches other psalms that David wrote and therefore he is clearly the author. Other scholars believe this psalm and the couple to follow are different and may have been written by or on the behalf of a later king, like Hezekiah.

To the choirmaster. A song. A psalm. Someone is leading worship in a house of God, and this psalm is being spoken or sung or both. *Praise to God for His Awesome Works (NKJV).*

Praise is the topic, and the subjects for song are the Lord's great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverances, and all his dealings with his people, brought to a close by a personal testimony to special kindness received by the prophet bard himself.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

"Shout for joy!" "Come and see!" "Come and hear!"

Psalm 66:1-4 NLT—Interlude.

The American Standard Version says, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth!" The psalmist here calls upon all people to praise the Lord, not just Israel. He knows that the Lord will be, and should be, praised by everyone on earth. And he is calling on believers to "shout for joy to God" (ESV). Something wonderful has happened, or the memory of something wonderful is being written about, and the author calls for pure joy and praise to the Lord.

God calls us to sing. He calls upon the devotion of the heart in worship to Him that is stirred when music is involved. Even Jesus sang.

Matthew 26:27-30

Sing. Shout. Praise. Proclaim to the world. Worship. Sing. These verses tell us how to worship God, and they remind us that all the earth will sing to the Lord.

Psalm 66:5-7 NLT—Interlude. Selah.

God's mighty deeds are remembered! The psalmist wants to take us by the hand to "see" what the Lord has done. Then, he picks two events in Israel's history of God's mighty saving deeds.

Psalm 66:6—compare the NKJV and the Message here.

The psalmist reminds us to worship and praise the Lord by remembering the mighty things He has done. There are so many throughout Israel's history. There are so many times that He saved us as well. Remember what Jesus has done for you. Sing praises and rejoice because of who He is and rest in the fact that His rule is forever.

The author could pick from countless miraculous ways the Lord intervened for His people, but he chose the Exodus of the people from Egypt crossing through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:13-30) and the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Joshua 3:14-17).

Psalm 66:8-12 NLT

Now this is interesting, the author writes truth here. Being a follower of Jesus does not mean all is perfect. In fact, trials and troubles sometimes come as God works to refine our character. Right? But even during those times, believers can rest in assurance that His hand is upon His children.

And He will see us through.

All the saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without a trial. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God will see us through the fire and through the flood. He will not leave us in the trial. He watches us walk in; He is present with us within; and He will see us to the other side.

Psalm 66:13-15 NLT—Interlude.

The psalmist switches from third person to first person here. Now he speaks about himself. I will come to your temple. I will bring my offerings.

The author here is fulfilling his vows. He called upon God during a time of great need. God came through. Now the author must fulfill his promise and praise the Lord with the best that he has—burnt offerings, Verse 15—Selah.

The Lord rescued His people in a miraculous way. The psalmist brings the best that he has. The "fattened" animals are the best, the healthiest, the strongest of the herd or flock. The one celebrating the Lord will bring rams and bulls and goats, the best of the best. God is worth our best. Praising God is worthy of our very best.

Selah/ interlude. Stop and praise the Lord.

Psalm 66:16-20 NLT—Come and listen.

The author remembered God's mighty miracles and saving grace, then he kept his vows with a thanks offering. Now he will tell others. He is overwhelmed with joy for what the Lord has done, and it is time to share that joy.

He confessed in his heart and was forgiven. God knows our hearts. He knows the truth.

If we ever feel that God is distant, that He is not listening or not responding, it's then that we must stop and check our hearts. God isn't distant in those cases. We are. We place a wedge or erect a wall between our hearts and our Father when we have unconfessed sin.

If thou listen to the devil, God will not listen to thee. If thou refuse to hear God's commands, he will surely refuse to hear thy prayers.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Something great has happened, but it doesn't stop there. After telling of God's amazing grace, the author stops—"Come and listen to what He has done for me!"

Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me! NKJV
 Blessed be God because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me! ESV
 Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer nor His favor from me. NASB2020

Hesed, found some 250 times in the Old Testament, expresses an essential part of God's character. When God appeared to Moses to give the Law a second time, He described Himself as "abounding in" or "filled with" *hesed*, which is translated "love and faithfulness," "unfailing love," "faithful love," "steadfast love," "mercy," and "loyal love" depending on the Bible version.

[What is the meaning of the Hebrew word hesed? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

Exodus 34:6-7a NLT

Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 67

May 17, 2021

Read Psalm 67

Make Your Face Shine upon Us

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a beautiful little song full of praise and adoration and meant for all.

A psalm and a song dedicated *to the chief musician* to be played upon stringed instruments, *Neginoth*. This Hebrew word, *Neginoth*, probably means just that, "upon stringed instruments."

The New King James Version titles this psalm/song: **An Invocation and a Doxology**. Or the English Standard Version (above) titles it: **Make Your Face Shine Upon Us**.

There is no author named and no historical time mentioned. Some commentators believe it sounds like a song of David and it's surrounded by others signed by him, so therefore, it must also be written by him. There is nothing to indicate with certainty who wrote this psalm, or when. God included it in His Word without a signature, so that is all we know.

This little psalm/song sounds a lot like what we know of as the "Aaronic Blessing" or "priestly benediction." Many of us grew up hearing this blessing at the end of church services. God instructed Aaron, Moses's brother and the first of a long line of Israelite priests, to speak these words over the people in the book of Numbers. The blessing may be spoken by a man, but the words are from God Himself.

Numbers 6:22-26

The blessing is a reminder that God watches over His children and that He is ever present and willing to lavish good things upon those He loves.

Read Psalm 67:1-2—compare two, maybe the NIV and the NKJV.

Verse one and two are a call on God for His blessing, for Him to look upon the people and be pleased. A shining face is a pleased face. The people call upon God to be pleased in them and to bless them and be merciful toward them. And the reason for the blessing: so that all the earth will know Him. If other nations look upon the Hebrews and see a blessed people, then they will come to know God. If the people are blessed, they can turn around and use that blessing to reach others.

Romans 10:12-13

All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. No matter race or gender or country of birth or past mistakes *all* who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. During David and also Paul's time (when the above letter was written to the church in Rome), that was shocking to the Jewish people to hear. Some believed that God was only their God, that He didn't love any other, that He didn't fight for any other people. Don't you find that some Christians act this way today? Don't you find that some who claim to follow Jesus want to exclude certain groups of people from the blessings of God?

Despite the gloomy notions of some, we cling to the belief that the kingdom of Christ will embrace the whole habitable globe, and that all flesh shall see the salvation of God: for this glorious consummation we agonize in prayer. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 67:3-5 NKJV—Selah.

Selah/Interlude is a musical or a reflective pause. Maybe the worship leader paused the music and the words to let the people pray silently in their own hearts. Or maybe the music was something special here, like a musical intermission of sorts.

This is a prayer to God. Let all the people praise you, God, and sing for joy. Not just—let the people here in this room praise you, but the psalmist cries *twice*, let *all* the people praise you.

These words are no vain repetition, but a chorus worthy to be sung again and again. The great theme of the psalm is the participation of the Gentiles in the worship of Jehovah; the psalmist is full of it, he hardly knows how to contain or express his joy.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 67:6-7 NKJV

Does the earth withhold its fruitfulness until we are thankful? Does it wait for God's hand to approve? The first part of verse six may indicate that the psalm was written during a plentiful harvest or in anticipation of one. But "the harvest" is also a metaphor for the cultivation of God's love and promises to all people.

Jesus spoke of a harvest and the need for workers. He spoke of the fields being His. The world is His; He came and prepared the harvest. Now His workers, the ones He left behind, must continue the hard work of bringing the harvest to the Father.

Luke 10:1-4

Matthew 28:18-20 NIV

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 68

May 21, 2021

Read Psalm 68

*God Shall Scatter His Enemies
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The Glory of God in His Goodness to Israel (NKJV). To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song.

Commentators believe Moses first wrote some of these words, and then David took his words and added to them to celebrate a triumphant time in Jerusalem.

Commentators also say this is the most difficult psalm to discuss and write about. According to some, the translation of the song is messy and damaged over the years in the attempt to make it understandable in English.

The Psalm is at once surpassingly excellent and difficult. Its darkness in some stanzas is utterly impenetrable. Well does a German critic speak of it as a Titan very hard to master. Our slender scholarship has utterly failed us and we have had to follow a surer Guide.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

But the song is a song exclaiming a great victory. It is a song proclaiming God's faithfulness to His people. There is no denying that. Bible scholars agree that the great occasion that prompted the writing of this song was probably the ascension of the ark of the covenant into the city of Jerusalem. As David speaks of that happy day, he recounts God's miracles and provision to His people in the past. David's psalms are filled with pleas for God's provision because of His faithfulness and His promises from the beginning.

2 Samuel 6:15-16

Read 2 Samuel 6 for the full story of the ark's journey into Jerusalem.

Psalm 68:1-3 NKJV

Moses spoke these words in Numbers 10 as the people followed the cloud of God's presence from Mount Sinai into the wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 10:33-35 NKJV

Every morning, Moses would shout these words as the ark would go first, ahead of the people as they followed the Lord's commanding presence into the wilderness. David took these words and tied them to the ark's

movement into the city of Jerusalem. It is a confidence in the power and the safety of God's promises and faithfulness.

Wickedness is blown away like "smoke in the wind," like "wax in a fire." When we keep God as the beacon ever before us, everything else melts away to nothing. All that is left is to rejoice.

Psalm 68:4-6 NKJV

David gives two reasons to praise and rejoice in the Lord. One—He rides on the clouds before the people. He goes before us, always. Within the storms of life, when we find ourselves lost and scared, He is already there holding out His hand. The second reason is by His covenant name—Yahweh (or JAH, Jehovah).

Yah, probably a contraction of the word Yehovah; at least so the ancient version understood it. It is used but in a few places in the sacred writings. It might be translated The Self existent.

-Adam Clarke, English scholar, 1762-1832

Our God is set apart in these ways from kings and great men throughout history and certainly from the gods of the pagans living around ancient Israel. He loves all people and desires all of His children to know Him and walk beside Him.

James 1:27

To this day and forever, God is, and will be, the peculiar guardian of the defenseless. He is the President of Orphanages, the Protector of Widows. He is so glorious that he rides on the heavens, but so compassionate that he remembers the poor of the earth. How zealously ought his church to cherish those that are here marked out as Jehovah's especial charge.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God doesn't desire any of His children to be alone. He gives them families in the body of His church. He calls us as believers to make sure this happens.

Psalm 68:7-10 NLT

David and the people are celebrating the ark's arrival into the tabernacle in Jerusalem, and he is comparing that procession to the Exodus from Egypt. He sees God as commander going before His people. God led the people by day and protected them by night. He rained down water and food to sustain them. The earth trembled and shook when Moses was directed by God on Mount Sinai.

There is no doubt, that the people of Israel needed to remember the miraculous things that God did for them at that time in their history. And what better way to remember these things, but to sing about them, especially on days of celebration. As the ark makes its way slowly up the hill, the people dance and sing and shout for joy remembering where they have been and Who has been faithful and seen them through it all.

Psalm 68:11-14 NLT

The New King James version says this:

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it

The Hebrew word for "company" is feminine. Some Bible scholars say it's because as the men returned from battle, the women would rush out to meet them in celebration. That a victory was won by the Lord and the women proclaimed it in celebration! How beautiful is that?

Psalm 68:12 NIV

Did the women of Israel celebrate ahead of the ark of the covenant as well?

Verses 13 and 14 are confusing for Bible scholars. If you read different translations, note the italicized words and notes. The italicized words are "emended" which means added to help clarify a meaning. But some believe the meaning is unknowable and therefore, emending just adds to confusion and possible misunderstanding of God's Word.

We will leave these two verses with these words from one of my favorite 19th century commentators,

Whatever may be the precise meaning, it was intended to portray the glory and completeness of the divine triumph over the greatest foes. In this let all believers rejoice.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 68:15-18 NLT

Mount Bashan is a mountain in northern Israel and a much bigger mountain than Zion. But God chose Zion to be where the ark rested, where His people called home, and where He would someday sit upon His throne.

The Israelites did not have battle chariots. God warned the Israelites not to accumulate chariots (or wives or gold) early on in the Bible—of course the people didn't always listen,

Deuteronomy 17:16-17

The Israelites never had an army of chariots, although nations that came against them did. God was enough for them, and He demanded that they remember this and trust Him on this. He was the many "thousands of chariots" that they needed.

Interestingly, Paul speaks of Jesus using verse 18 in his letters to the church in Ephesus:
Ephesians 4:7-8

As the ark ascended on Mount Zion, so did Jesus. As the people followed the ark in a celebration of breaking free of captivity, so we follow Jesus and are free.

Psalm 68:19-23 NLT

Blessed be the Lord! Praise to the Lord our Savior! Each day He loads us with benefits (NKJV), He daily bears us up (ESV), day after day He bears our burdens (HCSB)! Each day He carries us in His arms (NLT)!

Selah. Interlude.

Then the tone changes to a reminder of God's vengeance.

Psalm 68:24-27 NLT

The ark ascends Mount Zion into the tabernacle in a great parade and celebration, some commentators even refer to this day as the "end of the Exodus." Finally, the people are home.

2 Samuel 6:12b-13

The psalm mentions only four of the tribes—Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali. Scholars believe this to be poetic license, nothing more. The song would be cumbersome if all twelve were listed. Interestingly, the tribe of Benjamin was listed first, although at this point in Israel's history, the tribe was small. Some believe David chose Benjamin first as a tribute to his predecessor on the throne, Saul, who was of the tribe.

Psalm 68:28-31 NLT—Interlude.

As the ark arrives upon the hill, David calls upon the faithfulness of God throughout time. He also foresees the completion of the house of God on Zion, although David knew he would not be the one to build the temple, that his son would.

The palace of God, which towered above Jerusalem, is prophesied as becoming a wonder to all lands, and when it grew from the tabernacle of David to the temple of Solomon, it was so.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David calls upon judgment of the ancient enemies of Israel; Egypt and Cush. Interestingly, both of those will pay tribute in some way in the near future—Solomon will marry a daughter of Pharaoh, and the Queen of Sheba possibly came from Ethiopia to see the temple and meet Solomon, bringing extravagant gifts.

Psalm 68:33-35 NLT—Praise be to God.

This last paragraph is calling upon the God of the universe, that He is the God of all nations. All nations and all peoples should worship Him now, or they will bow to Him in the future as His enemies.

The voice of God is mighty power, a thundering in the sky. This psalm/song is filled with things that we don't quite understand, except for this one thing: God is faithful.

Zephaniah 3:17 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 69

May 24, 2021

Read Psalm 69

Save Me, O God

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles this psalm: *An Urgent Plea for Help in Trouble. To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Psalm of David.*

The "Lilies" or *Shoshannim* (in Hebrew) could be a tune or an instrument or a style of worship. Psalm 45 has the same title.

This song is of great sorrow. Some scholars say it is Messianic, meaning a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, not all of it can be ascribed to Jesus, as we will learn. Other scholars believe it is not Messianic, but it is one of the most quoted psalms in the New Testament. Many of the trials David speaks of were also trials of Jesus.

We commence our exposition of this Psalm with much trembling, for we feel that we are entering with our Great High Priest into the most holy place. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 69:1-4 NKJV

This is beautiful poetry filled with sorrow and grief. David paints a picture for us. He's drowning in water and stuck in the mud. His voice is gone, and his eyes are weary from crying out for help from God.

Is it a relief to know that "a man after God's own heart" could be overwhelmed with fear and sorrow and still hold fast to his faith? David knew God was faithful and would rescue him. But he didn't know when or how, so he still cried for help.

It is okay to lose it sometimes, to feel like we will drown in our worry. But we must always hold fast to the promises of God.

Bible scholars see David in one of the caves in the wilderness, hiding from Saul, as he writes this psalm. Saul, being king of Israel, had the ability to turn a nation, a people, against one young man because of his own jealousy and fear. David was alone and afraid. He had only God. But these verses speak even better of another; David's Greater Son, as He is often called.

Psalm 69:5-12 NKJV

However, "You know my foolishness," can never be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT

What a reassurance: "You know my mistakes; they are not hidden from you." Does this make confession easier? Let's add an important piece to this thought—"You know my foolishness; my sins are not hidden from You, and You love me still!"

Verse 6 is also a reassurance. David knows there are followers of the Truth in Israel still. While he runs for his life from what feels like the world at his heels, he prays for those he's left behind, that he won't let them down.

These next few verses are of a broken and abandoned heart. David is filled with shame and sadness, those he loves the most have turned away from him. We know that some of David's brothers remained faithful to him and came out to the cave to hide with him. But at the point of writing this, David feels abandoned. None are brave enough to fight for David.

And oh, do these verses speak of David's Greater Son. He was abandoned by those closest to Him. He was made a mockery and a byword.

Romans 15:3-4

Isaiah 53:3

Alas, my Lord, what pangs must have smitten Thy loving heart to be thus forsaken by those who should have loved Thee, defended Thee, and, if need be, died for Thee.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalms 69:13-18 NKJV

Thus begins David's appeal to God to rescue him. David knew God loved him. David knew God was faithful. So, in his darkest hours, David kept his eyes on the Lord. He uses the analogy of drowning again to plead for God's saving grace.

But as for me, I call out to You, O God, hear me . . . in Your timing.

Oh, what a prayer. When we need the Lord to rescue us, can we say the same? Help me, Father, in Your good and perfect timing.

He turned to Jehovah in prayer as being the most natural thing for the godly to do in their distress. To whom should a child turn but to his father.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 69:19-21 NKJV

David now speaks of his broken heart. Can you just feel his desperation? He is deserted and broken. His soul is heavy. No one stood up for him. No one defended him. The Message translates these verses with even more vivid description.

Psalm 69:19-20 The Message

David has no one he can turn to. No one is on his side . . . except for the One who really matters. The One he speaks to is listening. The One who he cries out to understands. The One who listens will deliver him.

John 19:28-30

David speaks in a metaphor about gall and vinegar. Jesus experienced this as He was dying on the cross to fulfill Scripture. Bible scholars question why David would ever drink gall or vinegar. The idea isn't viable. People don't do that. But if he was as broken as he's claiming to be, those cruel people around him could force something so horrible upon him. David's words, probably being but a metaphor for him, were a prophecy that Jesus fulfilled.

Psalm 69:22-28 NKJV

Where Jesus called upon God to forgive His enemies, David calls for God's vengeance. Paul writes about this section of Psalm 69 in Romans 11 when he discusses the Jews that turned their backs on the Messiah.

Psalm 69:29-33 NKJV

Oh ye poor and sorrowful ones, lift up your heads, for as with your Lord so it shall be with you. You are trodden down today as the mire of the streets, but you shall ride upon the high places of the earth ere long; and even now ye are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Ultimately, David knew that God was faithful. He knew that God would preserve his life, that God would raise him up as king over Israel, and that God provided a place of safety and security and peace and joy in a life to come. So David's heart would be directed toward Him for all of his earthly life.

Psalm 69:34-36 NKJV

David closes with a prayer of blessing upon the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, even though it probably hadn't become a city yet.

David's cry and pleading for help once again turns to joy and blessing. May we live out David's example to cry to God in our time of sadness and grief. God is faithful to hear us. God is listening. God will deliver us in His time and His perfect will.

Isaiah 40:31

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 70

May 28, 2021

Read Psalm 70

O LORD, Do Not Delay

To the choirmaster. Of David, for the memorial offering.

Psalm 70's title in the New King James Version: *Prayer for Relief from Adversaries. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.*

To Bring to Remembrance (NKJV). Asking God to Remember Him (NLT).

This psalm is almost an exact repetition of Psalm 40:13-17. Psalm 40 was titled: *Faith Persevering in Trial (NKJV); My Help and My Deliverer (ESV).*

This psalm is adapted to a state of affliction; it is copied almost word for word from the fortieth, and, some think for that reason, is entitled, "a song of remembrance;" for it may be of use sometimes to pray over the prayers we have formerly made to God upon similar occasions, which may be done with new affections.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Some commentators see this as an interesting bridge between Psalm 69 and Psalm 71, that the three may have somehow been linked together originally.

This memorial psalm acts as a connecting link between the two psalms of supplicatory expostulation, and makes up with them a precious triad of song.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Verse 1 in the NLT and NKJV—Come quickly! Make haste!

God does not need to be told to hurry up. He knows our needs, and He knows the urgency in which we need His help and guidance. Maybe this little prayer is not perfect, but does that matter? God wants our imperfect prayers. He wants to hear what's in our hearts; perfect or imperfect, complete or incomplete thoughts, ramblings or beautiful poetry. God wants to hear it.

And even the repetitive prayers!

It is interesting that David uses the Hebrew name for "God," *Elohim*, then repeats his urgent plea with "LORD," *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* or *YHWH*. The Hebrew name translated as LORD in English is the covenant name of God. The name is sacred to the Jewish faith, even today. When used, the name calls upon the promises and faithfulness of God throughout time to His people. David was in great distress.

Read Psalm 70:2-3 in the NKJV and NLT again—Aha!

David prays for his enemies to be confused; for their evil plans to fall apart; and for them to see the wickedness of their ways. These people were openly mocking David, and David knew God's promise of faithfulness to him. David knew God would deal justly with the people that have hurt him, that have stood in the way of his doing what the Lord called him to do. David asked God for his enemies to regret their actions and to turn back.

Psalm 70:4 NLT—God is great!

David turns his fretting into praise and a call to worship. David spoke his fear; he called out to God in his need, then he turned back to the fellow believers and called for them to rejoice with him.

We can rejoice during times of trial and pain. Does this set us apart as Christians? It does and in fact, believers have an opportunity to witness to others during trials and suffering. We can rejoice because of our salvation. We can rejoice because we know God's promises. We can rejoice because of God's covenant *hesed* love of faithfulness throughout time and even today. We can rejoice because we know how the story ends.

Philippians 4:4-7

David didn't know these words that Paul wrote in a letter to the church in Philippi. He didn't know these wonderful, refreshing, and life-giving words that we have today. But he already believed them and lived his life by them.

Psalm 70:5 NKJV—Help me! Do not delay!

David stopped for just a moment to praise, then he called upon God's help once again. Psalm 40, the song that David wanted to sing again, ends in this way,

Psalm 40:16-17

What a wonderful song, and what an incredible reminder that a "man after God's own heart" can pen such words and the kingdom of Israel will remember them for millennia. So, our own ramblings, our own confused prayers, our anger and fear expressed however possible are also reaching the ears of our loving Father in heaven. Keep on praying!

Romans 8:26-28

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 71

June 4, 2021

Read Psalm 71

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Titled: *Forsake Me Not When My Strength Is Spent* (ESV), *God the Rock of Salvation* (NKJV).

Here are titles given by Bible scholars: *The Prayer Of An Old Man For Deliverance* (Coffman). *The Prayer Of The Aged Believer* (Spurgeon). *Older In Years, Strong In Faith* (Guzik).

Although this psalm is not signed, scholars believe David probably wrote it. One commentator points out that twenty-three lines are taken from other Davidic Psalms and goes on to say that only David would quote himself that often rather than write new words. However, since God included this psalm in His book without a signature, that is all we will discuss it.

Psalm 71:1-4 NLT—Protect me, LORD.

The author of this psalm knows the faithfulness of God, and he calls upon those very promises during a trial of some kind. He opens this song calling upon YHWH, Jehovah, the covenant name of God, always written all capitals in English translations of the Bible. That name was where the author placed his faith and his hope for rescue. And in this name, the author was confident.

In what name are you confident?

Psalm 71:5-8 NKJV—For you are my hope.

Verse five is so beautiful. Here are a couple of translations.

For thou art my hope, O Lord Jehovah: thou art my trust from my youth. ASV
For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth. NASB1995
For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. NIV

As we get older, we have more opportunity to reflect on God's faithfulness. The author could look back and see God's hand upon his life from even before birth. And because of God's faithfulness upon his life, he would choose to praise Him all day long and for the rest of his life.

Psalm 71:9-13 NLT—And now in my old age.

God knows His children before they are born. He walks beside them throughout their lives and does not abandon them as their bodies grow old and begin to fail. It is a sad reality to read that life didn't ease for this author. Trials and worries don't go away as we age. But God's faithfulness never wavers. May we be able to look back at all the times God was faithful in our lives and cry these same words, "Be faithful again Lord!"

Isaiah 46:4

How beautiful! When we walk with God, He will never leave us. He made us and cares for us. "I will carry you along." Read the Bible paraphrase called the Message if you can. It's so beautiful.

Isaiah 46:3-5 The Message

But the psalmist fears his enemies see his age and his white hair and think, "aha! He weakens, now is the time!"

Psalm 71:11 NKJV

O bitter taunt! There is no worse arrow than all the quivers of hell. Our Lord felt this barbed shaft, and it is no marvel if his disciples feel the same. Were this exclamation the truth, if it were indeed an ill day for us; but, glory be to God, it is a barefaced lie.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834--1892

Psalm 71:14-16 NLT

Even as he ages and even if the Lord does not appear, the author will continue to speak about the wonders of God. He pledges here to speak of God's faithfulness and righteousness. He will speak about God's saving power and His mighty deeds. Even if the trials continue, he will praise the Lord.

The author does not despair or give up. He comes to realize that growing older does not give a believer an excuse to stop praising. If anything, we should praise louder because we have seen more of God's faithfulness. The tasks the Lord has given us may change as we get older, but He still gives them. We cannot stop sharing our faith to the next generation. We cannot stop standing up for what's right, upon God's Truths. We cannot stop loving others in the name of the Lord.

Maybe our strength fails, our memory lapses, but God's doesn't.

The holy faith of the persecuted saint comes to the front in these three verses. But I will hope continually. When I cannot rejoice in what I have, I will look forward to what shall be mine, and will still rejoice.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 71:17-18 NLT

The author of this psalm has seen blessing from the Lord throughout his life, and he pledges to share them. And oh, has he. Nearly three millennia have passed and we are still learning from his words.

The Psalter is filled with encouragement, hope, and strength. A beloved part of the Old Testament, and still relevant in modern days.

Psalm 71:19-24 NLT

The Psalmist, even claiming his old age, still expects God to do great things for him. "You will restore me—then I will praise you." He will still sing and shout and play music on instruments for the Lord. He will still tell others about what God has done.

Can we say the same? As life wears and tears us down, can we still make this promise to the Lord?

Some Bible scholars' comment on the name used for God in verse 22: "O Holy One of Israel."

Unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. Here is a new name, and, as it were, a new song. The Holy One of Israel is at once a lofty and an endearing name, full of teaching. Let us resolve, by all means with our power, to honor him. Here is the final vow of praise.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The author closes in great faith that God will redeem him, that God will come to his rescue. And upon that rescue and even prior, the author will sing and play music; he will shout for joy, and he will speak of God's goodness and faithfulness all day long.

May we all receive a boost of faith to do the same today.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 72

June 7, 2021

Read Psalm 72
Give the King Your Justice
Of Solomon.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 72 closes *Book Two* of the Psalter (Psalms 42-72). Titled *Glory and Universality of the Messiah's Reign* in the New King James Version, Psalm 72 is dedicated to Solomon. Some translations say, *Of Solomon* (ESV/NKJV), others say, *A Psalm for Solomon* (KJV) or just *For Solomon* (NET). The Message says, *A Solomon Psalm* and the Holman Christian Standard just says *Solomonic*.

Some scholars believe that David wrote this psalm, or rather, he dictated the words as an old man. David may have proclaimed these words on his death bed as a blessing over his son, the soon to be king over Israel. David died around 970 BC passing rule over to Solomon. Solomon was around twenty years old when he became king and ruled for forty(ish) years of peace and great prosperity for Israel.

Others say the "to" or "for" leaves too much unknown and we should just go with what we know with certainty: that God included this psalm in His Word with Solomon's name attached to it.

With some diffidence we suggest that the spirit and the matter of the psalm are David's, but that he was too near his end to pen the words, or cast them into form: Solomon, therefore, caught his dying father's song, fashioned it into goodly verse, and, without robbing his father, made the psalm his own. It is, we conjecture, the Prayer of David, but the Psalm of Solomon.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

This song is an appropriate conclusion for *Book Two*. We see the change in kingship over God's people. However, the words, whether David's or Solomon's, clearly speak of a Greater Son, Jesus Christ, and an unending reign over all of creation. Sometimes it's hard to understand the psalms; is it referring to an earthly king as a deity of sorts? Which isn't unheard of, kings were known to think very highly of themselves. Or is it referring to the Messiah to come? But we must always refer back and hold fast to Jesus's words as recorded in Luke's Gospel when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection:

Luke 24:44

Jesus is all over the Psalter.

Jesus is here, beyond all doubt, in the glory of his reign, both as he is now, and as he shall be revealed in the latter day glory.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 72:1-4 NLT

Solomon's words begin by asking for a blessing from God, calling himself "king" and the "king's son." As we know from history, kings often neglect the poor and needy amongst their people. Solomon at a young age and just beginning his reign, asked God to keep his eyes focused on caring for all of God's people, especially the needy. We know, as Solomon and David knew, God's heart is for the hurting and the broken-hearted. God's eyes are on His children, especially the one's cast out and hurting.

David's life as father, king, and follower of the Lord must have influenced Solomon. Maybe, upon his deathbed, David reminded Solomon of God's love and promises and faithfulness.

Read 1 Kings 3:5-9

David's life was filled with turmoil, fighting, fleeing, and bloodshed. But through his kingship, God's people settled into life and worship within Jerusalem, and the ark of the covenant moved into the tabernacle on Mount Zion. Solomon's life was peace and justice. He ruled God's people with a fair and loving hand, and God richly blessed him.

1 Kings 4:25

The reign of both kings, David and Solomon, are earthly examples of the reign of King Jesus. Jesus will destroy evil, and He will bring peace.

Psalm 72:5-11 NLT

Commentators say that these verses are the answer to the petition of the Lord in the previous four: Give the new king justice and righteousness and the ability to defend the poor and needy . . . so that the people of Israel will know and love and fear the Lord forever and ever.

While these words speak vaguely of the peaceful and prosperous time of King Solomon, they clearly prophesy of a time to come when the rule of Jesus will be like a spring rain on freshly cut grass as long as the sun shines and the moon remains in the sky.

Solomon did not "refresh the earth like a spring rain," neither did he "rule to the ends of the earth." Also, the land may have been peaceful, but where did Solomon get the money to fund his lavish lifestyle and care for all those women in his life? While the land remained at peace, someone had to work to provide for and to maintain this lifestyle. Was it on the backs (and out of the pockets) of his people?

Bible scholars point out that the extravagance of Solomon's life, while filled with peace and prosperity, led to the division of the kingdom during his son Rehoboam's reign. It wasn't but a few years after Solomon's death that the kingdom broke in two.

The prophet Zechariah repeats these verses but instead speaks of Jesus.

Zechariah 9:9-10

Solomon begins to look above his own reign to that of the coming Messiah, the Greater Son of David. His Kingdom will have no end, His dominion even greater than that of Solomon.

Psalm 72:12-14 NLT

What was life like for the poor and needy during Solomon's reign? The Bible says Israel was peaceful and prosperous, but there's another verse of a man speaking to Rehoboam about his father that makes some question what life was like for the regular people of Israel.

1 Kings 12:4 NLT

The needy are often seen as less with less value, especially by monarchs of the past. To God and to Jesus *all* life is precious and valuable. Christianity changed the view of the "poor and the needy."

Jesus is our example,
Luke 4:16-21

David prayed that Solomon would care for the poor and needy, and while the land of Israel was peaceful and prosperous during Solomon's reign as king, it was built and maintained on the backs of the working class. Never will this be with our Lord Jesus, King over all the earth.

Psalm 72:15-17 NLT

These verses clearly speak of the King of kings. Followers of Jesus will gladly lay their treasures at His feet; they will sing His praises all day every day. And when He returns, the land will be filled with goodness and His children will thrive and be blessed. His rule will cover the whole earth forever.

Solomon did not know Jesus, but he speaks of Jesus.

How blessed are we to know of Jesus? We have in our hands the Word of God which tells us of the character and the life and love of Jesus. Solomon, David, and the prophets of the Old Testament walked in faith of the promises to come. Peter walked with the man, Jesus. Paul walked with Jesus's disciples. How blessed we all are.

Psalm 72:17 NKJV

His name shall endure forever. David and Solomon are remembered in history, but it's the Name of Jesus that will endure.

Psalm 72:18-20 NLT—Amen and Amen.

The psalm ends in with a short doxology, a hymn of praise.

He is the Blessed God, and his name shall be blessed; his name is glorious, and that glory shall fill the whole earth. For so bright a consummation our heart yearns daily, and we cry, Amen, and Amen.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Solomon closes *Book Two* with a postscript, a signature of sorts. David is at the end of life and the end of his reign as king over Israel. He simply becomes "David, the son of Jesse."

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 73

June 12, 2021

BOOK THREE (Psalms 73-89)

Read Psalm 73

*God Is My Strength and Portion Forever
A Psalm of Asaph.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 73 begins *Book Three* of the Psalter in the Old Testament of the Bible, including Psalms 73-89. Asaph wrote Psalms 73-83; the Sons of Korah, Psalms 84-85, 87-88; Psalm 86 is a prayer of David; and Psalm 89 is signed by Ethan, the Ezarahite. All of these men probably lived during David's time and led worship in the tabernacle.

Nehemiah 12:46

Psalm 73 is titled: *The Tragedy of the Wicked, and the Blessedness of Trust in God* (NKJV); *God's Ways Vindicated* (HCSB); *The End of the Wicked Contrasted with That of the Righteous* (NASB2020).

Asaph was one of several men from the tribe of Levi that David assigned to run worship in the tabernacle (1 Chronicles 6:31-46).

Hezekiah, the 13th king of Judah and of the House of David, remembers David and Asaph as skilled poets and singers of Israel, and Asaph as a "seer" or prophet-

2 Chronicles 29:30

Asaph, among others, was tasked with being the Music Director of the church. Only those men of the tribe of Levi could serve in the house of God as priests or worship leaders or other maintenance jobs in the church. Asaph was a poet, maybe he had a beautiful singing voice, but he had a gift from God regarding song and music. And these psalms attest to his love for the Lord.

Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure. Psalm 73:1 NLT

The psalmist declares his confidence in God, and, as it were, plants his foot on a rock while he recounts his inner conflict.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Asaph, the singer/seer, opens Psalm 73 with a declaration of his commitment to God. This psalm will turn to struggle soon enough, but Asaph would begin his song in praise of the One who is faithful.

Psalm 73:2-9 NLT

God does not give favor to the wicked. We know this is true. But sometimes life feels unfair, right? Like maybe those who don't follow God have more fun, more stuff, an easier life on earth. Of course, God cares about our lives here, but His focus is so much bigger than any of us can ever understand. He sees us now, on earth, and He sees us into eternity with Him.

Of course, these "wicked, proud, cruel, fat cats" do not have it all together. Life isn't easy for anyone. Why is it that we see the grass is greener on the other side? The "woe is me" life is hard as a believer, the God-asks-too-much-of-me attitude. Does it seem that non-believers have more good stuff? More fame and fortune? More of the good things in life? Does it seem like they get sick less often? Do they suffer less?

God doesn't promise ease and prosperity in this life; nor does He promise good health and a pain free life. Sin destroyed what was meant to be in the Garden of Eden. When God walked this earth in the Garden, none of those things existed. And so, it will be again someday. We, as believers, hold fast to this promise.

John 16:33

"They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues strut across the earth" (verse 9, HCSB). What a vivid picture! It seems these people have blasphemed the Lord and then are walking around getting a lot of positive attention for it. Asaph is complaining; he's mad. We've seen David write similar psalms. But we know, as these men knew, God isn't ignoring these strutting tongues—these "fat cats." He sees all, and He knows all.

Numbers 14:18

Psalm 73:10-14

Asaph is frustrated and sees the ungodly life is a good one. They are at ease. Full of riches. Living a good life. He sees wickedness being rewarded. He asks God, "do you even see?"

The meaning of verse 10 is unknown with certainty, but here are a couple of translations.

Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. NIV
 Therefore his people return here, and abundant waters are drunk by them. NASB2020
 Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. ESV
 Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them. NKJV

In verse 11, Asaph seems to be saying the wicked claim that God does not see nor care what happens. Therefore, they can do whatever they want. Asaph has a hard time with this. He worked hard to keep his life on track while they just have a good old time and seem to increase in all good things. For Asaph, his righteous life brings only trouble and struggles and pain.

Oh, the unfairness of life.

Psalm 73:15-17 NLT

Asaph seems to stop himself here and remember God's children. Maybe he realized that his lamenting and complaining could lead others astray, to a life of unbelief. So, he shoots for understanding instead of empty complaining.

Where do we go when we do not understand? Where do we go when God seems far away? To where do we run when we despair?

Into the presence of the Lord.

Asaph did. And he wrote this psalm. When life feels unfair, like all we have is struggle and pain, run to the Lord.

Psalm 73:18-20 NLT

Once in the house of the Lord—in the Lord's presence, God cleared Asaph's mind. The peace and security that the wicked seem to gain in their wealth and status is but an illusion. A "slippery path" over the "cliff of destruction."

Asaph began his song afraid that he was slipping. He went into God's presence and came out with his feet on solid ground. He began his psalm seeing the present, jealous of the moments that others had. Then, Asaph entered into the presence of the Lord and gained an eternal perspective.

Do you need a reminder of what truly matters?

Seek the presence of God, right here, right now, in this very psalm.

Psalm 73:21-24 NLT

God wants us to come to Him in our brokenness. He wants His children to seek Him in pain and confusion, and even in complaint. He is the King of Ages, the Most High, the Ancient of Days . . . He can handle it.

With him is counsel, and when we come to him, we are sure to be led aright. And afterward. "Afterward!" Blessed word. We can cheerfully put up with present, when we foresee the future. What is around us just now is of small consequence, compared with afterward. Receive me to glory. Take me up into thy splendor of joy.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

John 14:27 NLT

Jesus knew what the world had to offer: empty promises, sadness, pain, fear. In the presence of God is joy and hope and peace.

Psalm 73:25-28 NLT

Asaph ends his song with a proclamation of belief. God is his strength, and though the earth and all that is in it will fail, God is faithful. And because of this joy he found, Asaph will sing his song so that others will know the peace he has found in the presence of the Lord.

While he longed for an eternity in the presence of God, Asaph also desired and found the strength and shelter and love of the Lord in the present. One day we will be with Him in eternity. But right now, at this very moment, He also stands beside you. You are always in the presence of the Lord.

James 4:8a

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 74

June 18, 2021

Read Psalm 74

*Arise, O God, Defend Your Cause
A Maskil of Asaph.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 74 is titled: *A Plea for Relief from Oppressors* (NKJV), *An Appeal against the Devastation of the Land by the Enemy* (NASB2020). The HCSB just titles it: *Prayer for Israel*.

A Maskil of Asaph. A Contemplation of Asaph (NKJV). *A psalm of Asaph* (NLT). A *maskil* or *maschil* is probably a literary or musical term of some sorts; maybe how the psalm should be sung or recited. Bible scholars don't know for sure.

1 Chronicles 25:1

2 Chronicles 29:30

Psalm 74 is a song about something terrible happening to the temple. When we look at historical records and the Bible together, we can understand the context of a psalm better. But often this is speculation, because no one truly knows for sure. This is one of those examples.

Jerusalem, along with Solomon's temple, was destroyed in 587 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (2 Kings 24). Bible scholars believe this total destruction of the holy temple is what Psalm 74 was written about, whether prophetically or by a different Asaph who lived during this terrible time.

Also, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria (the Seleucids), desecrated the temple in 167 BC when he sacrificed a pig upon the altar to Zeus, but he did not destroy it. He persecuted and tormented the people of Israel, set up idols in the temple, and forced God's people to do things against what they believed or be killed or sold into slavery. The Maccabean revolt of 167-166 BC ended Antiochus's control in Jerusalem.

Whether it is a prophetic psalm, intended for use in troubles foreseen, or whether it was written by a later Asaph, after the invasion of Sennacherib or during the Maccabean wars, it would be very hard to determine, but we see no difficulty in the first supposition.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 74:1-11 in the NLT

Asaph calls upon God's covenant love for His people. He believes God is angry. The NKJV says, "Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?" Whatever has happened, God's people feel they are being punished, that He has turned His back on them, that He is so very angry with His children.

God is never weary of his people so as to abhor them, and even when his anger is turned against them, it is but for a small moment, and with a view to their eternal good.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The city is in ruins; the sanctuary is destroyed. God's enemies shout victory, and they leveled the place that was "your home here on earth," the temple on Mount Zion.

Although Asaph cries out in despair, he knows that God will act. He knows that God will save them. While he believes God has turned His back on His children, Asaph knows it will not be forever. God will save. God will come. Like He always has.

It seems that the author is left in Jerusalem. If this is, in fact, the time of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian exile, the city and temple were destroyed, and the people have been carried away—total loss, total devastation. Alone and fearful that God has abandoned them, the remnants of Israel in the city were left to pick up the pieces. What a terrible time that would have been.

Psalm 74:12-17 NLT

The kingdom of Israel is in ruins, all this author could do now was remember God's faithfulness throughout time. Asaph is alone and afraid. What else could he do but despair?

When the world seems to cave in around us, remember that God has been faithful before. He will be faithful again.

Asaph remembers. We need to remember.

You "split the sea and smashed the heads of sea monsters" is a reference to the parting of the Red Sea. God saved His people from Pharaoh and his army by parting the waters and allowing His children to walk through to safety. As Pharaoh attempted to come after them, the waters fell again, and the Egyptian army was lost in the sea.

Some commentators say that "sea monsters" and "Leviathan" may be references to Egypt. Leviathan could mean crocodile, and Egypt was often referenced as such. Others have ventured to say that Asaph was speaking of mythical creatures from the pagan nations around Israel. Others see references to creation in these verses (sun and seasons) and therefore these verses refer to God's hand in creating rather than the Exodus from Egypt. The Leviathan is mentioned in other places in the Bible as a dragon or a sea serpent.

Isaiah 27:1 NLT

Whatever the meaning of these verses, the following is most important: He was faithful; He will be faithful.

The God of Israel is the God of nature. He that is faithful to his covenant about the day and the night, will never cast off those whom he has chosen. We have as much reason to expect affliction, as to expect night and winter. But we have no more reason to despair of the return of comfort, than to despair of day and summer.
 -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 73:18-23 NLT

O that the Lord himself would come into the battlefield. Long has the fight been trembling in the balance; one glance of his eyes, one word from his lip, and the banners of victory shall be borne on the breeze.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Asaph calls upon the Lord's saving grace. He asks God to reach His hand into enemy territory and bring His children to safety. Asaph goes so far as to call upon the covenant,

Genesis 12:1-3

The end of this psalm is despair. You can almost see the tears in the man's eyes while he cries out to God on his knees. Silence all around him. No voice of reassurance. No comfort to be found. Just a man pleading for help for him and his people. No rescue came.

But . . . we know how the story ends. God does rescue His children. God does come. He is faithful.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 75

June 25, 2021

Read Psalm 75

God Will Judge with Equity

To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 75 is titled: *Thanksgiving for God's Righteous Judgment* (NKJV), *God humbles the Proud, but Exalts the Righteous* (NASB2020). Bible commentators title this psalm: *Thanksgiving for God's Wondrous Deeds* (Calvin), *God Abases the Proud; but He Exalts the Righteous* (Coffman), *The Righteous Judge Exalts and Brings Low* (Guzik).

For the *music director* or *choir director*. Some believe this is dedicated to God Himself, as the *Chief Musician*. A song to be sung to the tune *Do Not Destroy* or *Al-tashheth. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song*.

Psalms 57, 58, and 59 are all set to this tune, *Al-tashheth*, and written by David. Although some scholars have speculated that the Asaph of Psalm 75 is a "son of Asaph" or a "descendant of" the original Asaph. That idea would put Psalm 75 possibly during the time of King Hezekiah and an attack on Jerusalem by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, as recounted in 2 Kings 19.

However, that idea is not agreed upon. There is no indication in the psalm itself of a specific period. Jewish tradition gives Psalm 75 its title and author; therefore, that is all we know with certainty. God has placed this psalm in His Book and gave us the tune it is to be sung to and the author, Asaph.

Read verse 1 in the NKJV and the NLT to compare.

Then, Psalm 75 becomes the voice of God. God is speaking to the psalmist. Verse one opens the song in praise and thanksgiving before God speaks. A reminder that God is near, that the people know His Name, and that they speak of His miracles and saving grace. This verse implies an active, present God in the lives of Asaph and the people of his time.

Is God active and present in your life? Call upon Him in thanksgiving and praise. Remember His faithfulness to you in the past. Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you (James 4:8).

Psalm 75:2-3 NKJV and NLT—Selah. Interlude.

In Psalm 74, Asaph cried out to God: have you cast us off forever? How long will you wait, Lord? Do not forget us! God replies in this psalm, "When I choose the proper time . . ." "At the time I have planned, I will act . . ."

Does that bring you peace? During our fear and worry and our demand for the Lord to intervene, His calm response is, "I will . . . at the proper time, my child."

God, the Father, set up the pillars of the earth and keeps the foundations firm. He set the sun and moon on their paths and the clock that is ticking for all of humanity. He knows the proper time.

We have merely to trust in Him.

If we were left to judge, we would respond quickly to anything that displeases us. God seems to let evil go unchecked for a time. Maybe it seems too long for our human understanding, but He *has* appointed a time. A proper time.

Selah/ Interlude. Let that all just sink in for a moment or two.

Psalm 75:4-5 NKJV and NLT—I like comparing these two in this psalm.

God warned His children. His commandments are clear. Stop being boastful and proud and arrogant. The "horn" is a reference to the horns or tusks being the strength of an animal. When the horns were raised, the animal was displaying its strength, preparing for an attack or to attack. When we "lift our horn up," we make a declaration of strength in self. The "stiff neck" is a reference to oxen raising their heads and horns to avoid the yoke.

Jesus said as recorded in Matthew's Gospel:
Matthew 23:12

Would to God that all proud men would obey the word here given them; for, if they do not, he will take effectual means to secure obedience, and then woe will come upon them, such as shall break their horns and roll their glory in the mire forever.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 75:6-8 NKJV

Here is the reason to check our pride from the previous verses. Help comes from nowhere on earth, but only from the Lord. God lifts up the righteous in His time. God alone is to be praised. Our hope is in Him, not self.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

If we are to have pride and boast, may it be in the love and grace and mercy of God. The world teaches us to rely upon self, to take pride in our accomplishments, and to be proud of our strength of will. God wants us to be proud of ourselves and our accomplishments, but He wants us to be clear on one thing . . . that it all comes from Him. Mercy and grace and love and all good things come from the Father. It is in Him that we must boast.

Hard work, good habits, persistence are all good things and contribute to success. But even these are gifts. Even these come from the Lord. Remember that.

"In the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red-" the cup of vengeance and judgment. There is a healthy dose of fear in loving the Lord, is there not? That cup is something we want nothing to do with. As believers, we should fear the wrath of the Lord. Before we take pride in our accomplishments, let us remember that God lifts one up, and He knocks down another. And in His hand, there is a cup . . .

The punishment of the wicked is prepared, God himself holds it in readiness; he has collected and concocted woes most dread, and in the chalice of his wrath he holds it. They scoffed his feast of love; they shall be dragged to his table of justice and made to drink their true dessert.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Compare verses 9-10 in the NKJV and NLT.

Some boast in themselves, in their wealth or strength or intelligence. Some "stiff necks" raise their horns and their glasses to other gods—the god of self, the god of money, the god of the world.

"But as for me . . ."

Joshua 24:15

God will do all that He has promised, in His time, and with His good and perfect will. Here is our task:

1 Peter 5:6—Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 76

July 16, 2021

Read Psalm 76

Who Can Stand Before You?

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 76 is titled: *The Majesty of God in Judgment* (NKJV), *The Victorious Power of the God of Jacob* (NASB2020), and above, *Who Can Stand Before You?* (ESV). *To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments or Neginoth. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.*

The Septuagint (abbreviated LXX) is the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the 2nd century BC. The LXX is a big deal because during Jesus's time most people of the world did not read Hebrew. This Greek translation allowed so many to know the words of God in the Old Testament. Interestingly, in the Septuagint, Psalm 76 has a subscription dating the song to the years 722 BC and the invasion of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib.

The defeat of the vicious and greatly feared Assyrian army is an incredible story found in 2 Kings 19. The prophet Isaiah recorded some things as well,

Isaiah 37:36-37

If, in fact, this psalm was written in celebration of God's victory over the Assyrian army, then the Asaph mentioned in the title is not the original one of David's time, but a "descendant of" or a "son of." We cannot say with certainty when this was written or who the Asaph was that wrote it, but what is certain is that this is a celebration of a great miracle.

The style and matter indicate the same hand as that which wrote the preceding; and it is an admirable arrangement which placed the two in juxtaposition. Faith in the 75th Psalm sung of victories to come, and here it sings of triumphs achieved. The present Psalm is a most jubilant war song, a paean to the King of kings, the hymn of a theocratic nation to its divine ruler.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 76:1-3 NKJV

During the time of the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem, David's kingdom of Israel was divided in two. Here the psalm probably refers to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. There were godly believers in both the north and the south and they knew the name of Jehovah, their God.

Salem is an ancient name for Jerusalem. God's dwelling place was Mount Zion. This is where he broke the army of Sennacherib, that dared to attack His home.

While Psalm 75 called upon God to take action, Psalm 76 celebrates a God who defended. God saved His children and His city from the horrors of that army and its evil king. And now, in this psalm, they sing His name.

Psalm 76:4-9 NKJV—Selah.

The New Living Translation translates verse 4, "You are glorious and more majestic than the everlasting mountains," while above the NKJV says "mountains of prey." While there is some confusion as to what these verses mean, the Truth is in the glory and majesty of our Lord. Is Asaph comparing God to a majestic mountain range or do the "mountains of prey" refer to the spoils of war after the Angel of God entered the battle? Is the "deep sleep" another word for death or did God cause the army to sleep before wiping them out? What does it mean that the mighty soldiers couldn't use their hands?

There are interesting comments and thoughts on all of these questions, but no real consensus except what we know to be fact and Truth. The same God who spoke the world into existence can stop an Assyrian army in its tracks, and that same God caresses a frightened child within a bad dream or a grieving mother unable to even close her eyes.

The fact is, God does get angry. God is vengeful. God will defend. And we should fear that anger. As believers, there comes a time when we all must reckon a loving Father and the wrath of God in our hearts. He can be, and most definitely is, both. But it is hard to understand.

These verses also speak of the end of days, the final judgment when God will put an end to sin and evil.

Revelation 6:12-17

Let us be on the right side of God's favor in these days. The choice is simple; it is not complicated. He makes it easy. Choose to walk with Him, and the reward will be an eternity with Him. Choose to walk without God in this life, and the reward will be an eternity without Him. Everyone and everything live under the blessings of God, believer or unbeliever, He watches over all. In the afterlife, there is only one place He will be present. I can't imagine a place where God isn't, a terrifying and lonely and dark place that will be. Thankfully you and I have chosen to never experience this.

Psalm 76:10-12 NKJV

Even the "wrath of men shall praise You." Asaph had seen how wrathful men and their acts had been turned to use by a powerful God. God can use even the stoutest atheist heart to bring Himself glory. Even the most despicable evil will be turned to Him and used for His glory in the end.

Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels the more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for his own purposes.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God will even use the "remainder of wrath" to "gird" Himself or adorn Himself. The leftovers of man's anger will adorn the Lord. God is in control. Even when it seems the world is angry and full of evil, He will even use the leftovers of that anger to bring about His glory.

Psalm 76:10 NLT

Asaph closes this song of a great deliverance and miracle with a reminder to the people to make their vows to the Lord, to pay tribute, to bring presents to Him who should be feared and revered. Let us not forget that God deserves the first and the best from us. We must continue to give our praise and our time and our resources to His glory.

Who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth. Psalm 76:12 ESV
For he breaks the pride of princes, and the kings of the earth fear him. Psalm 76:12 NLT

None are great in his hands. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God uses evil for good. Our broken hearts become blessings. Our struggles lead us to a deeper relationship with Him. Even the most tragic times in history can now be looked upon to see miracles and goodness within pain and suffering. Our God is good. He deserves our devotion and the best that we have, even in our brokenness. A life devoted to Him, despite the pain of this world, will be rewarded with an eternity in His presence.

James 4:10

If God can use evil for good, He can use our weakness for His glory as well. When we feel like we have nothing to give, He will use us. When we don't have the words, we can rely upon Him for providing. When we feel our efforts are in vain, He sees.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 77

July 24, 2021

Read Psalm 77

In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord

To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 77 is titled: *The Consoling Memory of God's Redemptive Works* (NKJV), *Comfort in Trouble from Recalling God's Mighty Deeds* (NASB2020). *To the Chief Musician*: some believe this is the worship director in the tabernacle/temple, others believe it's a song written to God Himself. Maybe it is both.

To Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph. Jeduthun was one of the men assigned to lead temple worship during David's reign as king in Jerusalem. Read about Jeduthun in 1 Chronicles 16:37-43 and 1 Chronicles 25:1-3. Asaph was the great singer, musician, and prophet during David and Solomon's time. Read about Asaph in 1 Chronicles 16:4-7; 1 Chronicles 25:1-2; 2 Chronicles 29:30.

There are some scholars who believe Psalm 77 is a "national lament." Others see it solely as Asaph lamenting for himself but brought on by a terrible disaster for the kingdom.

Psalm 77:1-3 NLT—Interlude.

Psalm 77 is a sad song. Asaph is in great need. He runs to the Lord in prayer. He cries out and shouts for help; he moans and lifts his hands to heaven in great longing. His heart and soul are in deep trouble. There is one thing that Asaph needs—His Father.

Days of trouble must be days of prayer; when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him till we find him. -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Jeremiah 29:13

Selah. Interlude. A pause to reflect and speak to God in our hearts.

Psalm 77:4-9 NLT—Interlude.

The night causes a worried heart to become weary and filled with anguish. Asaph feels as if God is keeping him awake. He has no respite from his worry and pain. God is far away. Asaph cannot find him. In his heart, he grasps at memories of times better, to no avail. He is weary. Will he ever be the same? Where is God? He has abandoned His people and His promises.

Some scholars place this psalm during the Babylonian exile and this author being a "son of" Asaph. If this is indeed the timeframe, the author is a remnant of believers in the kingdom. Israel had fallen into sin, had refused to turn back when told to, and now faced exile from the Promised Land. But there were still believers there. The author is one of them who continued to plead for God to relent His punishment.

If this is the timeline, then Jeremiah's words from God are essential:
Jeremiah 29:11-14

For a heart that feels lost and abandoned, the answer is to seek God. We must seek God until we find Him, until He reveals Himself to us. He will. For of course, God never leaves us. It is us who turn away, who walk away, and get lost in the process. The Father knows where we are always, and He waits for us in the place we left Him.

Psalm 77:10-15 NLT—Interlude.

Is the author finding his faith again? He is searching for God. Is God revealing Himself?

Asaph is realizing the things he accused God of are his own shortcomings, his own faithlessness. He recalls the holiness of the Lord. He remembers God's faithfulness and His mighty deeds. Instead of his own worries, Asaph dwells upon the Lord's great wonders of old and His redeeming power.

There are some scholars who believe that later versions of the Bible have weakened the translation of verse 13. For fun and because I love to research—here are some of the older versions,

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? KJV (King James)

Thy way, O God, is in the Sanctuarie: who is so great a God as our God? GNV (Geneva)

O God, thy way most holy is within thy sanctuary: and what god is so great in pow'r as is our God most high?

MP1650 (Songs of David in Metre: the Scottish Psalter)

God, thy way was in the holy place; what God is great as our God? WBMS (Wycliffe)

The answer is clear in these old versions of the Bible: when we feel lost and alone and as if God has abandoned us in the time of our greatest need, we must enter into the sanctuary. We must run to His sanctuary. Literally and figuratively, God can be found *in His sanctuary*. This world will pass away, but God will not. He is in His sanctuary. What a beautiful reminder of His love and faithfulness. It is refreshing. It is hope.

Selah/ Interlude. Pause and reflect and enter into His Holy Sanctuary.

Psalm 77:16-20 NLT

Here we remember God's miracle at the parting of the Red Sea found in Exodus 14.

In his remembering of God's faithfulness, Asaph dwells upon one His greatest miraculous works recorded in the Bible. God saved His people from the dreadful Egyptians soldiers behind them by having them walk through the Red Sea. A test of faith. And a miracle still talked about and sung about in Asaph's time.

The Bible doesn't record an earthquake of lightning bolts, but maybe Jewish tradition told more of the story back then. Or maybe Asaph is using those things to describe God's power in words as a poet does.

But the bottom line is—God was present, and He was mighty when His children needed Him most. Asaph uses this miracle to rebuild his own faith. God was faithful then; He will be faithful again.

God was the mighty deliverer, who then led His people along the road like a Good Shepherd.

The song ends abruptly here, as if he can say no more. The words have left him. He is overwhelmed remembering God's faithfulness and power.

The psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old; but there he must end: in his present intensity of passion he cannot trust himself to draw forth in detail any mere lessons of comfort. There are seasons when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simplest contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought.
-Joseph Francis Thrupp (cited by Spurgeon), English author, 1827-1867

The New King James version of the Bible says this:

Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were not known.
Psalm 77:19

Do we see God around us? Sometimes He leaves "footprints," sometimes He does not. What is a believer to do during the times we cannot see Him? During the times when we just don't understand or when we feel God has gotten it wrong, how do we reconcile the promises of God and His apparent absence at times?

Remember. Just remember.

Was He faithful?

He is faithful. He will be faithful. And enter into His sanctuary. Xo

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 78

August 9, 2021

Read Psalm 78
A maskil of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 78 is titled: *Tell the Coming Generation* (ESV), *God's Kindness to Rebellious Israel* (NKJV), and *God's Guidance of His People in Spite of Their Unfaithfulness* (NASB2020).

A Maskil of Asaph. A Psalm of Asaph. A Contemplation of Asaph: A *Maskil* or *Maschil* is a Hebrew word. The meaning is unknown, but most scholars believe it's a literary or musical term that refers to how the psalm should be performed or its purpose in worship services.

Asaph was a Levite chosen by King David to minister to the people in the tabernacle. He was a singer, a musician, and a prophet. He was also a poet; he wrote twelve psalms in the Psalter (1 Chronicles 15:17-19, 16:5-7, 2 Chronicles 29:13).

Psalm 78 is a song to contemplate God's saving grace, but also to remember the rebelliousness of the Jewish nation. God loves the children of Israel, but repeatedly the nation did not heed His commands and turned their backs on Him. The results were detrimental to generations of people. Thousands of years of—following God, becoming weary, seeking an "easier" path, God's warning, God's punishment, God's forgiveness . . . repeat.

Sound familiar? Hmmm.

This psalm will remind us not to forget God's faithfulness, that He is our Father, and that there are consequences to our free will choices that lead us astray. But also, God is mighty and powerful. He is God after all. We gloss over that sometimes. Let us not forget.

Does Satan want us to forget the important things, but remember the things we should forget?

Because of the abrupt ending with David as shepherd, scholars believe that this psalm was written by the original Asaph of David and Solomon's time.

Psalm 78:1-4 NKJV

Asaph begins his long song of wisdom with a call to attention. *Listen to my words. Incline your ear. Listen to my doctrine. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.*

There is nothing "dark" in the sense of evil or mystical or magical. Asaph means difficult things. When Jesus walked this earth, he taught with parables because stories make difficult things easier to understand. In his gospel, Matthew tells us that Jesus used the same teaching method by quoting Psalm 78:2,

Matthew 13:34-35

Why did Jesus speak only in parables to the crowds? Is it that stories are easier to understand? Is it that stories are easier to repeat around the dinner table?

Psalm 78 teaches two things: 1) a warning to Israel to remember, and 2) a reminder that the next generation must be adequately instructed.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

What does God require us to teach the next generation? What does He expect us to tell our children and grandchildren? We are required to share His Word. He commands that we teach them the stories of old. Sometimes we don't know how to teach, or we gloss over, the rebelliousness of Israel or the wrath of God or the consequences of sin. We can't do that. We must teach God's Word in its entirety. As we teach the love and sacrifice of Jesus, we must also teach the wrath and consuming fire of God. They are two and the same. We cannot understand one without the other.

The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mother's tears and father's prayers.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

We must also teach our children to teach their children to teach their children. There are five generations mentioned in this song.

In verses 12-16, Asaph goes on to remember how the Lord saved the Israelites in Egypt; how He parted the Red Sea; and how He continued to guide them with a cloud by day and firelight by night. God performed mighty miracles of great power in Egypt; with the plagues upon Pharaoh (Exodus 9-11) and then dividing the Red Sea with a trail for His people to walk through and "heaps of water" on either side (Exodus 14). Great and mighty power from the Lord. (Exodus 40:34-38)

The Lord always provided as a father to His children; He gave them direction and lit their path; He provided clean water to drink. When they grumbled and complained, wanting the rich food of Egypt, He again provided them with manna, the "bread of angels."

Psalm 78:17-22 NIV

God provided everything that the people needed, but it was never enough. God had been faithful. He had shown Himself mighty and powerful. He had defended and protected. He would not let them starve or die out in the wilderness. Why did they keep turning against Him?

God's anger was at their unbelief. It wasn't that they wanted better food, it was that they questioned if He could even provide for His children even after all that He had done for them.

Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth. He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. So a fire was kindled against Jacob.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Interestingly, after Jesus fed the 5,000 (or closer to 20,000 counting women and children), then He walked on water out to the boat, *and then* He spoke before Jewish leaders the next day. John quotes these verses (24-25),

John 6:30-35 NKJV

The story of the quail is in Numbers 11:31-34, the Israelites grumbled for meat, and the Lord gave them meat. But there were so many dead quails—three feet deep in the camp—it took them all day and all night to gather. Then God struck some of them with a sickness.

Psalm 78:30-31 NIV

He gave them what they wanted, even though He knew it was not what they needed.

They walked through a sea to escape soldiers. They were thirsty and God gave them fresh water IN THE DESERT. They were hungry and the Lord provided the "bread of angels." They wanted meat and God rained down three feet of dead quail.

And still, they doubted His ability to provide and defend. Still, they doubted the place they were in. They wanted more. The Lord knew what they needed; the fresh water and the manna would mean survival in the desert. But they demanded more, and God knew it would make them sick. But He provided what they asked—in over abundance. And some got sick and died—the young, strong, sturdiest men of group.

Psalm 78:32 NIV

Is this not the saddest line: "in spite of all this . . ."

And so, we know how the story goes, the children of Israel wandered in the desert, unable to enter the Promised Land. They sinned, then they sought Him. But not with their whole hearts. They would confess and praise Him with their mouths, but their hearts remained hard.

God knows our hearts. And God is faithful. He is merciful. He forgave His children over and over again.

Here are some interesting translations of verse 40:

Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. (NIV)
 Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel. (NASB2020)
 Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. (NKJV)

Yea, turning back, they tempted God, and limits set upon Him, who in midst of Isr'el is the only Holy One.
(MP1650--Scottish Psalter)

God does not sin; He cannot be tempted. But we “pain Him.” Our sin “limits Him.” Wow.

In Matthew's Gospel, something similar is said about Jesus,

Matthew 13:58 NKJV—sad.

Our fear and unbelief, our unwillingness to follow God's direction, limits the blessings He has planned for our lives. Think about that the next time you worry about taking a step of faith.

Asaph goes on to remember more of the miracles in Egypt and more of the unbelief and stubbornness of the people. He reminds his reader of Shiloh, when God turned His back on His people again and the ark of the covenant was stolen. The story of Shiloh is found in 1 Samuel 4; the Philistines defeated the Israelites in battle to the loss of 4,000 soldiers, then the ark was stolen and carried off. Thirty thousand soldiers died in the resulting battle, and some priests from the tabernacle.

1 Samuel 5 describes what happened to the Philistine people because of the ark of the covenant being in their midst rather than where it is meant to be.

Psalms 78:65-72

Of course, God was not sleeping, nor was He drunk on wine. But it was "as if" He were when He came to Israel's rescue again. He chose a king to lead His people. And not from one of the tribes that the people would expect. He sought Judah. And not one of Jesse's tall, handsome, strong sons. But He chose David, the youngest and smallest. David, the shepherd, would lead His people. And He would do so with a heart "after God's own heart."

David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart. And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

But, like much of David's life and rule, all was fulfilled completely by his Greater Son, Jesus. David was not perfect. He was a sinner. His actions had consequences. However, Jesus was perfect. Jesus is the true Son of God.

Daniel 7:13-14

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 79

August 16, 2021

Read Psalm 79
A psalm of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 79 is titled: *How Long, O LORD?* (ESV); *A Dirge and a Prayer for Israel, Destroyed by Enemies* (NKJV); *Faith amid Confusion* (HCSB); *Grieving over the Destruction of Jerusalem, and Prayer for Help* (NASB2020).

A Psalm of Asaph: Asaph was the director of worship during David and Solomon's time. He was a singer, a leader, a poet, and a prophet. Scholars believe that because of the historical context written about here, this Asaph was probably a "son of" or "a descendant of" the original Asaph. Although there are still some who believe that this was written as prophecy by the original Asaph, "the seer."

Bible scholars believe the setting of great devastation to Jerusalem is the Babylonian exile and destruction of the city by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army in 586 BC, although the conflicts began in 598 BC. Sometimes the people are referred to as Babylonians, sometimes Chaldeans. The word "Chaldean" refers to the ancient tribe of people; the word "Babylonian" refers to the same people by the place they ruled. The ancient Chaldeans took Babylonia from the Assyrians in 620 BC and ruled that portion of Mesopotamia until 538 BC when the Persians conquered the ancient world. King Cyrus (or Cyrus the Great) of the Persians was the one to end the Babylonian Exile of the Israelites and begin restoration of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 79:1-4 NLT

Asaph opens his song by painting a picture of brutal destruction and loss of life and home. Jerusalem was God's Holy Land. The Promised Land of His people. The people of Israel were His beloved people; the people of His inheritance; His children. Not only had things been destroyed, sacred things, but God's beloved children were left to die in the streets like animals.

These verses are part of why scholars believe this song was written during the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem. If people were left to die and bodies were in the street, then it is because everyone else was dragged away as prisoners or hiding in desperate fear for their lives.

The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Asaph calls upon God the defender of His people. Does He not care that His children did not receive proper burial? Does He not care that unbelievers have defiled His temple? Will He do nothing to help, even neighboring countries are laughing at them—"See, where is your God now?" "Can your God not defend you, Jerusalem?"

Psalm 79:5-12 NLT—How long, LORD?

Sometimes trials and suffering make believers question God's existence. Asaph did not question God's sovereignty. He believed and He knew that God would act. His question was—how long?

Jeremiah was a prophet who lived during this time. God told him that this would happen, and He even told Jeremiah how long. God loves His children even during times of discipline. This had to happen, but God, the loving Father that He is, wouldn't allow His children to suffer without some understanding.

Unfortunately, the people did not heed his warning. The book of Lamentations holds songs written during this time. Jewish tradition tells us that this is also Jeremiah's book (along with the books of Jeremiah and the Kings).

Lamentations 2:22

Then these refreshing words from Jeremiah written during these terrible, hopeless times. You may recognize them-

Lamentations 3:21-26

Even during suffering, God is good. Do you see God in your suffering? Do you find God in your grief?

Asaph speaks on behalf of all of God's children in this psalm. He prays humbly and admits sin and failure. He prays for God's mercy. He pleads for forgiveness.

Psalm 79:9 NKJV

Provide atonement for our sins: the temple was destroyed, their house of worship. The priests could not atone for sins; they could not provide the proper animal sacrifice to make things right. The people could not just "call upon the Lord," like we are able to. All the people could do was trust that God would provide. God was faithful before—He will be faithful now.

Genesis 22:8-14 NKJV

The-LORD-Will-Provide. In the Mount of the LORD, it shall be provided.

Read John 1:29—Thank you, Jesus.

The Word of God is one long beautifully connected story, and the more we study it, the more God will reveal little nuggets of His plan and His Truth like this one. God provided for Abraham, the Israelites knew this and spoke of it often. In this psalm, Asaph reminded God (or he reminded himself and the people) of this promise, to help them provide the appropriate offering for their sins and therefore be free of the punishment afflicted upon them.

Nearly six centuries later, the Lord would provide another sacrifice—His Son.

Psalm 79:13 NKJV

We have a history which shall survive all other records, and it is bright in every line with the glory of the Lord. From the direst calamities God's glory springs, and the darkest days of his people become the prelude to unusual displays of the Lord's love and power.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Everything that the nation of Israel had was broken and lost; their beloved city and temple, their nationality, their communities, their traditions and ability to worship of the Lord. They were exiled, abandoned, alone.

But the story doesn't end, does it? Thankfully not. The books of Daniel and Esther are beautiful stories of believers—God's children—living in dedication to the Lord despite their captivity. They were never abandoned. He was with them in captivity.

He is still with us, even in our darkest days. Thank you, Father.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 80

September 10, 2021

Read Psalm 80

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lilies of the Covenant." Of Asaph. A psalm.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 80 is titled: *Prayer for Israel's Restoration* (NKJV); *Restore Us, O God* (ESV); *God Implored to Rescue His People from Their Calamities* (NASB).

For the choir director; set to El Shoshannim; Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph (NASB). To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Testimony of Asaph. A Psalm (NKJV).

Shoshannim is some sort of stringed instrument from ancient times; *Eduth* means "testimony." Asaph was the great poet and singer and worship director of King David and Solomon's lifetimes. However, this Asaph was probably a later worship leader. Some believe the name is more like; "a descendant of Asaph" or a "son of Asaph." But it's very likely that Asaph was a common name in that family line, a name that any Levite family of the original Asaph would be happy and proud to continue giving to their sons.

A Psalm of Asaph. A latter Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The historical time frame is hard for Bible scholars to pinpoint. Some believe Psalm 80 resembles Psalm 74 and 79 which were more clearly written during the Babylonian exile. Others believe that the psalm was penned during a later struggle. But what is clear in Psalm 80 is that something terrible has happened and that the entire Hebrew nation is suffering.

Read Psalm 80:1-3 in the NKJV

After Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel was divided in two. The southern kingdom was called Judah and included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the city of Jerusalem. The northern kingdom, called Israel, included the other tribes. This psalm calls for the Lord to rescue them all, the entire kingdom.

Often, God is referred to as the "Shepherd of Israel." According to one commentator, however, only twice in the Psalter: here and Psalm 23. But the idea of the Lord being a shepherd is reassuring. The shepherd was someone that the ancient world understood. He was the defender of the weak, the finder of the lost, the provider for the flock. He carried them when they needed help; he healed them when they were hurt. He protected them as they slept. The shepherd is a beautiful, tender metaphor for God, the Father.

Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved! This seems to be the refrain of the song as it's repeated three times. And what a verse to repeat! Asaph knew that all he and his people needed was for God to look upon them once more. If He would just turn His face and His favor back upon Israel, they will be saved.

Psalm 80:4-7 NKJV—LORD God of Hosts!

There is nothing more frightening in this universe than the anger of the Lord. In fact, there is nothing more frightening than the fear of the anger of the Lord. Asaph calls upon the LORD (YHWH/Jehovah) and God of Heaven's Armies (Sabaoth). *Jehovah Sabaoth* is LORD God of Hosts.

The ultimate call for help.

To be so low that all one has is one's own tears. Such great sadness and loneliness and hopelessness. That others laugh and point. That God has, in fact, turned His face away.

Revelation 21:3-4

John 16:33

"Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved."

Psalm 80:8-11 NKJV

The vine and the root and the vineyard were another image well known during ancient times. The Israelites are often referred to as a vine or a vineyard by God.

Isaiah 5:1

Jeremiah 2:21

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches with parables of the vineyard (Matthew 20; Matthew 21/Mark 12), a metaphor that the people understood well.

God is the gardener, His children are the branches, and Jesus is the vine with which we cling to.
John 15:5-9 NIV

Asaph sings in this ancient song of a vine that was transplanted from Egypt. The vine was safely carried, then carefully pruned and planted. Then it grew to fill the space from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea

in the Promised Land. These vines even grew to cover the hills and ancient cedar trees. What a beautiful metaphor of God's people during times of old.

In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 80:12-16 NKJV

Hedges were often planted around vineyards to protect them. The psalmist here claims that God has even destroyed the hedges of protection. That He was, in fact, that hedge.

God protects His children to this day. We have a hedge of protection around us of angels and heavenly warriors. God's hand is today our protection. What happens when He removes it? Why would He do that?

This is free will. When we make our own choices that go against God's will, He may remove His hand and let us fall.

Using Asaph's metaphor, you can just see our loving Father cutting away that beautiful hedge of protection around His children, shaking His head, "Okay, if this is what you really want . . ."

Even the smallest hole in the hedge can allow a wild pig in, resulting in destruction.

What a beautiful metaphor of sin. In Asaph's time, the wild boar was probably Babylon. But the imagery stands for other things today: pride, envy, hatred, lust, etc.

His favor is life, and His wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon your churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 80:17-19 NKJV

Who is the "man of Your right hand," the "son of man whom You made strong?" Maybe Asaph referred to the current king of the times, to make him strong again, restore his leadership. Maybe Asaph prayed for a stronger leader than before, to free the people and encourage the people and bring strength to the people once more.

But ultimately, that would never happen by mere human means. The Son of man and the One at God's right hand is Jesus.

Ephesians 1:18-23

The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in Him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When He visits our souls anew we shall be revived, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And finally, Asaph closes his song with the refrain, although slightly different, and imminently more power.

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Psalm 80:19

Man can do little to save himself. Asaph calls for God to just turn His face back to His children. Just a glance and all would be healed.

God comes in distress. And distress goes when He comes.
-Gaelic Proverb

LORD God of hosts, turn your face toward us today. Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 81

September 13, 2021

Read Psalm 81

Oh, That My People Would Listen to Me
To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles Psalm 81: **An Appeal for Israel's Repentance.** *To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of Asaph.*

There is some confusion on the events and the meaning of this psalm. Some point out that because the song calls for some sort of temple ceremony together, it cannot be during the exile, nor directly after as the temple and Jerusalem were in ruins.

But the song was written for a celebration during a "new" and "full" moon. Therefore, Bible scholars agree that it must be one of the festivals that the people of Israel still celebrate today, many lean toward the Feast of Trumpets or the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Trumpets or *Rosh Hashanah* is the Jewish New Year and begins the 10 Days of Repentance. It is a day filled with shouting and singing and horns blowing. The Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths or *Sukkot* is celebrated at the end of the harvest. It is a celebration for God's provision for the current harvest but also in memory of His protection during their time in the wilderness. Because the Feast of Tabernacles is a reminder of God's deliverance of His children from Egypt and is also a pilgrimage feast (all Jewish males were required to go to the temple in Jerusalem), scholars lean toward this being the call to worship in Psalm 81.

The *Chief Musician* is the audience. Asaph is the singer. *Gittith* is the instrument. Some believe it came from the people of Gath during David's time, but not much is known about this Hebrew word.

Read Psalm 81:1-3 NKJV

Asaph called the whole congregation to sing and shout with joy to God. Throughout the Word of God, there is music. Music is the way we praise and the way we give our hearts to the Lord. A true heart in song abandons worries over what others think. A heart in song gives to God what He wants, which is devotion. Asaph calls for singing and for instruments, three in particular: the timbrel (tambourine), harp, and lute. The Levites oversaw worship music and would have been the ones to play these ancient instruments.

The priests would blow the trumpets at the appropriate time, calling the people to the time of worship. The sound of the trumpets rang in the new moon, possibly the new year or the end of the harvest. Whatever the exact time of year, the celebration reminds the people to be thankful and to give their praise back to God.

Psalm 81:4-5 NKJV

stat-ute: noun- a written law passed by a legislative body. (archaic)- in biblical use- a law or decree made by a sovereign, or by God. (Oxford Dictionary)

This celebration is one of God's laws, proof that He wants His children to join their voices and their hearts together regularly in worship and thanksgiving. Does He need to hear our voices? No, but we do. He knows the strength and love and joy that comes from being together worshipping Him. Does He love to hear our voices? Yes, like a loving Father, He desires for His children to laugh and sing. It brings Him joy.

Numbers 10:10

God required this time of worship and celebration for His children. The Lord proclaimed this as His law that no matter what was going on at home or in life, the people would travel to Jerusalem to sing, worship, and hear His Word. Possibly some years this was a forced celebration, but God knows best. He wanted them to celebrate their heavenly Father, His grace, and might; remembering that He saved them from Egypt where they "heard a language they did not understand."

Then God speaks:
Psalm 81:6-7 NKJV—Selah.

Sometimes the easiest way to get through today's burdens is to remember how God delivered us from yesterdays. God saved His children in Egypt in mighty ways. He wanted them to remember this; He knew they needed to remember this. He knew how quickly they would forget and then lose faith. Here He reminds them.

"The place of thunder" is probably Mt. Sinai where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and where God came close to His children. *Meribah* is where God heard His children's cry for water and provided.

Psalm 81:8-16 NKJV

God's voice continues with a call to "listen" and "hear My voice!" God is speaking to His children, always. How often are we listening?

God repeats Himself. When the Israelites were freed from hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt, He told them then—"Do not have any other gods before Me," when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:1-2

He warned them then not to bring the pagan gods of the Egyptians with them. He was God and the only God that they needed. Now, during Asaph's time and the time of the kings, God reminds them again.

He is so patient. He gives us chance after chance after chance to hear Him and listen to His Words. He says if we would just open our mouths, He will fill them. "I am all that you need," God says. Isn't that the truth?

What enemies sinners are to themselves! It is sin that makes our troubles long, and our salvation slow.
-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. Psalm 81:12 NIV
 So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their own ideas. Psalm 81:12 NLT
 So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart; that they might walk in their own counsels.
 Psalm 81:12 ASV

"So, I gave them up . . ." Oh, no sadder words have ever been uttered. Or scarier. God will not abide with sinful people forever. We must realize this and teach our children and grandchildren them. He *will* eventually give man over to his sin.

The beginning of this section and the ending are beautiful: "Oh my people . . . I would have satisfied you."

God is all we need. But He asks that we choose. He gives us free will.

As God wanted these words sung at a yearly pilgrimage festival, they are an equally important reminder to us today. While the world tries desperately to distract us, the way is really very simple.

Listen. Hear. Put God first. He will satisfy. He will subdue our enemies. He will provide.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 82

September 20, 2021

Read Psalm 82
Rescue the Weak and Needy
A Psalm of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles Psalm 82: **A Plea for Justice**. A Psalm of Asaph. The NASB1995 titles it: **Unjust Judgments Rebuked**. A Psalm of Asaph.

Bible scholars believe the Asaph writing here is probably of King David and Solomon's time.

Asaph no doubt saw around him much bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic psalm.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 82:1-2 NKJV—Selah.

Who are these "gods?" Bible scholars wonder about the use of this word in Scripture: are these "gods" angels or men in power? Why does God refer to mere humans as "gods?" Is something lost in translation?

The Hebrew word used for "gods" in this psalm is *Elohim*, which is the plural word for "god."

Elohim is the Hebrew word used often for the one true God, Yahweh. Maybe it hints at the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sometimes *Elohim* is used to speak of the gods of the pagan nations in plural.

Commentators say that *Elohim* is also sometimes used in reference to angels, but they say in this psalm, the author may be meaning *Elohim* as human judges who stand in God's place.

God places people in power. Once they take that power over others, they are in a position of doing God's work. God is the ultimate and final Judge of the earth. His Word will prevail. In Exodus, God gave Moses this position to execute His judgment and even referred to him as "like God."

Exodus 7:1-2

God expects the words that come out of the mouths of human judges to be His Truth, His Word, like what He expected of Moses. According to Asaph's words here from God, that is not happening.

Psalm 82: God is calling the judges of the earth into His presence, and He is not happy.

In these two verses, Asaph prophetically reminds magistrates, judges, church leaders, etc. that they serve as God's judgment on earth for a time. God will uphold or reverse these judgments one day soon. And the warning is: He is present in these cases and during these judgements; He sees all.

Selah/Interlude. "Stop and let that sink in."

Psalm 82:3-4 NLT

Jesus speaks of the "unjust judge" in a parable as told in the book of Luke,

Luke 10:6-8

The prophet Micah has similar words. Many of us have these words memorized. It's easy to recite them, but do we walk them daily?

Micah 6:8

During Asaph's time, the widow and the orphan were easy targets of evil people. Do we protect them better today? Are there others today? Who would God list today? Immigrant? Refugee? Homeless? Addict?

Suffer not the afflicted to be further afflicted by enduring injustice, and let not the needy long stand in need of an equitable hearing.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1832-1894

Compare verse 5—NKJV and NLT

As it was in the days of Asaph, also into the time that Jesus walked the earth, so it is today. When our leaders walk without the light of God directing their paths, we all feel the world shake beneath our feet. Do you feel this today? Does it bring you hope to know that God wrote these words, that God is watching? That God will ultimately be the final Judge?

When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 82:6-7 NKJV

It is hard for men to have honor put upon them, and not to be proud of it. But all the rulers of the earth shall die, and all their honor shall be laid in the dust. God governs the world.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

And thank the Lord for that, right?

Jesus spoke of this verse as the teachers of Jewish law in Jerusalem looked for a reason to kill Him,

John 10:31-36 NLT

God reminds the judges of the earth that they are "children of the Most High," as all are, even the ones they just proclaimed judgment upon. This is another reminder that God is watching. All His children deserve fair treatment. He will demand this. And in this verse, He reminds those doing the judging of it.

He also reminds those in power that they will die like every other person. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, all our fates were sealed.

Genesis 3:17b-19

No places are too high for death's arrows: he brings down his birds from the tallest trees. It is time that all men considered this.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalms 82:8 NLT

Asaph closes this psalm with a call for the Supreme Judge, the Good Father, to come forward and take His place.

Philippians 2:9-11

There is one who is "King by right divine," and He is even now on His way. The last days shall see Him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by His potent scepter. The second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 83

December 7, 2021

Read Psalm 83
O God, Do Not Keep Silence
A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles Psalm 83: **Prayer to Frustrate Conspiracy Against Israel**. A Song. A Psalm of Asaph. The NASB1995 titles it: **God Implored to Confound His Enemies**. A Song, a Psalm of Asaph.

Psalm 83 is the last song penned by Asaph in the Psalter. Asaph was a great poet and prophet during King David and Solomon's time. He was the temple worship leader. Asaph's duties in the temple are outlined in the Old Testament in 1 Chronicles 6 & 16. The "sons of Asaph" or later men with the same name were probably in his lineage. He was a renowned singer and writer and lover of the Lord. It is not a surprise that future Levite families would continue giving his name to their sons.

Psalm 83 is an Imprecatory Psalm, one of many. The Imprecatory Psalms call upon God's judgment against Israel's enemies. These songs call curses and bad things down upon the enemies of Israel, enemies of God.

im-pre-ca-tion: noun, a spoken curse (www.dictionary.com)

Some Bible scholars relate Psalm 83 to King Jehoshaphat and a great victory against the Moabites and Ammonites as told in 2 Chronicles 20. But others believe that the Asaph of King David and King Solomon's time wrote this psalm as a list of those who had aggressed upon God's people and as a prophecy of things to come.

Some commentators call this the *Collection of 10 Enemies* of Israel.

Psalm 83:1-4 NLT

Sometimes we cry these words, right? "Don't turn away from me, God. Don't be silent. Do something!" But the truth is that God is never silent; His Word is alive, living, breathing, and active. Always.

Hebrews 4:12-13

When we wonder where God is and why He doesn't seem to move, we merely must open His Word.

His Word will tell us that past, present, and future attacks upon those who love Him are imminent. To be a follower of Christ means trials and suffering. It means we take up His cross every day to walk in the way He walked, to live in the way He lived. We must take courage in the Words written.

From day one, the enemy has sought to destroy God's creation. He cares about nothing else but destroying Jehovah's children. But he can't. He has tried throughout time, and he can't. Many have attempted and still attempt to destroy the Jewish people, but they continue to fight and live throughout the world. Others, throughout time and even now, attempt to end the name of Christ. Impossible.

Hidden away from all harm at the Lord's chosen; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 83:5-8 NLT—Interlude.

Asaph lists ten nations that banded together against Israel and ultimately against God Himself. Ten nations many of which came from men written about in the Bible who were angry at the place they found themselves in life. Could the Edomites (Esau) or Ishmaelites (Ishmael) or Moabites (Lot) have turned their lives around to serve the one true God? Yes. Rather, they chose to follow the father of lies, the one who would promise the world and bring only more pain and suffering.

There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone.

-Charles Spurgeon, English Preacher, 1834-1892

Selah/Interlude: pause a reflect upon all that God has done.

Psalm 83:9-12 NLT

Asaph reminds us of God's great victory over the Midianites through Gideon as recorded in Judges 6-8. The Israelites had screwed up and for many years they suffered under the oppressive Midianites. But the Lord heard His people's cry and rose up the mighty warrior and prophet, Gideon.

Psalm 83:13-18 NLT

It's interesting that Asaph ends his song with a call for God to strike His enemies so that they will seek the face of Lord. Sometimes we must be brought to the very end of our strength before we can then look up to see our Savior. Asaph asks God to knock down Israel's enemies with a storm and blow them away with the wind, burn them in a great fire . . . "until they turn to You."

Whatever you are facing right now, it's okay to call upon God in this way. People have done it throughout time. He hears us; He desires to know what is in our hearts. But sometimes we must be broken so that we will look up into His face again. A good and loving Father.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 84

December 14, 2021

Read Psalm 84

My Soul Longs for the Courts of the LORD

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles Psalm 84: **the Blessedness of Dwelling in the House of God.** *To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.*

Do you recognize some of these words? What a beautiful song.

Gittith or *On an instrument of Gath* is a musical term of some sorts. No one knows the meaning for sure. What we can see is that the song was to be played on an instrument or a melody from the people of Gath. Gath was a pagan city of the Philistines; King David spent some time there. The infamous warrior Goliath was from this city.

The sons of Korah wrote this song possibly during David's time. Bible scholars believe it has a Davidic feel to it, but there are no specific references that allow us to know for sure. The words have deep meaning for anyone at any point of life. Remember Korah (Numbers 16) led a rebellion against Moses. God destroyed them, however, there were sons and daughters who continued to tell God's story and seem to live from that point on as a family praising the Lord throughout time for redemption and mercy.

Charles Spurgeon (English preacher, 1834-1892) called this the "Pearl of Psalms" and the "most sweet of the Psalms of peace" in his sermon on Psalm 84.

Psalm 84:1-4 NLT—Interlude.

"Dwelling place" is translated as "tabernacle" in some versions.

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! NKJV

The use of the term tabernacle rather than temple possibly dates this to David's time. Solomon built the temple, and prior to that, the people of Israel worshipped God in the temporary and moveable tent, called the tabernacle. Although it is possible that the writer was referring to the "old way," which is why scholars are hesitant to use this idea to date this psalm with surety.

Does your soul long for God?

Each of us has a place in our hearts specifically for God, even unbelievers or those who have not met the Lord yet. God created us that way; He created us with the intention that we would live in communion with Him. Those who do not or choose not to fill this hole with other things.

But make no mistake that void was made for and only can be filled with a relationship with the Lord God of Heaven's Armies, our LORD and our God.

And some day when our walk in this life is over and we are called home, we will stand beside and walk with God in the way that we were created to. We are voyagers passing through. We are forced to stop for a time in this life, to share the love of God with others and to love and serve all in our path, and then we are called to our true home.

Psalm 84:5-8 NLT—Interlude.

The pilgrims to the heavenly city may have to pass through many a valley of weeping, and many a thirsty desert; but wells of salvation shall be open for them, and consolations sent for their support. Those that press forward in the Christian course, shall find God adds grace to their graces. And those who grow in grace, shall be perfect in glory.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 84:5-7 NIV

The Valley of Baka or Baca is a term that means tears or weeping or drought. No one is sure of its exact meaning except the feeling is clear: as we pass through despair or sadness or trials, God provides the Life Water of His son, Jesus.

As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God gives us what we need, even in trying times. We can go from "strength to strength" as He promises to never leave us.

Psalm 84:9-12 NLT—O LORD of Heaven's Armies!

The Psalmist calls for blessings upon his king. In ancient times, the king and his men and his decisions protected the people. If he was a good king, his people prayed to God to uplift and strengthen him. Other versions speak of God as the shield of protection. Maybe the author meant David or Solomon as "thine anointed" or maybe he meant Jesus, the Savior.

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. (verse 9 KJV)

But then the author goes on to describe the house of the Lord in such a beautiful way. A single day spent with Jesus is better than a thousand spent in the most luxurious space that Satan owns. We must remember this when the road ahead looks more "comfortable" than the one that points to our God. Even standing in the doorway of God's house is better than a lifetime of seeming luxury in the house of wickedness.

God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God is our sun and our shield, both necessary on the pilgrim's journey. A man or woman travelling a great distance must stay warm, they must have light for their path, and they must have a way to protect themselves. The author is announcing that God is both our warmth and light, and our protection. He is all we need on our journey through this life. He will provide.

Oh Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You! NKJV

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 85

December 21, 2021

Read Psalm 85

Revive us Again.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles Psalm 85: *Prayer that the LORD will Restore Favor to the Land. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.*

Nehemiah 12:46

Some Bible scholars believe this psalm to be written by David and see the clear saving redemption of Jesus as the theme. Others point to certain words and a belief that the author refers to the captivity and return from exile in Babylon. But God did not write the author's name, so good Bible scholars are hesitant to speak with any certainty.

Psalm 85:1-2 NKJV—Selah.

LORD, You have been favorable to Your land. The Psalmist calls upon the name of Jehovah (YHWH), the Great I AM. He speaks of God's promises and faithfulness to "His land." The entire earth is the Lord's and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1), but He has shown great love for a specific piece of land throughout history, the land of Israel, the Promised Land.

Whether the Psalmist speaks of a literal return of the nation of Israel from captivity or the land itself under rule of the Philistines during David's time, he is ultimately speaking of God's mercy and faithfulness to His people. That even though His people have sinned against Him, He is faithful to cover and forgive their unrighteousness.

What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, forever. What a covering does his blood afford!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 85:3 NKJV

Oh, praise the Lord! His anger and wrath are not something that we want to see, let alone be directed at us. In Old Testament times, the sin offering and rituals around it were very specific. When God's children sinned, which we all do, they had to confess and follow the procedure. Praise the Lord for the intercession of our

Savior.
Hebrews 10:5-7

Thank You, Jesus.

Psalm 85:4-9 NKJV

Here the tone shifts again. The author pleads with God to stay His wrath. But God's anger is not the problem.

It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Revive us again, Lord, so that we may rejoice in you! A call for revival. Revive Your people, Lord. Revive Your church. Revive the hearts of those who love You. If ever we need that again, it is now. Revive us, Lord.

Will we hear what the Lord will speak? This is great trust in God. The Psalmist called for mercy and faithfulness and then for revival, now he will wait and hear what the Lord has to say. And with surety, the author believes the Lord will speak "peace to His people." But even though we often wait for the voice of the Lord, for the Father to intervene, for His path to be made clear, we cannot slip back into folly and foolishness.

Psalm 85:10-13 NKJV

The Psalmist closes Psalm 85 with the utmost trust in the Lord.

Love and faithfulness have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. NIV
Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed! NLT
Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. NASB1995

The Hebrew word used here in verse 10 is *hesed*. The word *hesed* is found hundreds of times in the Old Testament and is used to express an essential part of God's character, specifically the way He loves. *Hesed* is translated as unfailing love, steadfast love, abounding love, loyal love and faithfulness.

Exodus 34:6-8

Love and truth; righteousness and peace. These things are not easily set together. God is Love and Truth. These four attributes are fully reconciled in the person of Jesus Christ: unfailing (*hesed*) love and truth, righteousness and peace.

Romans 3:26b

What a beautiful psalm and a beautiful reminder of God's unfailing love in good times and bad; God is faithful, and God is good.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 86

January 4, 2022

Read Psalm 86
Great Is Your Steadfast Love
A Prayer of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 86 is a beautiful prayer of David. Some modern scholars have tried to dispute the Davidic authorship because there are bits and pieces, words and phrases, in this psalm that are sprinkled throughout Old Testament scripture, parts that David would not have access to. However, ancient Israelites believed this psalm to be *of David*, and that is what God recorded in His Word; therefore, that is the truth that we know.

Why do people think they know better?

This is *A Prayer of David*. Some point out the mix of words and phrases and ideas that can be found in other parts of the Old Testament and call this psalm a "mosaic" prayer. It is also the only psalm penned by David in the Third Book of the Psalter.

The Orthodox Jewish Bible 2011 calls Psalm 86 a *tefillah of David*. *Tefillah* is a word for prayer. The NKJV titles this psalm: Prayer for Mercy, with Meditation on the Excellencies of the LORD. *A Prayer of David*.

A Prayer of David. We have here one of the five psalms entitled Tephillahs or prayers. This psalm consists of praise as well as prayer, but it is in all parts so directly addressed to God that it is most fitly called "a prayer."
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Read Psalm 86:1-7 in the NLT

Bend your ear down to me and hear me! What a beautiful image this portrays. David had quite a relationship with God. He was not a perfect man; he was a sinner, like the rest of us. But he loved the Lord, and he knew the Lord. God called David a "man after His own heart."

David needed God's help. Who knows what was going on for David when he wrote this prayer. His life was filled with man's betrayal, even that of his own son. Whatever it was that prompted these words, David knew that his only help would come from the Lord. No matter who hurt him in this life, the Lord was always with him, and because of that promise David could handle whatever was thrown at him.

David's prayers and songs are humble. He often calls upon God's mercy while saying "help me, I am poor and needy. I am lost and afraid. I am in trouble." You can almost see David on his knees, head bowed, tears in his eyes.

Psalm 86:5 NKJV

God is ready to forgive! He is abundant in mercy. God is good. His steadfast (*hesed*), unfailing love is available to all who seek Him.

Have you failed a hundred times? Are you ashamed to look toward God again? Do you feel it is just too much to ask? My friend, you are never too far gone. God made a way. Let these psalms reassure you.

Psalm 86:8-13 NLT

What beautiful words! Some commentators say that it's best in this psalm that we do not know the occasion of David's cry for help. When the reason behind his need for a Savior is vague, it is easier for future generations to relate it to their own lives and struggles. Read the words again . . . it's true, the words could be mine or yours.

He alone is God. There is none other. The only way to be saved is through Him. David knew this. Do you?

Note: all of the verbs in David's prayer are present tense. God **does** great works. He **is** God. If we ever feel distant from God all we must do is open our eyes and look around us, at all of creation, at the sunrise, at the seasons. It is that God *did* great things, but He also *does* great things. Do you believe this?

At this point in the psalm, David has shifted to praising the works of God. He shared his needs and his fears and called upon the God who can save. He put his trust in the Lord. Now he praises God for His unfailing love and is reminded of the strength God offers His children.

David says: Teach me Your ways Lord!

Teach me thy way, O LORD. Instruct me thus at all times, let me live in thy school; but teach me now especially since I am in trouble and perplexity. Be pleased to shew me the way which thy wisdom and mercy have prepared for my escape; behold I lay aside all willfulness, and only desire to be informed as to thy holy and gracious mind.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 86:15-16—Compare NIV and NLT

This is why we study different translations whenever possible. “Just as my mother did” and “the son of your servant” mean the same thing, I guess. But knowing both of these, gives us a bigger picture of what David is saying.

Three times David uses the Hebrew word *hesed* to describe God's love. *Hesed* or *chesed* is the Hebrew word that God used to describe His covenant love toward His children.

Exodus 34:6-7a

The word *hesed* is translated: unfailing love, mercy, compassion, steadfast love, faithfulness, among others.

David uses this Hebrew word in three verses of this psalm.

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (verse 5
NLT)

For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. (verse 13 NLT)

But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.
(verse 15 NLT)

Despite the struggles and pain in David's life, he knew God intimately. He relied upon God. He sought God first. God was David's strength. And no matter if the kingdom's walls fell around him, David knew that God was faithful and would take him home and into His presence someday.

Psalm 86:17—My help and comfort.

David completes his prayer with a plea for help, but a knowing plea. David knows God will hear him and answer him and help him. How does David know this with certainty?

Because He has before. God is faithful. When we worry if He hears us and will move to help us, we need only to look back and remember the times that He was faithful before.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 87

January 11, 2022

Read Psalm 87
Glorious Things of You Are Spoken
A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. A Song.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NASB1995 titles Psalm 87: **The Privileges of Citizenship in Zion. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.** The NKJV titles it: **The Glories of the City of God.** A Psalm of the songs of Korah. A Song.

Some believe this song was written during David's reign and at the founding of the city of Zion. The song is a celebration of being an Israelite and dwelling in Jerusalem, but the mention of Babylon and the other ancient superpowers leans toward a later date, at least until after the temple's construction.

A Psalm or Song for the songs of Korah. A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one . . .

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The sons of Korah were Levites who stood at the doorway to the temple. Maybe this was a song sung at the opening of the doors. For sure, it is a celebration of being God's chosen people.

Compare Psalm 87:1-3 NKJV—Selah.

Psalm 87:1-3 NLT—Interlude.

The entire earth is the Lord's and everything in it. We know this. But the Lord has a special love for Jerusalem. The place is not holy because of itself; Jerusalem is holy because God is there, and God has chosen it.

Psalm 24:1-2

Zechariah 2:12

God is Lord over all the earth. And He has chosen Zion as His home and the place He will return to and sit upon His throne at the end of days. Both are true. Likewise, God used the Israelite people to bring His Word and His Son into the world to redeem the world in the same way.

Psalm 87:4-6 NKJV—Selah.

Psalm 87:4-6 NLT—Interlude.

In Psalm 87, starting at verse 4, the sons of Korah are now sharing the words of God.

Jerusalem is the city of God, but the surrounding gentile cities, even those of immorality, have children of God within them. God speaks specifically of Egypt (Rahab), Babel (of the Babylonians), Philistia, Tyre, and Cush (Ethiopia). These are cities or peoples that had conflicted with Jerusalem, but God was reaching out to His children within those places and those peoples and calling them to Him, to His Holy Mountain.

Verse 6 is beautiful in the Message (which is a single author's paraphrase of the Bible):

GOD registers their names in His book: "This one, this one, and this one—born again, right here."
Psalm 87:6 The Message

Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in His sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 87:6—Compare the NKJV and the NLT

Maybe the sons of Korah saw God writing all the saint's names down in His Book and then all the people, from every nation and tribe and place around the world would celebrate and sing and play music for being written and chosen as God's children. What a beautiful picture and reminder of all that we have and all that we have to look forward to.

Psalm 87:7

The Source of Life, all Good Things, "all of my springs" come from the Lord.

James 1:17

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 88

January 18, 2022

Read Psalm 88

I Cry Out Day and Night Before You

A Song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NASB 1995 titles Psalm 88: **A Petition to Be Saved from Death**. The NKJV titles it: **A Prayer for Help in Despondency**. The NLT adds: *A song to be sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction."*

A Maskil or *Maschil* is a Hebrew term not completely understood, but probably some sort of musical or literary term. Most Bible scholars believe a psalm with this heading is a meditative or contemplative song intent upon imparting or teaching a piece of wisdom.

Heman the Ezrahite, a son of Korah, probably lived during the time of King David and Solomon. He was noted for being wise and a devout servant of the Lord, however, there is no proof that this is same man. There are other men named Heman spoken of in the Old Testament, but Bible scholars lean toward the author being one of the three "sons of Korah" (Heman, Asaph, and Ethan) during David's time. Read 1 Chronicles 6:31-48. The New Living Translation is the most straight forward and easy to read here.

Note: Heman's grandfather was the prophet, Samuel. Interesting. 😊

The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the Psalm must have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1894

The song is sad, but it's a beautiful song of a man pouring his heart out before the Lord.

Psalm 88:1-7 NLT—Interlude.

The psalmist here clings to his salvation. That is the only good thing left for him. He is lost and completely alone in his suffering. His loved ones have written him off as dead already; he feels far away from God, but he never renounces his faith nor the goodness of God. Neither does he claim any sin he is being reproached for like in other psalms we have seen from David. Heman is in pain, lost and alone.

Or maybe this is a collection or story of the times in his life when he felt this way.

The opening line calls out to Yahweh (LORD, in all caps), the covenant name of the Great *I Am* of the Old Testament.

Exodus 3:14-15

Heman calls upon the LORD to save him from his suffering, but he also understands that the God of all creation controls all, sees all, and sets all in motion. He was suffering because God allowed him to suffer. Some commentators link this author to Job in style and manner of writing and the way that he calls out to God.

Selah. There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 88:8-10 NLT—Interlude.

Verses 8-10 reminds us of two others in the Bible. Job was abandoned, forsaken by his friends,

Job 6:14-22

Job's so-called "friends" abandoned him in his hour of need. Heman, too, felt abandoned. Some commentators suggest that Heman was cast out with a terrible disease, like that of leprosy.

Someone else was abandoned and cast away,

Isaiah 53:1-6

Mark 14:48-50

There is nothing that we suffer, that Jesus did not also suffer. He understands. He walks with us. Heman did not have this reassurance as he lived long before the Messiah came to earth.

Psalm 88:11-18 NLT—Darkness is my closest friend.

Heman feels that death is close, and that death will only bring more desperation. He feels far away from God, but he never expresses anger or bitterness; he has just accepted that this is his life, his suffering. Doesn't your heart go out to him? He has no hope.

But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.

Psalm 88:13 NKJV

In the morning: David often wrote words like these, that he would call for help from the Lord in the morning. That the morning would bring word of His unfailing love. The night can be filled with fear and anxiety and the unknown, but with the morning comes renewed hope that God is present, and all will be well.

Despite the grief and sadness of Heman's life or present times, he still reaches out to God each morning.

The final words of this song are this: Darkness is my closest friend (NLT), my acquaintances are in darkness (NASB1995), my companions have become darkness (ESV).

What an awful way to end this psalm.

Maybe, here, the message is two-fold. First, no matter the darkness, no matter the anxiety nor the fear, no matter the suffering, we are to call out to God, the Great I Am, the One and only who can save.

And two, we are privy to the Good News that Heman did not know, and here it is . . .

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

1 Peter 5:10-11

The Good News is that Jesus Christ is our hope and joy amidst struggles while in this life. He has conquered death and paved the way to new life with Him. All that He asks is that we believe and walk with Him.

Thank you, Jesus. xo

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 89

January 25, 2022

Read Psalm 89
I Will Sing of the Steadfast Love of the LORD
A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite
 ESV

Remembering the Covenant with David, and Sorrow for Lost Blessings
A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite
 NKJV

The LORD's Covenant with David, and Israel's Afflictions.
A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite
 NASB1995

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer end with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favors, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite or A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite: there are a number of men named Ethan mentioned in the Old Testament. Although Bible translations link the title of Psalm 89 to 1 Kings 4:31, a passage about King Solomon.

1 Kings 4:29-31

Of Ethan the Ezrahite: perhaps the same person as Jeduthun, who was a musician in David's reign; was noted for his wisdom in Solomon's days, and probably survived till the troubles of Rehoboam's period. If this be the man, he must have written this Psalm in his old age, when troubles were coming thick and heavy upon the dynasty of David and the land of Judah; this is not at all improbable, and there is much in the Psalm which looks that way.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Also, Psalm 89 closes *Book Three* of the Psalter.

Ethan begins his song singing of God's faithfulness to all generations,

Psalm 89:1-2 NLT

The beginning verses of Psalm 89 are a great reminder of how our Lord Jesus taught us to pray,

Matthew 6:9-13

If we begin our prayers with a reminder of God's faithfulness, it puts our hearts and our minds upon what is true. Have you ever stumbled and wondered how to start or where to start? When your mind is filled with worry and chaos? As Jesus taught us, sing of God's faithfulness first; remember the Lord's promises; recall the things He has done.

"I will sing of the Lord's unfailing love forever!"

Psalm 89:3-4 NKJV—Selah.

2 Samuel 7:12-13

Ethan sings of God's covenant with David; that David's line would sit on the throne established by God forever. If Ethan was still alive and saw Solomon's days waning and the kingdom crumbling, he would have leaned upon these verses and this promise of an everlasting kingdom. Solomon would sit on David's throne; Solomon would build the house of the Lord.

But Solomon was only a man. These verses sing of Jesus, although Ethan would not have known His Name. The people of Israel knew He was coming.

Selah. A musical moment of silence. A promise so wonderful to be worthy of a moment of pause.

Psalm 89:5-18 sings of the power and majesty of our God. The wording is beautiful poetry, using imagery of things that existed around the people of Israel during ancient times.

Verse 10 says, "You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm." Rahab was sometimes the name given to Egypt. The Old Testament speaks of God's power over this ancient kingdom. Egypt was a world superpower until they refused to heed the words of God. Rahab was also an ancient sea serpent of Canaanite mythology, and the serpent is well known to believers in Genesis 3. What a beautiful piece of imagery to use in writing this instructive psalm.

Yes, our protection comes from the Lord, and he, the Holy One of Israel, has given us our king.

Psalm 89:18 NLT

For our shield belongs to the Lord, and our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Psalm 89:18 NKJV

Ethan continues by thanking the Lord for His chosen king, David. The psalm sings of God's provision and protection over the chosen leader of His people. The song also hints at the relationship between David and God, and verses 19-37 are God's words, His promises to strengthen and shield David and his line in the years to come.

Psalm 89:19—Compare the NLT and NKJV

Bible scholars believe the "holy one" or the one who God gave "the vision" to was probably Nathan, the prophet.

Psalm 89:20-21 NLT

God goes on to speak about how He will protect and guide and defend His chosen servant, David. David was "of the people," a shepherd, the youngest and least of Jesse's sons, yet God exalted him.

Psalm 89:24-28 NLT

Here God speaks of His son and anointed one, David. But truly He speaks of our Redeemer, Jesus, God's true Son and our Savior.

David after his anointing, was persecuted, but none could gain advantage against him. Yet all this was a faint shadow of the Redeemer's sufferings, deliverance, glory, and authority, in whom alone these predictions and promises are fully brought to pass.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

John 8:28-29

It's beautiful and comforting and inspiring that sprinkled through the Old Testament are pictures of Jesus. David may have tried to rule over the seas, but he did not and could not. There is only One who has done so and only One who will ever do so.

Ethan goes on to reiterate the promises God made with the line of David in verses 30-37. That, despite many prideful and evil kings in David's family tree, God never turned His back on His people. God *did* allow judgment to fall upon His people because of these kings and their choices, that when the people turned their backs on God, He did respond. But He never renounced His promises, and He always saved them.

2 Samuel 7:14-16

In verse 38, Ethan's words turn toward questioning God and His promises. That God *had* turned His back on the promises He made to David and David's house. Could this be true?

Psalm 89:38-39 NLT

The tone here shifts. The author was confident in God and His promises. But not now. Scholars are unsure of the reason or the time period the author wrote this. But something bad happened.

In verse 45, Ethan pauses (*Selah/Interlude*). Ethan is a wise man; he knows that God did not cast off His children. Ethan knows that God would not forget His promises, he had just spent many verses prior speaking of those promises. He knows God's unfailing love and faithfulness; he did not need to remind God.

Does it ever feel like God has forgotten though? We know God's love and faithfulness are never-ending, but we are human, and it is easy to doubt. There are many times throughout history when God's people lost hope, even in modern history, when the Jewish people could have felt that God turned His back upon them. When we feel this way, we *must* speak of His faithfulness to remind ourselves and to encourage our brothers and sisters around us. That is called hope, and we always have hope in our Lord.

Psalm 89:46-48 NLT—Interlude.

How long, Lord? When will You return? When will You serve justice? When will You redeem us?

Some commentators point out these verses as needing the Good News. Jesus is present throughout the Old Testament; He is talked about; He is held in high honor. The people long for His arrival. But they didn't know when or how, and it was probably easy to doubt.

Thank You, Father, that we live after the time of Jesus. We know who He was and is. We know His promises; God walked on this earth as a man. He showed us how to live; He told us what to expect in this life and the one to come. He is faithful. Praise the Lord that we know the Good News.

Ethan and the people of his time did not know, they waited. And as they waited, they suffered.

Isaiah 40:31

Ethan goes on to plead with the Lord to remember His promises, to David and to His people. Then, this beautiful, LONG song ends this way,

Blessed be the LORD forevermore! Amen and amen. Psalm 89:52 NKJV
 Praise the LORD forever! Amen and amen! Psalm 89:52 NLT
 May the LORD be praised forever. Amen and amen. Psalm 89:52 HCSB

Blessed be the Lord for evermore. He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for He always deserves it of us.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 90

February 1, 2022

BOOK FOUR (Psalms 90-106)

Read Psalm 90

From Everlasting to Everlasting
A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 90 begins *Book Four* of the Psalter (Psalms 90-106).

The New King James Version of the Bible titles Psalm 90: **The Eternity of God, and Man's Frailty. A Prayer of Moses the man of God.** The New American Standard Bible (2020) titles this psalm: **God's Eternity and the Brevity of Human Life. A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.**

Some have questioned the authorship of Psalm 90, suggesting instead that the author was "some other Moses" from antiquity. But Bible scholars believe the evidence for Moses (of Egypt, the great leader of the Israelites) being the author is strong and withstanding. Psalm 90 is the only psalm with his name attached to it, but he did write other similar pieces in the Old Testament.

Exodus 15 is titled "the Song of Moses," and begins: *Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD* (verse 1a).

Also, the end of Deuteronomy 31 (verse 30) says this: *then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended . . .* and Deuteronomy 32:1-43 are Moses's song reminding the people to follow the Lord always and to teach their children and grandchildren the commandments. He sang this song to the people before he died and passed his leadership over to Joshua.

Deuteronomy 33 is also a blessing song.

It is hard to speak with certainty on an event or time when this psalm was written. Some say the events of Numbers 14 make sense, others, Numbers 20 or 21. Bible scholars cannot agree; therefore, we will leave it at this: Psalm 90 was written by Moses sometime during the forty years of wandering in the desert (possibly 13th or 14th century BC).

Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this Psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honored of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 90:1-6 NIV

During the Exodus and forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the people were constantly looking for shelter, safety, and refuge. This psalm reminds the people: *Lord, you are our dwelling place*. A reminder when times are hard, when we are afraid and unsure where our help will come from, *Lord, you are our dwelling place*. A reminder to put our trust in the Lord, and the Lord only.

In Numbers 13, the Israelites approached the Promised Land of Canaan after God freed them from slavery in Egypt. God told Moses to send out spies to explore the land, twelve men, one from each tribe. These men were gone for forty days. Upon returning, they shared their worry of not being strong enough to take the land that God promised them.

Beginning in verse 26, these men shared their fears. Caleb and Joshua were the only two in this meeting who tried to encourage the people and remind them of the strength and promises of the Lord. The other ten spies worried and doubted and fretted despite God's promises and faithfulness and previous great miracles of protection and defense.

And God responded . . .

Numbers 14:28-33

Forty years is a long time to wander in a wilderness, but it is not a long time to watch an entire generation die. Those who had seen the wonders of the Lord in Egypt passed on in the desert, except for Caleb and Joshua. Not only were they moving and protecting and guarding themselves every day in an unknown and unsafe place, they were dying, quickly. It's so sad to think of.

Yet, Moses's words speak of a commitment to God anyway. God *is* their dwelling place, their safe place. He is everlasting and faithful. Days must have dragged on and on, but God was everlasting. A thousand years was a blink of an eye for God. The Israelites, Moses in particular, understood this, took comfort in this, relied upon this as they wandered and died knowing that God would be faithful to their children and grandchildren.

Psalm 90:7-11 NLT

Deuteronomy 31:2 says that Moses lived to be one hundred and twenty years old. So, what is this "seventy or eighty years?" In our understanding, Moses was even an old man when God sent him to Egypt.

Exodus 7:6-7

Justice shortened the days of rebellious Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The people knew what it was like to face their sin and the wrath of their God. They had sinned against Him. The Lord had performed mighty miracles to free them from Egypt, the superpower of the world. Egypt was nothing compared their God.

But they lost faith, they doubted, and God exposed their sin. It is painful when God does this. But even though God punished the people, He never left them.

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

This little prayer of verse 12 is good reminder for believers today as well, to live like today is our last and make every day count. Make use of every day, every moment given to us. What is important in this life, in our days, however many they be?

Let Jesus remind us of what to fill our days with,

Matthew 22:37-40

Lord, if we must die in this desert, if this whole generation (except Caleb and Joshua) must pass away in the wilderness, then, at any rate, give us the fullness of Thy favor now, that we may spend all our remaining days, whether they be few or many, in gladness and rejoicing.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 90:13-17—NLT

Instead of wasting our precious, fleeting days in pursuing fancies, which leave the possessors forever poor, let us seek the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance in heaven. Let us pray that the work of the Holy Spirit may appear in converting our hearts, and that the beauty of holiness may be seen in our conduct.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Moses calls upon the covenant love of the Father, *hesed*, God's unfailing mercy and love. When we become weary or doubtful or tempted, let us call upon the unfailing love of our Father in heaven.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 91

February 7, 2022

Read Psalm 91 My Refuge and My Fortress

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles this psalm: **Safety of Abiding in the Presence of God**. The NASB titles it: **Security of One Who Trusts in the LORD**. There are no other notes recorded for this psalm.

Some believe this psalm was written (and the few to follow) by Moses. Maybe because it has some of the same language as Psalm 90, which Jewish tradition attributes to Moses. Others believe it was written later and sounds like David's writing. Some suggest that when no author is specified (as in the next few) the author can be assumed to be the last name written, in this case, Moses (Psalm 90).

However, no one knows for sure. God did not add an author's name on this psalm and on many books in His Word. Why is that? Could it be so that we must research and think about it and discuss it and struggle to understand it? Or could it be so that we are reminded that the Bible is filled solely with the words of God, not of man? Or could it be that when we assign a person or a date the piece can become less applicable to later generations? When we don't know who or where or why a person wrote something, it can be easier to apply it to our own lives and the time that we live in.

Whatever the reason, praise be to God.

Charles Spurgeon had some interesting words on this psalm. These words hit home for our current times.

In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly. A German physician was wont to speak of it as the best preservative in times of cholera, and in truth, it is a heavenly medicine against plague and pest. He who can live in its spirit will be fearless, even if once again London should become a lazarus-house, and the grave be gorged with carcasses.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

(Lazarus-house: another word for leper colony)

Compare Psalm 91:1-2 in the NKJV and NLT

Such beautiful, peace-filled words.

What is this "secret place" in the shadow of the Almighty? This place of refuge, peace, and safety is nearness to God. One commentator said that one must walk close to something to fall "under the shadow" of it. How close must we be to our Father to "enter into" this secret place and find rest within the shadow of His protection?

Not everyone who believes knows of this secret place, but it exists for anyone who draws near enough. Do you know this place? David knew this place; Moses knew this place, and Jesus certainly knew.

Those who commune with God are safe with Him, no evil can reach them, for the outstretched wings of His power and love cover them from all harm.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 91:3-8 NLT

God does not always rescue His children from disease or traps or bad things. What do these verses mean? God may not rescue His children from these things, but He can, and He has.

God is our refuge and our mighty fortress; He is our strength and our protector. When we walk close to Him, we feel the power of His presence. We feel hope and strength that doesn't exist when we stand alone, far away from our Creator. God is our hope. What is there to be afraid of when He is on our side? When He walks so close? When He is within an arm's reach for help?

Not to be afraid is in itself an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

There is nothing to fear when we walk with God.

Romans 8:38-39

There is nothing to fear when we are in the secret place of God, in the shadow of the Almighty. Not because bad will never happen, but because we are never alone.

Psalm 91:9-13 NLT

No evil will conquer us. He even sends His angels (not one or two, but an unspecified number of angels) to watch over and protect us.

Interestingly, Satan twisted these words in an attempt to deceive Jesus,

Matthew 4:5-6

Jesus walked in the shadow of the Almighty. He knew the secret place of the Father. He could not be deceived. Even though the devil spewed his lies, Jesus knew already that He was covered by the shadow of the Lord.

Angels were with Jesus always. They were already helping him, just not in the way that Satan taunted Him with.

Matthew 4:11

Psalm 91:14-16 NLT

Oh, what a sweet promise. God's promises are everlasting. What He says is true and will happen. He is our protector; He is our place of safety. How do we know this?

Because He says so, and what He says is Truth.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 92

February 8, 2022

Read Psalm 92
How Great Are Your Works
A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

In the New King James Version of the Bible, Psalm 92 is titled: **Praise to the LORD for His Love and Faithfulness. A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day.** The New American Standard Bible titles it: **Praise for the LORD's Goodness. A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day.**

No author is mentioned. It's interesting that some have speculated that Adam possibly wrote (or composed) this, but there is no proof of that. God revealed the Sabbath to Moses, so it's uncertain how some could believe Adam wrote it from the garden of Eden. Some commentators believe Moses wrote it; others are certain that the prose fits David. But again, God chose to leave the "who wrote it" a mystery.

What we do know is that this song has been sung on the Sabbath for thousands of years. This song is a beautiful poem of rest and peace and joy found in the goodness of God.

Psalm 92:1-3 NLT

Give thanks to the Lord. Praise the Most High God. We proclaim your unfailing (*hesed*) love in the morning when we wake and by the evening we are still singing of your faithfulness. All day long we praise the Lord with our voices and musical instruments.

That is the Sabbath. In the book of Exodus, the Israelites were wandering in the desert. They were lost and afraid and beginning to doubt the Lord and His promises. He fed them every day—from the sky. He sent meat when they were hungry for meat. He sent bread every morning, enough for everyone. But still they doubted. So, what did God do about their disbelief and their grumbling and complaining?

Exodus 16:23

God commanded His people to rest, and on that day of rest they were to give thanks and praise Him. That is all. We no longer live under this commandment, but we should still live by this example. The day of rest, the Sabbath, is our day for the Lord. It is our day to recoup, to rest, and to remember. To sing of His unfailing love in the morning and His faithfulness at night. The Israelites doubted and grumbled about God while wondering in the wilderness, so He told them to take a break for the day. And on that day, all they were to do was rest and remember His goodness.

How many of us grumble about our hour and a half spent at church on Sundays?

Psalm 92:4 NLT

Sometimes we read these stories of the grumblings of the Israelites and think, "how could they?" God literally dropped food from the sky for them! He gave them meat even, and they didn't have to hunt for it. How could they grumble? He had saved them from slavery.

When we feel like grumbling about our Sabbath day, let's remember this verse. We think the day of rest belongs to us, "It is my day to rest and do what I want." No, it is the day we are called to slow down and remember what God has done. Sing for joy because of what He has done for you.

Compare Psalm 92:5-7 NLT and the Good News Bible if you can.

The wicked may prosper and spread like weeds. But take heart, they, like weeds, will be destroyed. Then the promise is found in verse 8:

But You, LORD, are on high forevermore. NKJV
 But You, O Lord, will be exalted forever. NLT
 . . . because You, LORD, are supreme forever. GNB

The wicked weeds will be scattered and destroyed. But God will be on high forevermore. Not just forever. Forevermore!

Psalm 92:9-11 NLT

The psalmist finds joy in God's promise that He will prevail. All knees shall bow in heaven and on earth. It will happen. God is faithful. He has been faithful, and He always will be. If we believe this, then we know that He will triumph over all and someday everyone everywhere throughout time will answer to Him.

The psalmist takes a moment to boast that he has seen his enemies fall. He has seen God move against them. Of course, most of us cannot say that we've seen the fall of evil. Evil is real and present and active in this world, all around us. Sometimes bad losses and good wins, but not often. Evil flourishes here . . . for a time.

Romans 8:37

We may not see prosperity or justice, but we know it will happen. How do we know this? Because God said so, repeatedly, and the things that God has said will happen have already started happening. Nothing happens in this world without His knowledge. He sees. He knows. He will act against all the wrong committed against His children throughout time.

But He will do so at the right time, and only He knows what that time will be.

On a side note, sometimes these verses of promised vengeance are hard for those of who have the gift of empathy and mercy and want to believe in the good in all. However, and thankfully so, it is not up to us. God sees the heart of men. The decision is His.

Terrible as this fact is, no true hearted heart would wish to have it otherwise. Treason against the great Monarch of the universe ought not to go unpunished; such wanton wickedness richly merits the severest doom.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 92:12-15 NLT

The wicked man "flourishes" for a time. But the children of God will flourish abundantly, like palm trees and the mighty cedars of Lebanon! Palm trees grow tall and strong in the desert. They stand proud like a sentinel reaching toward the sun. A beautiful metaphor of God's children growing and reaching toward Him.

These strong and enduring trees will be moved into the house of the Lord, into the courts of our God. And even as the trees age, they will still grow and fruit and forever remain young. They will forever sing of the Lord's faithfulness and love.

As David saw the Ark of the Covenant come into Jerusalem, he and all the people sang these words:

1 Chronicles 16:31-34

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 93

February 14, 2022

Read Psalm 93 The LORD Reigns

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The NKJV titles this psalm: **The Eternal Reign of the LORD**. The NASB titles it: **The Majesty of the LORD**.

The LORD reigneth, or Jehovah reigns. Whatever opposition may arise, his throne is unmoved; he has reigned, does reign, and will reign for ever and ever. Whatever turmoil and rebellion there may be beneath the clouds, the eternal King sits above all in supreme serenity; and everywhere he is really Master.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

What a beautiful poem. God be praised. We do not know the author. Neither do we know the timeframe: it could be long, long ago, but it also fits for today. Thankfully, whatever goes on around us, God reigns!

The Message paraphrase of this psalm is beautiful,
Read Psalm 93 in The Message

This little psalm brings hope in a dark and hopeless world. God reigns. All we must do is look around us, at His creation, and into the night sky, at the beauty and majesty of the universe. God reigns over all. He always has, and He always will. No evil is bigger than our God. He will not be defeated.

And the beautiful reminder today: we are His children.

Psalm 93:1 NLT—The LORD is King!

Do you believe that? Do you feel like the world is shaken? This is just a little bitty psalm with a BIG promise: the world stands firm and cannot be shaken—because YAHWEH is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

Psalm 93:2 NLT—Time immemorial. The everlasting past.

The Oxford dictionary attempted to translate "Time Immemorial": *used to refer to a point of time in the past that was so long ago that people have no knowledge or memory of it.*

We can't define "time immemorial" without God. One commentator said this, "The Lord does not count time as we do. He is above and outside of the sphere of time. God sees all of eternity's past and eternity's future. The

time that passes on earth is of no consequence from God's timeless perspective. A second is no different from an eon; a billion years pass like seconds to the eternal God."

Yet the beautiful piece is that He still sees all.

Revelation 1:8

The beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, from time immemorial, the everlasting past: these are hard ideas to understand. Our human mind needed the concept of "time," so God gave it to us. We have since attempted to fit Him into it, but that doesn't work. God is and was and always will be.

Psalm 90:2—Compare NLT and NIV (A prayer of Moses, the man of God)

When it feels like the world is crumbling around us, we can cling to this psalm. God's throne has stood since time immemorial.

Psalm 93:3-5 NLT—Forever and ever.

Most of us have only read about (or watched movies of) the violent storms of the sea. Thank goodness. To the psalmist, a storm on the sea was the most frightening thing . . . but his God was mightier! And we know this was a reality during Jesus' time as well. Jesus calmed the seas when His disciples feared for their lives. Jesus had no fear of the sea, but He calmed the storm because the ones He loved did.

Mark 4:37-41

God is mightier than the mightiest waves of the sea. He reigns over all. Since time immemorial. Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 94

February 21, 2022

Read Psalm 94 The LORD Will Not Forsake His People

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The New American Standard Bible titles this psalm: **The LORD Implored to Avenge His People**. The New King James Version titles it: **God the Refuge of the Righteous**. And above, the ESV: **The LORD Will Not Forsake His People**. The themes of this psalm are clear in the titles: "save us" and "serve out Your justice!"

There is no other information about Psalm 94. Bible scholars are unsure who wrote it or when it was written. Titles like those listed above were added to the text later, although scholars believe they are ancient because many are included in the Septuagint (LXX, the earliest Hebrew to Greek translation of the Old Testament, approx. 3rd century BC).

This psalm was penned when the church was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and it is an appeal to God, as the judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 94:1-7 NLT

The psalmist, whomever he was, called upon the Lord to strike down his enemies, the enemies of the people, and therefore, God's enemies, who hurt and killed the innocent.

The Bible paraphrase called The Message's words are beautiful for this psalm. The Message is one pastor's modern-day summary of the Bible. While it is not a translation of the Bible, it is a good addition to any study when combined with other reputable Bible translations. Pastor Peterson was once asked what his goal was with the incredible work he had completed:

(to) "Bring the New Testament to life for two different types of people: those who hadn't read the Bible because it seemed too distant and irrelevant and those who had read the Bible so much that it had become 'old hat.'" Eugene H. Peterson, pastor, 1932-2018

His words flow like poetry,
Read Psalm 94:1-7 The Message

Show your colors God! Throw the book at the bad guys! Prove that You are not out to lunch!! 😊

Have you cried out to God, "How long"? "What are you waiting for" "I need you. Help me now"? You wouldn't be the only one. Here are some instances of God's children as recorded in the Bible crying out the same: the prophet Habakkuk and King David and martyrs in the book of Revelation even:

Habakkuk 1:2

Psalm 13:1

Revelation 6:9-10

It's hard to wait for God. God's timing is different than our timing. We expect an answer and a fix right when we ask, and as humans, it's very hard for us to wait. But God understands this. His Son came to earth in human form and experienced this firsthand. God knows. He understands. But He also knows what's best for us, and often, as we know with our own children, waiting is not a bad thing. It can bring clarity and patience and perseverance and empathy for others.

Vengeance belongs to God, not to man. God sees all, past, present, and future. He knows all, and He sees the heart of people. Therefore, vengeance is God's. But . . . God promises good things to those who wait for Him,

Isaiah 40:31

Waiting for the Lord is hard, but those who persevere will be rewarded. God says so.

The Psalmist goes on,
Psalm 94:8-11 NLT

The bad guys think "God is out to lunch," but they don't think about the fact that He made their ears, so He Himself can hear just fine. He made their eyes; therefore, He can see just fine. He punishes those around them, will He not do the same to them? He knows everything. He sees you. He hears you, and He knows all. There is no hiding from a God who is alive and has ears to hear and eyes to see.

The Apostle Paul quotes verse 11 in his letter to the church in Corinth,
1 Corinthians 3:18-20

How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 94:12-15 NLT

Do you find joy in discipline? When God teaches and instructs us, He does it for our own good and for the good of His Plan for us. It's hard to find joy in that. It's hard to let go of shame, to accept mercy and grace when we feel like we don't deserve it. And when God stops us in our path and directs us a new way, that is hard. But what we must remember is that He loves us enough to care. Like a loving father who steers his children away from coming danger, God says, "because I love you, I cannot allow you to go that way. I know more than you do."

The Message is beautiful again in this section,
Read Psalm 94:12-15 MSG

"The LORD will not cast off his people." Lay hold of that precious assurance. Even if Satan should come, and whisper to you, "The Lord has cast you off," do not believe it; it cannot be. The devil has his cast-offs, but God has no cast-offs. Sometimes he takes the devil's castaways and makes them to be the trophies of his mighty grace; and when he has done so, they are his people, concerning whom the psalmist says, "The LORD will not cast off his people."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God has no cast-offs! He never turns anyone away!!

Psalm 94:16-19 NLT

The Lord is our strength and protection. He is our mighty fortress, the Rock that we can stand upon. When we feel our feet slipping away, when fear grabs hold and hope begins to fail, the Lord's unfailing love is our shelter. God's covenant *hesed* love will see us through this life and into the next. Why? Because He said so, and He has been faithful throughout time.

Exodus 34:6-7a

Verse 19 is a mighty reminder for us, here is it in several translations:

When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy. NIV
In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. NKJV
When I was upset and beside myself, you calmed me down and cheered me up. The MSG
Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad. GNBDC

How does God provide comfort? He sees you and me. He doesn't just watch us, He SEES us. He sees our hearts, our worries, and our fears. Do you ever just want someone to understand you and what you're going through, but there is no one? There is. God sees; He hears, and He understands. When we draw near to Him through prayer and reading His Word, He provides peace and comfort. God *is* peace and comfort.

Read Deuteronomy 31:6 in the NKJV and the MSG—Amazing!

Psalm 94 closes with a reminder that God is our mighty fortress. God protects us from evil. He promises to. He doesn't keep us from every bad or hard thing, but there are unseen forces that He protects us from every moment. Praise the Lord.

Psalm 94:20-23—The LORD is my fortress.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 95

February 28, 2022

Read Psalm 95 Let Us Sing Songs of Praise

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A Song of Praise and A Call to Worship and Obedience. Have you heard some of the words of this beautiful psalm before in hymns and worship music? What a powerful song of praise and adoration!

Come, let us praise the LORD!

Psalm 95 has no other information recorded in the Old Testament; however, the writer of Hebrews teaches directly from it in Hebrews 3:7-4:13. Hebrew 4:7 says "in David" or "through David" depending upon the translation. The author of Hebrews believed that David wrote this psalm, or it's possible that in ancient times the psalms were just referred to as "David's Book" as a whole. Bible scholars cannot attribute Psalm 95 to David with certainty, but it is interesting to read the author of Hebrews words about this piece.

Psalm 95:1-5 NLT

Come! Let us sing, shout, worship, and praise the Lord, our Rock and our great King! And not only is He our salvation and a loving Father who watches over us, but He holds the deep places of the earth (NKJV) and the peaks of the mountains (NASB) in His hand. How amazing! The universe is His, held in His hand, and yet, He cares for us.

It becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God wants our hearts to be cheerful and full of joy. He wants us to come to Him in joyful worship. Too often, religious ceremonies have preferred the solemn and the quiet, but that is not what our God wants of His children. In the past, children were sent out of service in fear of making too much noise for the adults there to hear from God. But is not God teaching us through the joy of our children? He wants them in service to sing to dance and to shout for joy.

Psalm 95:6 NKJV

One commentator called verse 6, "the beating heart of Psalm 95."

Let us kneel before the Lord our maker. As suppliants must we come; joyful, but not presumptuous; familiar as children before a father, yet reverential as creatures before their maker.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 95:7-11 NKJV

This is the section of Psalm 95 that the author of the New Testament book Hebrews teaches on in his letter to a Jewish community of Christian believers,

Hebrews 3:12-14

The first section of Psalm 95 calls believers to worship and bow down. Come before the Lord with a joyful heart with song and with belief. He is our salvation; He is mighty enough to hold the deep places of the earth and the highest mountain peaks within His hand.

Then comes the warning: to not forget as our ancestors forgot and therefore incurred the Lord's wrath. The author reminds the church of the Hebrews, or Jews who had become believers of Christ.

Psalm 95:8-9—Do not harden your hearts.

Meribah is the place where the Israelites quarreled with the Lord. They needed water and refused to have faith in the Lord despite the miracles He had shown already in Egypt. Moses didn't do so well here either; he was supposed to tell the rock to provide, instead he smacked the rock with his stick two times (Numbers 20:1-13). The people doubted God's ability to provide and protect many times while in the wilderness, therefore, God said:

Numbers 14:20-24

God promised a land flowing with milk and honey; where they were no longer slaves, but free and provided for. Time and time again the Israelites doubted and demanded more signs and more provisions. Eventually God had enough. For forty years they would wander the wilderness until the entire generation of those who would have seen and been old enough to understand the wonders and miracles God performed in Egypt had passed away. Then, their descendants would enter the Holy Land.

But even then, God did not abandon His people. He was angry and disappointed, but He still provided for, watched over, and cared for His people. A good and loving Father.

Hebrews 4:1-2

Psalm 95:11 NKJV

Many of the Israelites could not enter the Promised Holy Land, the place of God's "rest" promised to His people, including Moses and Aaron because of their unbelief. However, even during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness God provided for them. He provided food and rest.

Does God provide "rest" for us now? Certainly, if we are faithful to Him, we will see His face in heaven someday where we will live in eternity at rest with all the believers who have gone before and after us: a place of peace and eternal joy and rest. But doesn't God also offer "rest" here in this life?

Genesis 2:1-3

Also, the Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:8-11

A day of rest. God's holy day. Remember to give it to Him and to rest in His love and His provision.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 96

March 2, 2022

Read Psalm 96 Worship in the Splendor of Holiness

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The New King James Version titles this psalm: **A Song of Praise to God Coming in Judgment**. The New American Standard Bible titles it: **A Call to Worship the LORD the Righteous Judge**. A Song of Praise/A Call to Worship, to sing, to declare His glory and splendor among the nations. All the earth and everything in it are His. And someday, He will return in all His glory and judge all that has happened and will happen. Take heart, child of God.

There is no other information in the heading of Psalm 96, however, the words are also recorded in 1 Chronicles 16, when King David and all the Israelite's gathered to celebrate the Ark of the Covenant's arrival in Jerusalem and ascension into the tabernacle. David told Asaph and his family to give thanks to the Lord in song. The song is recorded in 1 Chronicles and in different psalms in the Psalter as well. Therefore, maybe this psalm was written by David, or maybe it was written later in remembrance of that day the Ark settled with the people in Jerusalem. Bible scholars say we cannot be certain.

But here read David's as recorded in the Chronicles,
1 Chronicles 16:23-36

Sing and shout the good news that our God reigns! The people of Israel celebrated the arrival of the Ark into Jerusalem, symbolizing God moving into His Holy City, finally. The city of Jerusalem is the Lord's and will someday again be where He reigns on earth and where He sits upon His throne and judges all the earth. The day the Ark of the Covenant, God's holy seat among His people, came into Jerusalem was a special day and a day to celebrate.

But today is also a special day. Sing and shout the Good News of the Lord, for every day is His and a day to be thankful for.

Read Psalm 96:1-3 The Message

In contrast to the beliefs of the people around the Israelites, our God calls for song, a new song. Joy and shouting and worshipping. Not solemn chanting and mourning, and certainly not the other morbid requirements of pagan gods during that time. Our God, the One True God, calls us to sing and be filled with joy.

His name, his fame, his character, his revealed word and will are to be delighted in, and remembered with perpetual thanksgiving.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 96:4-6 NLT

We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully. He deserves that nothing in his worship should be little, but all the honor rendered unto him should be given in largeness of heart, with the utmost zeal for his glory.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Our God is the One True God. He is God above everything. He is the Creator. The gods of other beliefs are manmade, they are "vain things" or "nothings" as the word "idol" is often translated.

Psalm 96:7-10 NLT

The psalmist calls for all to seek the One True God. He calls for all nations and even those worshippers of idols to recognize Yahweh and to give Him glory, the glory that He deserves. The author calls all people to bend a knee and worship the Lord. Because someday, maybe soon, everyone will see God. Now is the time to declare our obedience and our love for the True God.

Philippians 2:10-11

Are you ready for His return?

Psalm 96:11-13 NLT—Justice and Truth.

Praise be to God.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 97

March 7, 2022

Read Psalm 97 The LORD Reigns

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The LORD Reigns! (ESV) *A Song of Praise to the Sovereign LORD!* (NKJV) *God the Supreme Ruler!* (GNT) *A Hymn About God's Power!* (ICB) *The LORD's Power and Dominion!* (NASB)

The point is clear! The previous psalms are about the glory of God. How all will see God's glory someday, and how all should seek to praise the Lord now, before He returns. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it! This psalm, Psalm 97, is similar but speaks more of the power of God. He will return, and when He does, woe to the man or woman on the wrong side of His grace.

There is no information about this psalm. The couple before and after are very similar. One is titled *Of David*, so some believe Psalm 97 to be written by David as well. Others want to argue about that.

Because God didn't record a time nor an author, we need to leave it at that.

Psalm 97:1-6 ICB—I love the simplicity of this version of the Bible.

Today, the world is in chaos, which is not a new thing. But still, war and disease are real fears for us as they were during biblical times. Psalm 97 is a reassurance. God is King. He was King then; He is King now. Even though we face the unknown of scary things, the Lord reigns over all the earth. It is a reassurance that He watches over us, that He sees us.

Mountains melt like wax before the Lord. So, what you and I are afraid of is nothing, a blink of an eye, nothing to an Almighty God who knows all, sees all, and can handle all.

Isaiah 40:28-29

The Lord reigneth. This is the watchword of the psalm- Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and on earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

His Kingdom is built on what is right and fair (ICB). Praise the Lord for that.

Psalm 97:7-12 ICB

God reigns now, and when He returns, He will tear down the idols and false gods. There will be no question who is the Creator and who is the one true God. Sadly, there are those who will never believe, and who even work to tear down the children of God. But someday, upon Jesus's return, all will be made right again.

Revelation 1:7-8

Psalm 97 verse 10 is hard for many Christians, or maybe all Christians. We must love the Lord with all our being, all of it! If we cling to evil, we cannot be truly loving God at the same time. Sin and evil do not go with our God, He is good and hates evil because it cannot exist in His presence. So, if we truly love God, then all evil and sin must be purged from our lives. We cannot cling to some of it and still claim to love Him. We are only deceiving ourselves. God sees. God knows, which is beautiful and terrifying at the same time. We cannot hide from Him.

And those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy prepared for them. Those that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Let us close with the ICB simple translation of the reminder to follow the example of Jesus as we wait for His return,

Hebrews 12:1-3 ICB—Look to Jesus and don't stop trying. 😊

This is the Good News.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 98

March 14, 2022

Read Psalm 98
Make a Joyful Noise to the LORD
A Psalm

Favorite verse or thoughts:

In the NKJV, Psalm 98 is titled, **A Song of Praise to the LORD for His Salvation and Judgment**. A Psalm. The NASB titles it, **A Call to Praise the LORD for His Righteousness. A Psalm**. And the title in the ESV (above), **Make a Joyful Noise to the LORD**. A Psalm.

This sacred ode, which bears simply the title of "A Psalm," follows fitly upon the last, and is evidently an integral part of the series of royal psalms.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! This is clearly a song about redemption and salvation. This psalm is about Jesus.

The Redeemer has overcome all difficulties in the way of our redemption; His salvation and His righteousness fulfilling the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament. In pursuance of this design, God raised up His Son Jesus to be not only a Light to lighten the Gentiles, but the glory of His people Israel.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 98:1-3 The Message

Salvation is a brand-new song. God's plan for His children was to redeem them through the sacrifice of His Son all along. The Old Testament is filled with the promise of Jesus and His great love for us. Psalm 98 is a prophecy of Jesus and the way in which God would redeem His children to Himself. Who knows what the author of this psalm believed he was writing about, maybe he was writing about the promised Messiah, maybe some great way God had saved them at that time. But this psalm is most certainly about God's redeeming plan throughout time in that of His Son Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:10

Sing a new song to the Lord! What does this mean? It's the beauty of a new day. In David's psalms, he often sings of a new day, that while the night can bring worry and fear, the new day is a gift from the Lord.

Psalm 143:8

God is faithful every day, in every way. He is good, always good. Therefore, we must sing a new song to celebrate Him and His unending love and mercies. If God is faithful, then we must tell of it to others so that all the world will know Him.

Psalm 98:4-6 NIV—Shout for joy!

Sing a new song. Burst into jubilant song. Make music to the Lord. Shout for joy before the Lord. Why? Because He is the King.

Not only do our voices praise the Lord, but so do the sound of instruments. God wants our praise through song and music. How beautiful is that? Not some quiet, somber, mournful worship. God wants the beautiful noise of praise.

Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise; or burst forth, and sing, and play. Let every form of exultation be used, every kind of music pressed into the service till the accumulated praise causes the skies to echo the joyful tumult. There is no fear of our being too hearty in magnifying the God of our salvation, only we must take care the song comes from the heart, otherwise the music is nothing but a noise in his ears, whether it be caused by human throats, or organ pipes, or far resounding trumpets.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 98:7-9 NLT—Clap with glee!

Creation praises its Creator! The day and the night, the seas and the mountains all sing praise to the Lord. They are His creation.

Psalm 24:1-2 NLT

Romans 8:18-21 The Message

And in the end, all will see Him, all will know the Truth. When the Lord returns and rids the world of evil and all that's left is His goodness, then everyone everywhere will sing His praises. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. A reassuring thought during hard times. When life is full of chaos and worries and sad things, then the hope of the Lord and the return of Jesus Christ to make all things new and right is calming and reassuring.

God loves His children. He has not, nor will He ever, abandon us.

This is the joy of it. No tyrant and no weakling is he, to oppress the good or to indulge the vain, his law is good, his action right, his government the embodiment of justice. If ever there was a thing to rejoice in upon this poor, travailing earth, it is the coming of such a deliverer, the ascension to the universal throne of such a governor.

All hail, Jesus! All Hail!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 99

March 21, 2022

Read Psalm 99 The LORD Our God Is Holy

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This may be called THE SANCTUS or THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, for the word "holy" is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions.

-Charles Spurgeon, English Preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 99 is titled **Praise to the LORD for His Holiness** in the New King James Version. The New American Standard Bible (1995) titles it, **Praise to the LORD for His Fidelity to Israel**. The Holman Christian Standard Bible (a modern English translation completed in 2004) titles Psalm 99 simply, **The King Is Holy**.

There is no other information about this beautiful little song. But commentators point out the "triple holy." Something that Isaiah says later.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah sees God in all His glory in a vision and is called to a life as a prophet,

Isaiah 6:1-3

You may recognize these words from the book of Revelation when John also has a vision of God on His heavenly throne.

Revelation 4:8

Therefore, this psalm is a joyous song of God's greatness! It is a "holy" x3 in celebration of God on His throne, and what a joyous thing it is to celebrate Him in all His glory. No matter what happens here on this earth, God is on His throne. Holy, holy, holy is His Name!

Psalm 99:1-3 NLT

Other translations say, "The LORD reigns!" In due time, all will tremble at the sight of the Lord on His throne. Believers will tremble in great adoration and excitement. Evil will tremble in fear. Creation groans for this moment when it will be released to be as it was created to be. It waits for the Lord's return.

Whether the author is speaking of God currently on His heavenly throne or the time when He will return and be enthroned in Jerusalem, scholars are not sure. But does it matter? Maybe it's both. He is on His throne in

heaven, while at the same time, He sits enthroned within His church and within the hearts of His people. But someday, His throne will appear on earth for all to see.

Psalm 99:4-5 NLT

The Lord is a mighty King, but not as in those kings or world leaders remembered in history. He is a just and fair King!

The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Throughout history, kingdoms have been built on the backs of slaves and those deemed of a lower class standing, by taxing its people, and by taking land and goods with bloodshed. But it not so for the Kingdom of God. There have been times in history when men have twisted God's Word to steal and kill and destroy to attain power for themselves. Some have claimed to do so in God's Name. But our Father in heaven is good, and He will deal with those who misused His Name.

What does our God ask of us? It is clear.

Micah 6:8

Our God loves what is good because He is good. Our God desires justice and mercy and a humble heart for His children. We do what is right, not because that is what will save us, but because of being saved. Jesus's sacrifice, His death and resurrection, saved us from our sins. He made us clean again and able to be in the presence and glory of God the Father. We are not saved by good works. But because we are saved, we are called to good works.

Psalm 99:6-8 NLT

The psalmist goes on to remind the people of those who have gone before. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel followed God; they cried out to the Lord for help, and the Lord answered. But these men also followed the Word of God. They read it; they knew it. They followed it, and they taught others about it. But they also made mistakes. Three great men of the Old Testament who are remembered for their faith and standing with the Lord were sinners, yet God loved them still. King David, whose sins are listed in the Bible for generations to read about and judge him for, was loved and protected and cared for by his loving Father in heaven. David had a deep and meaningful relationship with God. We know this from many of his psalms and we know this from the stories of God's provision and protection over David's life.

Psalm 99:9 NLT

For no other reason than because He is holy. Holy, holy, holy is our God and for that reason, we will bend our knee, we will trust during difficult times, we will suffer for our beliefs, and we will stand tall until our names are read from the Book of Life.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
 Early in the morning my song shall rise to Thee.
 Holy, holy, holy merciful and mighty!
 God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
 Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
 all the cherubim and seraphim are falling down before Thee,
 which wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,
 though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
 only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
 perfect in power, in love, and purity

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
 All thy works shall praise Thy name in earth, and sky and sea.
 Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
 You are God in three persons, blessed Trinity!
 (Reginal Heber 1826)

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 100

March 28, 2022

Read Psalm 100
His Steadfast Love Endures Forever
A Psalm for giving thanks.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 100 is simply titled, *A psalm. For giving grateful praise*, in the NIV. The NKJV titles it, **A Song of Praise for the LORD's Faithfulness to His People. A Psalm of Thanksgiving**. The NASB titles it, **All Men Exhorted to Praise God. A Psalm for Thanksgiving**.

A Psalm of Praise; or rather of thanksgiving. This is the only psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favorite with the people of God ever since it was written.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

When you truly know Jesus, His love pours forth from your heart, and you cannot help but sing and shout for joy. God is good, and there is much to be thankful for. The "hundredth" (i.e., Psalm 100) can be our mantra for today even.

Compare Psalm 100:1-2 in The Message and the NLT

Clap, shout, sing, laugh, be glad as you worship the Lord for He is good.

In Psalm 34, David wrote: oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him! (Psalm 34:8 NIV)

The prophet Nahum said: the LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him. (Nahum 1:7)

The author of Lamentations (possibly Jeremiah) said: because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

In summary, God is good in all times! In good times and bad, God is good! He is faithful and present and good. Always. And because of that, those who believe should shout and sing and clap and laugh with joy to the Lord!

Psalm 100:3 NKJV

This is the Truth. Too often humans attribute good things to their own power, to their hard work and abilities. God appreciates hard work; He expects it of us. But everything we have is because of Him, because of His grace and goodness.

James 1:17

As His children, we are the "sheep of His pasture." Sheep cannot do anything without a shepherd. They need Him for protection and for guidance, for help in times of trouble. While the analogy of the shepherd and his sheep is ancient and may feel like it's "of another time," we can still be certain of its meaning in modern times.

We need God's guidance because He sees the whole picture. A commentator spoke once about how our lives are chapters in a book. And God sees them all. He's read the whole book, because He wrote it! He even knows the end. So, when we are fighting through chapter 12, He may be leading toward something that matters in chapter 22. We may be stuck in what's happening right now, but He is preparing us for another chapter. We are blessed, my friends. The Creator and Author of our lives wants to be active and real from day to day. He wants to walk with us and guide us in *every* chapter. We are blessed with this reassurance.

The Apostle Paul wrote similar words in his letter to the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 15:10

Psalm 100:4 NLT

To "enter his gate" and to "go into his courts" means to stand before the Lord. We do that in prayer; we do that in worship. We enter His presence. Our God is not dead; He is alive and real and active, and He calls His children before Him. We are blessed that we can enter His presence. And upon entrance before the Lord, we are called to praise His name.

The Lord is good. His love continues forever. His loyalty continues from now on.

Psalm 100:5 ICB

For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 100:5 NKJV

For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Psalm 100:5 NLT

The psalmist claims God's covenant love in this last verse. The Lord's *hesed* love; unfailing love, mercy, steadfast love, lovingkindness. *Hesed* or *chesed* in Hebrew has no equivalent English word. There have been sermons and blog posts and entire books written on what this word means. Why? Because God claims to love His children with this word. A word that none of us completely understand.

How wonderful is that?

God describes Himself to Moses with the word *hesed*:
Exodus 34:5-7

We often don't understand God. We don't understand His silence sometimes. We don't understand when He allows suffering. We don't understand why He doesn't respond in kind.

But we also struggle to understand His love and His forgiveness and His grace. Don't we?

Even during times of uncertainty, during those times when we struggle to understand, those are the times to sing this psalm, "the hundredth." Sing it in good times and bad, in times of unbelief and times of great thanksgiving—

For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:5 NIV

Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 101

April 4, 2022

Read Psalm 101
I Will Walk with Integrity
A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A Psalm of David. The New King James Version titles Psalm 101, **Promised Faithfulness to the LORD.** The New American Standard Bible titles it, **The Psalmist's Profession of Uprightness.** And the International Children's Bible titles it simply, **A Promise to Rule Well.**

Psalm 101 has sometimes been called a "Prince's Psalm." Some commentators believe that David wrote this as he was set to become king. After years of suffering under the tyranny of Saul, David was to take the throne promised to him. David was God's chosen king for His people, "a man after His own heart."

Acts 13:22

God was faithful to His people. He was faithful to David. Samuel anointed David as God's chosen king over Israel when he young, scholars believe somewhere between ten and fifteen years old. David was crowned king at the age of thirty, then reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. For fifteen to twenty years of his life, David waited. He waited for God's promise. And during that time, he ran and hid and fought for his life. Some believe that this song is David's promise upon the day he finally took the throne.

Others believe this song was penned as David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Either way, David realized his need to get things right as he took the steps into godly leadership, whether as king or as the one to bring God's Ark home.

A Psalm of David. This is just such a psalm as the man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Other leaders since then have used this psalm as their promise to rule well.

Psalm 101:1-2 NLT

David promised to sing the praises of the Lord. In our day, when a man or woman takes a seat of power, they will sometimes "sing" of those who helped them along the way, but even that is not common. Mostly a person in power "sings" of their own accomplishments, of their own hard work and perseverance.

David promised to sing of the Lord's faithfulness to him.

He promised to live a blameless life and hold a blameless heart. Who can say that? David certainly couldn't. What does he mean then?

The NKJV says, "I will behave wisely," "with a perfect heart." The ESV says, "I will walk with integrity of heart within my house." The ICB says, "I will be careful to live an innocent life."

David was dedicating his life, his heart, and his service to the Lord. But like you and I, he was a sinner, and because of David's sin, he had pain and suffering in his life. Not unlike the rest of us. But David's heart sought God, and God loved David. And here, at the beginning of his reign, David promised that his house and heart were God's.

Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

How is your heart? How is your home? Why are these the two places that we hide our sin? It's interesting that these are the two places that David dedicates to God. These are the two places that God must be, and often, these are the two places we "pretend" are a lot better than they are. Today, invite God into your heart and into your home like David did.

Psalm 101:3-8 ICB

David pledged his heart to God. Firstly, by shielding his eyes. We know this did not go well for David. How horrible it must be to have your sins laid open within the Word of God. David's eyes led him to multiple wives and sin that cost lives and caused him and others great pain and loss. We can look upon his words here and dismiss them because he didn't live up to them, or we can be thankful for this sinful/saved man whose life can be an example to all of us.

We should not look on David's life and see only hypocrisy. He did fail to live up to his own standards. However, as one commentator said, it's hypocrisy when we have one standard for others but a different one for ourselves. David was not like this.

Also, David vowed to keep evil away from his home and only employ and befriend those who loved the Lord and proved trustworthy. This is a big deal for a person in power. David was king and had the ability to appoint and remove other men from places of power. He vowed to God and to His people that he would only choose those who loved the Lord.

He listed some negative qualities that he would avoid in his friendships and co-workers; those who slander (NLT), a haughty eye and a proud heart (NIV), conceit and pride (NLT), anyone who whispers evil things about someone else (GNBDC), a high look and a proud heart (ASV).

We are called to love others, even the ones who do us wrong. Jesus prayed for those who tortured and killed Him. We are called to do the same under the Gospel of the New Testament. However, those in power who make laws and withhold the justice of the land are called to be something different. David was king over the nation of Israel. It was his job to purge the land of evil. It was his job to dispense justice to keep the Lord's people safe.

As David was set to become king (finally), he looked around for the faithful, and those were the ones he vowed to surround himself with. A good reminder for us. We are called to love all, but when we need advice or support who do we turn to? Take David's example and seek the faithful.

Jesus's words directed to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 are similar. Woe to you teachers of the law, you drink from a clean cup that is dirty on the inside. You tithe your expected amount, yet you do not take care of the hurting. You look good on the outside, but your heart and your home are evil. Woe to you.

How is your heart? How is your home? Be wary of the evil that lurks around trying to find a way in to these two places that must belong to God and to God alone.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 102

April 11, 2022

Read Psalm 102

Do Not Hide Your Face From Me

A Prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 102 is one of seven *Penitential Psalms* set apart by the ancient church (Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Traditionally, they were recited for the confession of sin and repentance, often during Holy Week. Although some commentators point out this may be a longstanding mistake as the psalmist of Psalm 102 makes no reference to sin or repentance. But because the possible "mistaken identity" of Psalm 102 exists back in ancient times, then maybe we just don't understand something.

The New King James version of the Bible titles Psalm 102, **The LORD's Eternal Love.** *A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD.* The New American Standard Bible titles it, **Prayer of an Afflicted Man for Mercy on Himself and on Zion. A Prayer of the afflicted when he is weak and pours out his complaint before the LORD.** And the International Children's Bible simply titles it, **A Cry for Help.** *A prayer of a person who is suffering when he is discouraged and tells the Lord his complaints.*

The writer of Psalm 102 is suffering. He is suffering and God's people are suffering. Because of the mention of Jerusalem in ruins, some suppose it to be written during the Babylonian exile, maybe by Daniel. Others see David's hand and a prophecy of destruction to come. Others have suggested Nehemiah or Jeremiah even. The pain of Psalm 102 echoes Job even. Whoever wrote it knew suffering, but also knew God's saving power and the need to wait on the Lord, for the promised salvation, the Messiah.

Psalm 102:1-11 NLT

Such suffering. The author of this psalm seems to be in physical and emotional pain. He feels lost and far from home, like a little owl far from his nest. He's alone and afraid, like a lonely bird on a rooftop. His enemies have easy access to him and cause him regular pain. Not only is he in pain, but he is alone in his pain.

And what hurts the most is God has "thrown him out." The author feels abandoned by God, like God has turned His back and no longer hears the cry of His people. He has "picked me up and thrown me out."

Psalm 102:10-11 The Message

Can you just feel the pain of abandonment? Have you ever felt that God has turned His back on you? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Even the Son knew this feeling, but because of His sacrifice, we will never truly

be abandoned. It may feel like God has turned His back, but He has not; He will not, and He cannot. Because of Jesus.

Matthew 27:45-54

Psalm 102 is clearly a prophesy of the Messiah.

Psalm 102:12 NKJV

No matter the suffering, no matter the pain in this life, no matter what goes on around us . . . "But you, O LORD, will sit on your throne forever." Our comfort is in the fact that God was and is and will always be on His throne. He is the same yesterday as He is today and will be tomorrow. That knowledge of God's eternal reign brings comfort during evil times.

What God is now he always will be, that which our forefathers told us of the Lord we find to be true at this present time, and what our experience enables us to record will be confirmed by our children and their children's children.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1934-1892

Psalm 102:11-17 NLT

Here the Psalmist speaks of the city of Jerusalem. God's holy city. Someday the Lord will reign from Zion, the city of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 3:17

Revelation 14:1

Joel 3:16-17

And because of God's great love and mercy for the people of Israel in Jerusalem, "the nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory (verse 15 NIV)."

God loves the nation of Israel, and through their story, all the nations of the earth will come to know Him. He reveals His character and His love through the Jewish people and their story. But His love exists for all. His mercy and compassion are for all the nations, all the peoples of the earth.

An interesting piece of history, in 1948 Israel reclaimed Jerusalem with the support of the United Nations. After suffering for generations without a home, lost and oppressed, with Satan constantly trying to destroy them and wipe them from the face of the earth, they finally went home. They reclaimed their homeland, kind of. They went to Jerusalem to find shelter in the Promised Land, to find peace, kind of. But the truth is, despite being in God's chosen city, they are threatened on all sides, and even within. There is no peace. The Israelites have Jerusalem, but there will not be peace. Until Jesus returns.

Here is the prophecy: the Lord will rebuild Jerusalem and appear in His glory,
Psalm 102:18-22 ICB

God wanted His people to write this down. Write this down so that you do not forget. These things have happened in the past, God is faithful. And God will return and restore Himself to the city of Zion. Write it down! Write it down so that all will remember and watch carefully for the day to come when He will do what He says He will do.

Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved; we write down in history the calamities of nations- wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's lovingkindness!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Write it down and praise Him! Even during times of trial. Why? So that people will come together. So that kingdoms will come to see the Lord. Write it down and remember it.

Psalm 102:23-28 ICB

God is shown through our weakness. Through our struggles and suffering, God's plan is glorified. Through the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the people, God's redeeming power was, is, and will be shown to the nations, to all the peoples of the earth.

Because God is eternal. He was there in the beginning; everything was made by His hand.

The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews explains the ways that Father God has spoken of His Son throughout scripture. He quotes this Psalm. The Hebrew translation of Psalm 102 has the psalmist speaking to God the Father in these verses. But Bible scholars point out a difference, that the author of Hebrews also explains, in the earliest Greek translation called the Septuagint.

In the Septuagint, the psalmist shares God's Words to His Son,
Hebrews 1:8-12 NKJV

While the psalmist did not know whom he spoke of, he was certainly speaking of Jesus. The Messiah.

But you remain the same, and your years will never end. (NIV)
But you never change. And your life will never end. (ICB)

But you are always the same; you will live forever. (NLT)

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 103

April 18, 2022

Read Psalm 103
Bless the LORD, O My Soul
Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

A Psalm of David.

David was a man who knew suffering and pain. He was the youngest of many brothers, all of whom were better suited to success and certainly to kingship, according to his own earthly father. He was anointed as God's chosen king over Israel between ten and fifteen years old but did not become king until he was thirty. For possibly two decades he struggled to find his place in life, and many of those years he was hiding or defending himself against the jealous King Saul. Then, as king he was betrayed by friends and his own son. He committed sins and suffered consequences. David knew pain. He knew sin, and he knew God's forgiveness.

One thing David's life and words teach us is: no matter what, praise the Lord. David knew pain and fear and tribulation, but he also knew that despite the pain he was *never* alone.

The New King James version titles Psalm 103: **Praise for the LORD's Mercies.** *A Psalm of David.* The International Children's Bible titles it: **Praise to the God of Love.** *Of David.* The Good News translation is titled: **The Love of God.** The Hebrew Title. By David.

Psalm 103:1-5 NKJV—Bless the LORD, O my soul.

So many things to praise God for! Do not forget! And not only does David remind God's children to praise Him with song and dance and words but also with our very souls. This psalm is a beautiful call to worship. For everyone and everything. God is our Creator and Redeemer and Father and all that we are calls out to worship Him.

We praise the Lord for all He has done. Firstly, we praise Him for the forgiveness of sin. By the sacrifice of Jesus, we are saved from the wrath of God. Because of Jesus, when the Father looks upon us, He sees His children washed clean despite their human failings. When He looks upon us, He sees the sacrifice of His Son.

Secondly, God cares for the bodies He gave us. He heals us of disease, whether spiritual or physical. God provides. He protects us "from destruction." We do not know all that He protects us from, but make no mistake, there is evil in a realm we cannot see with our eyes. Within that realm, God watches over us. Praise the Lord.

God "crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies." He lavishes His covenant *hesed* love upon our heads. He pours down His love and grace upon His children.

And lastly, the Father gives us nourishment. He provides what we need to survive, but what He supplies is "good." So good, that it "renews our youth."

Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 103:6-18 the Message

God makes everything right. That is such a comfort in hard times. The NIV says:
The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. (v6)

Righteousness: the quality of being morally right or justifiable (Oxford Dictionary)

What is Righteousness? Righteousness is an attribute that belongs to God, the Lawgiver, and is manifested in His laws. No man can be justified by his own works apart from God's ordinance. Therefore, righteousness is a wonderful gift from God to humanity through His love: it is the God-given quality imputed to man upon believing in the Son of God.

www.christianity.com

I love this section of "God is . . . "

God is righteous.

God is just.

God is compassionate and gracious.

God is slow to anger and abounding in love.

Although God gets angry, He does not stay angry. Nor does He anger easily. He is right and just, compassionate and gracious FIRST. Oh, that we had an ounce of this temperament for those around us!

What God says is Truth, and God called Himself these things in the book of Exodus, as recorded by Moses.

Exodus 34:6-7a

There are consequences for sin. David knew this. We know this. The second half of Exodus 34:7 (b) says this: God will see the punishment of sins from generation to generation. There are stories of that in the Old Testament.

Yet God is righteous, just, compassionate, and gracious! Because of the Redeeming power of the blood of Jesus Christ, we know His forgiveness. He takes our sin, and He hurls it as far as the east is from the west!

As high as the sky is above the earth is His love for us. We don't know and cannot even comprehend this distance. To us, there is nothing up there. As far as the east is from the west, He has thrown our sins. The east

and the west never meet. There is never a point on this planet when one continues west, reaches a point, and is now going east. It does not happen.

We are but dust. He knows; He formed us. And yet, His love and mercies know no boundaries.

How beautiful are these words? How beautiful is our God?

Psalm 103:19-22 the Message

Praise the Lord. His throne was, is, and forever will be established. Established means: *having been in existence for a long time and therefore recognized and generally accepted.* (Oxford Dictionary)

David's psalm calls for his own soul to praise God three times! He calls for all of creation to sing the Lord's praises. He even calls upon the angels and the heavenly hosts. David doesn't care about the sound of his voice. He doesn't care if someone else finds his style of worship off putting. He doesn't care what others think. None of that matters because his soul MUST praise the Lord. It must be so.

Let it be with us. Cast aside our worries and our fears and our insecurities to praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord for He is good.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 104

April 25, 2022

Read Psalm 104 O LORD My God, You Are Very Great

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 104 has no recorded author nor is the date something scholars are certain of. Many believe the author to be David due to style and similarities between this one and the one prior. Older translations of the Bible (the Vulgate, Septuagint, and others) attribute Psalm 104 to David's hand, but for some reason, God did not want this one to be signed in later translations. So that is where we will leave it.

Here are some titles: *Praise to God Who Made the World* (ICB). *Praise to the Sovereign LORD for His Creation and Providence* (NKJV). *God the Creator* (HCSB). *The LORD's Care over All His Works* (NASB).

Interestingly, the author writes his song following the days of Creation as recorded by Moses in the book of Genesis.

Psalm 104:1-9 NLT—this is so cool!

Praise the Lord. He is worthy of praise. Why?

Because all of creation is His. He created it all, and all of creation relies upon Him. Survival of the fittest? No, those that survive were chosen by God, and it all works together for the glory of the One who created it.

You are dressed in a robe of light. When God spoke, there was light. He covers Himself with light, and darkness is the absence of light. Light uncovers the Truth as God brings light to the darkness of the earth and to all of mankind. Just like darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God, and in God's presence, evil cannot exist. Good and evil do not exist together. Light and darkness cannot either.

1 Timothy 6:16

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: wrapping the light about him as a monarch puts on his robe. The concept is sublime: but it makes us feel how altogether inconceivable the personal glory of the Lord must be; if light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendor of his own essential being!
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

This section of verses reminds us of the power of God, the Creator. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain. He rides on the wind. Everything obeys Him, even fires and floods and storms.

Verse 4 paints a frightening picture of God's messengers. Here is the verse in other translations,

Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. NKJV
 Who makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers. NASB
 You commandeered winds as messengers, appointed fire and flame as ambassadors.
 The Message

God's angels are fire and flame and wind. They are beings of terrifying power. Yet they are His messengers, His ministers, His ambassadors. And they guard and protect His children. How wonderful and terrifying at the same time to think about. If God's angels are like this, then what must the servants of Satan be like? Ooofff.

Praise the Lord for His mercy and protection from evil.

The writer of the book of Hebrews ties this verse to Jesus,
 Hebrews 1:5-7

The writer of Hebrews teaches us that the Father's words here are to His Son. Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire? Jesus does.

Jesus is the Son of God. God in human form. He is also the commander of legions. Someday Jesus will return with a host of God's ambassadors of fire, flame, and wind to vanquish the world of evil. Oh, to see that day!

In a very creative way, so passes day two of Creation.

Psalm 104:10-18 ICB

The psalmist begins this section with day three of Creation as recorded in the book of Genesis (Genesis 1:9-13). God separated the waters and made dry land. He made trees that grow and bear fruit, and plants for seeds and grain, and all that He created was good and worked together for good. Everything in Creation works together to sustain life and to bring God glory.

This psalm is a beautiful tribute to God as Creator. There are many ways that we can praise and honor God, and the author of Psalm 104 chose to focus his praise on God as the mighty Creator that He was and is.

When we reflect upon the provision made for all creatures, we should also notice the natural worship they render to God. Yet man, forgetful ungrateful man, enjoys the largest measure of his Creator's kindness.
 -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Interestingly, different translations of these verses provide a bigger picture of God's creation and His expectations for us.

Psalm 104:14-15 NKJV

God makes the grass grow to feed His animals, and He provides similarly for mankind but with expectations. Man must work. God provides, but man must work the land and the fruit for food and wine and oil and bread.

God's blessing and man's work bring forth sustenance from the earth.

Psalm 104:19-30 NLT

Now the psalmist praises God for the creation of the sun and moon and seasons. The author of Psalm 104 is in awe of our Creator God. Everything in all of creation works together.

There is work to be done each day and God opens and closes the day for His Creation. There is time to refresh with sleep upon nightfall because God did not create man with the ability to work at night. Man must rest at night. Although other animals within creation are awake at night. The psalmist marvels at God's creativity and great wisdom to make it all work together for His glory. The sun and the moon and the seasons all have their place and their jobs.

Then the psalmist marvels at the sea, and quite possibly the author only knows the Mediterranean Sea or the Red Sea. He would not know nor have seen the oceans of the earth. He mentions that elusive Old Testament sea creature, Leviathan. Old versions of the Bible call this beast a dragon. It could be a whale or a crocodile. Job 41 talks of this creature. Whatever this sea animal was, it was a magnificent creature of the sea, and our psalmist here glorifies God for its beauty and its character.

It "plays" in the sea!

But all of this, all of Creation, relies upon the hand of God. He gives and He takes away. He provides and cares for all of it. Actively. God watches over His Creation.

Psalm 104:31-35 NKJV

On the seventh day the Lord rested. He saw it was good, and He rested! He rejoices in His works! Even while His creation may die, His glory will endure forever.

The poet finds his heart gladdened by beholding the works of the Lord, and he feels that the Creator himself must have felt unspeakable delight in exercising so much wisdom, goodness, and power.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

All of creation glorifies the Lord. But nothing in creation can withstand Him. His touch and His eye upon it, and it will tremble and shake. We can admire the beauty of the mountains and the sea, but the beauty of Creation is nothing compared to the Creator.

Therefore, "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live."

The psalmist has found his reason to praise the Lord. He even ends the psalm with a request that all who defy the Creator be put to shame. And God will. He creates and He provides, but He will also destroy.

Interestingly, this psalm is the first to use "Praise the LORD" or *Hallelujah Jehovah*. There are more instances to come, and often are called the "Hallelujah Psalms," but this is the first in the Psalter. In the New Testament,

the term is only found in Revelation 19:1-6. Hallelujah is a term we often hear in the church in modern times, especially around Christmas time, but in the Bible, it is only spoken a few times.

Revelation 19:1-6

Hallelujah! Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 105

May 2, 2022

Read Psalm 105

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 105 is titled **Tell of All His Wondrous Works** in the ESV. The NKJV titles it **The Eternal Faithfulness of the LORD. The LORD's Wonderful Works in Behalf of Israel** in the NASB. And also, the ICB titles it simply **God's Love for Israel**.

While there is no author attributed to Psalm 105, the first fifteen verses are also found in 1 Chronicles 16:8-22. These verses are David's song of worship to the Lord when the Ark of the Covenant finally came to rest in the tabernacle in Jerusalem.

Verse 7 says: *That day David first appointed Asaph and his associates to give praise to the LORD in this manner . . .*

And then what follows is a song of which the first fifteen verses are again found in Psalm 105. Therefore, Bible scholars believe David—or someone on his behalf—is the author of Psalm 105, and it was written during the time of the Ark coming to rest in Zion.

Psalm 105:1-7 ICB

Psalm 105 begins with song and praise and joy. The author reminds the people of Israel to remember God's faithfulness and to celebrate it. God is in control; He rules. Be glad about that. Tell others the Good News of God's provision and love. Remember. Remember. Remember.

Verse 6 says: Remember who are. Remember *whose* you are.

Sing unto him. Bring your best thoughts and express them in the best language to the sweetest sounds. Take care that your singing is "unto him," and not merely for the sake of the music or to delight the ears of others.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

As the Ark of the Covenant *finally* comes to rest in Jerusalem, David reminds his people to **sing** to the Lord and to **remember** all that He has done. How easy it is for us to forget God's faithfulness. Why is that? God was faithful; we would all claim that in our lives. Why then do we worry and fear about the future? If God was faithful, He will be faithful.

The Israelites needed reminders too. God had been faithful to them. He brought them out of slavery and into the Promised Land. As the Ark made its way into the Tabernacle, David would remind his people of God's faithfulness.

We must actively remember. We must speak regularly of God and His mighty works and saving grace.

Sing. Tell. Remember.

Psalm 105:8-23 ICB

Psalm 105 reminds the people of a few of the "*marvelous deeds*" they should remember. Remember God's promises. Remember the agreement He made with Isaac. Remember how He provided for Jacob. He gave the Israelites the Promised Land. He protected and watched over them until they arrived there. His Spirit went ahead of His people to bring them safely home.

Remember Joseph. Joseph suffered, but God's Words were fulfilled. And because of Joseph's suffering, Jacob (his father, also called "Israel") brought his family (what we know of as the Israelites) to Egypt where there was food. They were saved from the famine ravaging the Middle East during that time. Joseph suffered, but he persevered, and God's reward was great.

Remember.

Let us remember the Redeemer's marvelous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Though true Christians are few in number, strangers and pilgrims upon earth, yet a far better inheritance than Canaan is made sure to them by the covenant of God; and if we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, none can do us any harm. Afflictions are among our mercies. They prove our faith and love, they humble our pride, they wean us from the world, and quicken our prayers.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 105 calls upon God's children to remember His marvelous deeds, we must also remember the sacrifice, the life, and the words of our Redeemer. Remember Jesus.

Jesus left us with a beautiful way for us *remember Him*.

1 Corinthians 11:24-26

Remember. Proclaim.

The story of Joseph in Egypt is a beautiful reminder of God's promise. He lifted Joseph up to a position of power but not before he suffered. The story is told in Genesis (Chapters 37-50). Joseph was born to Jacob's loved wife, Rachel, but he had many brothers older than him who were jealous for their father's attention. Joseph was sold into slavery. He suffered for a long time in Egypt before he was found by Pharaoh's men to have an ability to understand dreams, a gift from God. Joseph understood Pharaoh's dream was a vision from God, and he interpreted it. The result was status, wealth, and Pharaoh's trust. And because of God's faithfulness through Joseph, the region was saved from famine, including Joseph's family who went to Egypt seeking help. The story comes full circle for Joseph. God was faithful.

Remember.

Psalm 105:24-36 ESV

The Israelites remained in the region of Egypt after the famine. Jacob died. Joseph died. All the brothers and their families died. The people grew in strength and prosperity in the land of Egypt for more than four hundred years.

But at some point, during that time, God moved. He shifted the tides by changing the hearts of the Egyptian people toward the nomadic shepherding people of Israel and they enslaved them. The Egyptians put God's people to the hard task of building the temples, towers, tombs, and pyramids of the Pharaoh at the time. God's people suffered and cried out to Him.

And God sent Moses and Aaron. The Old Testament book of Exodus tells this story. This is God's story of redemption. He redeemed His children. Through a series of miraculous plagues upon the land and people of Egypt, God revealed His glory. Eventually, after much suffering, Pharaoh released the Israelites, for a time.

It's interesting how the Jewish people often seemed to forget God's faithfulness from this time in their history. God was faithful; God will be faithful. He has proven Himself time and time again. But isn't this true for us as well? Even when God was faithful, it's easy to doubt that He will come through again.

As the Ark of God's Covenant to His people arrived in Jerusalem, it was a promise fulfilled. He promised that His children would find a home on Zion, His mountain. They were finally there, and it makes sense that the author would call the people to **remember**.

What a good reminder to us. When we feel life pulling us away from God, and when the world becomes heavy . . . remember His faithfulness.

Psalm 105:37-45 NLT—Praise the LORD.

Not only did God free His people from their enslavement in Egypt, but He caused the Egyptian people to give them gifts of silver and gold upon their departure. The Egyptians wanted to be free of the Israelites and even paid them to leave.

Exodus 12:35-36

God then led His people on a long journey to the Promised Land. The Bible says that the Lord literally went before them to show them the way and became a pillar of fire for safety and warmth at night.

Exodus 13:21-22

What a beautiful and reassuring sight that must've been for the people. To see God go before them and behind them.

God provided manna for food, and when His children cried out for meat, He provided quail. When they were thirsty, He led them to water. God provided for His children then, just as He provided for His children in David's time. In his letter to the Philistines, Paul says this,

Philippians 4:19

During Paul's time, God promised to provide for His children. If God has promised and fulfilled that promise throughout time to His children, will He not do the same now? God was faithful then; He is faithful now.

Psalm 105 is a song of God's glory, His faithfulness and provision, and His constant presence and protection. But the psalm closes with a reminder for God's people.

God does all these things for His glory. He gathers His children to Him; He is faithful to them, so that they will follow His ways and keep His commandments.

That they might observe His statutes and keep His laws. Praise the Lord! NKJV
All this happened so they would follow his decrees and obey his instructions. Praise the Lord! NLT
This was so they would keep his orders and obey his teachings. Praise the Lord! ICB

God's ways are good. His ways lead to good things. Sometimes the path of evil seems easier and maybe it is sometimes, but it never leads to good. Therefore, we remember God's faithfulness and continue to keep our hearts on Him and walk in His ways.

Hallelujah.
Colossian 3:16

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 106

May 9, 2022

Read Psalm 106

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 106 is titled **Give Thanks to the LORD, for He is Good** in the ESV, **Joy in Forgiveness of Israel's Sins** in the NKJV, and **Israel's Rebelliousness and the LORD's Deliverances** in the NASB.

This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah- "Praise ye the Lord." The space between these two descriptions of praise is filled up with the mournful details of Israel's sin, and the extraordinary patience of God; and truly we do well to bless the Lord both at the beginning and the end of our meditations when sin and grace are the themes. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Where Psalm 105 exults in the greatness of God, calling all the people to remember Him, Psalm 106 recollects sin and the shortcomings of His children. While we read of the many (and atrocious at times) sins of Israel, we must also reflect upon ourselves. We are sinners. We all have fallen short. And to remember God's goodness, we need to understand that we are worthy only because He says so.

My worth, your worth, is not in what we do, it is solely because of God's grace and love for us.

Some commentators call this the first of the "Hallelujah Psalms" (there are 10 of them: 106, 111-113, 115-119, and 150). And although there are a few verses that again match David's words in 1 Chronicles as the Ark enters Jerusalem, there is no definitive event to associate this psalm to. Bible scholars also are uncertain of its author. Sometimes the unknown of date and author allows us to reflect even more upon the words and the teaching.

And what we know with certainty is this:
Hebrews 4:12

A psalm listing the grievous sins of Israel must still pierce our hearts. May the words of this psalm cause us to remember our worth is in the Lord, not in all that we have done right or wrong.

And may we begin and end our study of Psalm 106 with *Hallelujah*. **Praise the Lord!**
Psalm 106:1-3

What does the author tell us to do? Praise. Give thanks. Proclaim. Declare. Act justly. Do what is right.

Thankfully, no matter what goes on around us, no matter the good or bad choices that we make today, we can **always** sing praise to the Lord. Why? Because He is good, and His *love* endures forever. The Hebrew word used here is *hesed/chesed*. Other translations use *mercy*, *steadfast love*, *faithful love*, *lovingkindness*. All these English words attempt to translate the Hebrew word *hesed*, or God's covenant love throughout time to His

children. God used this word to describe Himself (Exodus 34:6-7). God can be difficult for us to understand; therefore, His love is not only difficult to understand, but also challenging to explain with words.

Sometimes, as in this psalm, His faithful and steadfast love can best be understood with the forgiveness of sin. Grace.

None of our sins or sufferings should prevent our ascribing glory and praise to the Lord. The more unworthy we are, the more is his kindness to be admired.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Thus begins a confession of sin,

Psalm 106:4-12 ESV—Remember me, O LORD.

The author of Psalm 106 does a humble thing here. This psalm is a confession of national sin; however, he begins this section asking God to "remember me" "that I may glory with your inheritance." He does not just list national sins, he includes himself. He includes the present children of God. *Both we and our fathers have sinned.*

The history of Israel's sin as listed in the Old Testament (and New even) is more the history of God's faithfulness. It is the story of God's covenant love and mercy, His *hesed* steadfast love throughout time.

Even so, He saved them- to defend the honor of His name and to demonstrate His mighty power.

Psalm 106:8 NLT

Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power known.

Psalm 106:8 NKJV

But the Lord saved them for His own sake, to show His great power. Psalm 106:8 ICB

God loves and provides for and redeems His children for their sake but also to show His mighty deeds to all and for future generations. The author then lists a time in Israel's history when they lost faith and sinned against the Lord.

God caused the Red Sea to split and His children to walk through in safety to escape the Egyptian army and to make their way home, to the Promised Land. No enemy was left alive as the waves of the Red Sea crashed back together. All His children were saved. (Exodus 14)

And, at that time, they sang praises to the Lord for His mighty saving power. (Exodus 15)

Psalm 106:13-15 ESV—But soon they forgot.

Numbers 11 tells of this change of heart. The people "forgot" God's faithfulness,
Numbers 11:1

How quickly the people forgot God's saving grace. They grumbled and complained and demanded meat instead of the life sustaining manna that God provided. They even longed for the fish and fruit they remembered as slaves in Egypt. Moses went to God with their requests and their complaining. Numbers 11 tells of this conversation between God and Moses.

Sometimes God will give His children what they ask for. But God's will is always better.
Numbers 11:33

One commentator pointed out that God's judgment was harsh here. But did it teach the Israelite people not to be ruled by lust and craving? The people called the place, *Kibroth Hataavah*—Graves of Craving (Numbers 11:34). Do many of us allow ourselves to be ruled by what we crave? Will it, too, lead to the grave?

Psalm 106:16-18 ESV

This story is found in Numbers 16 and is the story of Korah's rebellion,
Numbers 16:1-3

Jealousy. Envy.

Korah and his followers sinned against God. They incited a riot to protest Moses's leadership. Moses was chosen by God to lead the people of Israel at that time, and so God was angry. Another example of a time when the people turned their backs on God and His plan. God would lead them to the Promised Land through the leadership of Moses, and the people rebelled.

Moses and Aaron are both named here as God's chosen leaders—Moses was the hand of God, His chosen leader. Aaron was the spiritual leader, a high priest.

Thus neither church nor state was ordered aright for them; they would snatch from Moses his scepter, and from Aaron his miter. It is the mark of bad men that they are envious of the good, and spiteful against their best benefactors. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 106:19-23 ESV

This is the well-known story of the golden calf found in Exodus 32.

What do we exchange the glory of God for? Do we forget our Savior and turn to worldly idols? And, when we find our way back to God and look back at our foolishness, is it similar to this event in Israel's history? The wondrous miracles of God versus a cow that munches on grass. Which one has the power to save?

The living God only.

Romans 1:21-23

Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach. Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers. Moses had great power with God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1832-1892

What a stark reminder of the power of prayer and the power of having a relationship with God. Do you fear for the sins of someone you love? Stand in the breach as Moses did. Stand in faith!

Psalm 106:24-27

This refers to a story in Numbers 14 when all the people grumbled and cried against Moses and Aaron—again. "Would we have died in Egypt!" they even said. "Let us choose a different leader and go back!" Wow. Seems crazy, but do we ever act like this?

After that, God swore a whole generation of Israelites would die wandering the desert. All the adults who were led from Egypt and now stood before the pathway to the Promised Land, would not enter, except for Joshua and Caleb. Thus, for forty years the people wandered, and each stop was probably littered with funerals as an entire generation passed.

Remember God and His promises. Remember His faithfulness. When you feel yourself "murmuring in your tent" turn your eyes back to God.

Psalm 106:28-31 ESV

Because of their sin, God sent a plague upon His people. God wants our hearts, and He may well allow our suffering if it means that we will turn back to Him.

In this place in the history of God's people, they had turned their hearts to false gods. They had allowed themselves to be tempted and led astray (Numbers 25), and God allowed a plague to kill 24,000 Israelites before a man named Phineas violently took matters into his own hands.

Psalm 106:32-33 ESV

Verses 32 and 33 are the story of Moses disobeying God and the consequence that followed. (Numbers 20) The Israelites were thirsty. So, God told Moses to take his staff and tell the rock to produce water. Moses took his staff and smacked the rock with it instead. God sent fresh water flowing from that rock even though Moses lost his faith and didn't do it the way God said to. It's a good example of God still using us, even in our weakness. God still provided drinking water for His children. Moses however didn't trust God to provide. He therefore would not enter the Promised Land.

Interestingly, the psalmist here says the people provoked Moses to act the way he did. And maybe they did; maybe Moses was frustrated with them and did it his own way because of that. But God still held Moses accountable for how he responded.

We are responsible for ourselves, and we will be stand in front of God someday and must speak of how we handled things.

Psalm 106:34-39 ESV

Sometimes God called the Israelites to war, to destroy enemies. Here is an example of why God did this and expected this. He told the Israelites to rid the area of the Canaanites. They did not, and as time went by, the ways of the Canaanites mingled with the Israelites. Even to the point of worshipping the god Molech who was often worshipped with the sacrifice of children.

Psalm 106:40-43 ESV

Throughout the history of Israel, God intervened. His children are too valuable to Him to stand by and watch them destroy themselves. Like a good Father, God punished. He steps in with a heavy hand at times. We may see His punishment as harsh and merciless, but that's easy to say from this point looking back. God allowed His children to suffer oppression and slavery. He delivered them only to have the next generation commit the same sins against their Creator.

God can make our enemies to be rods in his hands to flog us back to our best friend.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God used that which the Israelites had turned to and turned away from God with, to be their demise. Many times, He allowed their desires to be their downfalls. Their sins became their tormentors. Does He not do that with you and I still? We choose things that lead us away from Him, but the path of the Lord is always the safer road.

Good thing the story doesn't end here,

Psalm 106:44-46 ESV—Nevertheless!

Because of God's great mercy, His steadfast love, He heard their cry. God never turns away from us. Even when we give in to our sinful nature. Even when we turn our back on God, He is still there. He does not move. He waits for His children to cry to Him.

In our unfaithfulness, God remains faithful.
 2 Timoth 3:13

God has been faithful. He is faithful. He will always be faithful to those who love Him.

Psalm 106:47-48 ESV—Amen.

Blessed be the Lord.
From everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the Lord.

Hallelujah.

Thus ends *Book Four* of the Psalter.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 107

May 16, 2022

BOOK FIVE (Psalms 107-150)

Read Psalm 107

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Let the Redeemed of the LORD say so (ESV). Thanksgiving to the LORD for His Great Works of Deliverance (NKJV). The LORD Delivers Men from Manifold Troubles (NASB). God Saves from Many Dangers (ICB).

The last verse of Psalm 107 is such a good reminder and possibly sums up the meaning behind this song,

Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD.
Psalm 107:43 NLT

The Old Testament is a story of the children of Israel. If we know nothing of God's great love and faithfulness it would read as a history book, telling the tale—the ups and downs—of the Israelite people. But the Truth is that the Old Testament is *God's Story* of redemption. The story of His love and faithfulness throughout time. A beautiful story of redemption from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, God is faithful.

If we are wise, we will read, study, and pray to understand this story. It is, after all, God's Story.

Psalm 107:1-3 NLT

Psalm 107 sings of God's deliverance. Now, whether that is from slavery in Egypt or the miraculous gathering of scattered Israelites from Babylon, Bible scholars are not certain. But does it really matter "which" time God redeemed us? What matters is that He did. That He does, and He will.

Psalm 107 tells this story of God's deliverance in four beautiful testimonies. The author uses these four pictures to teach us that everyone's story is just a bit different, yet very much the same.

The psalmist uses four "pilgrim stories" as metaphors to describe God's deliverance: weary travelers lost in the wilderness, prisoners in bondage, the sick near death, and mariners on dangerous seas.

Psalm 107:4-9 NLT—the lost.

God is faithful. Has He redeemed you? Then speak it. Tell others how He found you when you were lost in the wilderness. Tell others how He gave you what you needed when you were thirsty and hungry and near death.

Praise the Lord for His great love.

Not only does the psalmist call the lost to praise because they were found, but he also calls the rest of us to praise the Lord along with them. Do you know someone who was lost and is now found? Praise the Lord for His great love and for the wonderful things He has done for them.

Are you lost right now? Call to the Lord. He will lead you to safety, to a city where you can live. He will draw you home into His arms like this first "pilgrim story."

Psalm 107:10-16 NLT—the prisoner.

Here is the second "pilgrim story" of prisoners that God set free. Some commentators point out that this can only be in reference to Israel (looking at verse 11) and probably during the time of exile in Babylon.

for they had rebelled against the words of God and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
Psalm 107:11 ESV

But really this is a story any can relate to. Haven't we all found ourselves in the bondage of sin? We read the sad story of prisoners in chains and the wonderful redeeming grace of God the Father, but we know that He has saved us all from an eternity of chains and imprisonment. God set the Israelites free; He called them home. But He also literally broke the chains of sin and death when He sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place. He snapped the chains of sin and darkness that would have a hold on our souls for all eternity—but no longer.

There are still many who sit in the darkest cell, in the deepest of gloom, in iron chains of misery. Sin has a hold of many hearts. The world is full of evil.

But Jesus broke the chains of sin and darkness with the light of His love, with the love and faithfulness and mercy of the Father.

All it takes is a cry for help. "LORD, help!"

The Lord's deliverances are of the most complete and triumphant kind, he neither leaves the soul in darkness nor in bonds, nor does he permit the powers of evil again to enthrall the liberated captive. What he does is done for ever. Glory be to his name.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 107:17-22 NLT—the sick.

The psalmist explains the third "pilgrim story" and how God's glorious redemption of the ones who were sick and suffering because of choices that they made.

Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

Psalm 107:17 NIV

Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Psalm 107:17 NKJV

Some of you were sick because you'd lived a bad life, your bodies feeling the effects of your sin; you couldn't stand the sight of food, so miserable you thought you'd be better off dead. The Message

The author here is not saying all sickness is caused by sin. What he is saying is that sin leads to sickness, disease, suffering, and pain even in our physical bodies. And in this case, when God redeemed His children, He called them out of the sin that caused them physical suffering and into His healing grace.

The people cried out again, "LORD, help!" And like the good, good Father that He is, *He spoke*. God commanded healing with His words. The Word of the Lord is power and healing.

Then the psalmist calls us to praise, let them sacrifice in thanksgiving and sing praises so that all will hear of the wondrous healing power of the Lord.

Psalm 107:23-32 NLT—the sailor.

The psalmist ends with the fourth "pilgrim story." Those who do business on the sea have seen the mighty power of God, but the Israelite people were not a seafaring people. They did not seek the open sea as other groups of people have throughout history. However, the psalmist still speaks of redemption upon the sea. He tells of a fierce storm and the calmness after.

He speaks and a mighty wind stirs up the waves of the sea! The sailors reel and stagger aboard their ship. They are afraid and see death coming for them. There is no hope.

But . . . they pray. They call to God, "LORD, help!"

Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray staggering and reeling, and pray when we are at our wit's end. God will hear us amid the thunder and answer us out of the storm.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The Creator calms the storm "into a whisper." He stills the waves with His word. God's Word brings peace. God's Word brings back the calm. A good reminder that when life is like a great storm, whether it's all around us or within our hearts and minds, the answer is in God's Word. Open His Word. Read His Word. He will give you peace.

Philippians 4:6-7

The storm calmed; the waves stilled as God brought His children safely into harbor. What a beautiful picture of God's faithfulness.

Praise the Lord for His great love. Praise Him for the wondrous works He has done. Tell others. Declare before all the greatness of God. Speak of God's love before the leaders of nations and the elders of the people.

Psalm 107:33-38 NLT

God's judgment upon the wicked, and His provision upon the faithful.

The same land that is bare and dry, God will transform into all that His children need. When we seek after Him, when we follow His ways, He will provide. God is all that we need. He even uses His creation to provide or to teach and remind.

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water. With another turn of his hand, he more than restores that which in judgment he took away.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 107:39-43 NLT

The righteous shall see it and rejoice. Divine providence causes joy to God's true people; they see the hand of the Lord in all things, and delight to study the ways of his justice and of his grace.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Verse 43 is it: This is God's Story. His story of redemption and faithfulness throughout time. On every page, God tells the story of His great love.

Let whoever is wise pay attention to these things and consider the LORD's acts of faithful love.

Psalm 107:43 HCSB

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 108

May 23, 2022

Read Psalm 108
With God We Shall Do Valiantly
A Song. A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 108 is titled: **Assurance of God's Victory over Enemies** (NKJV), **God Praised and Supplicated to Give Victory** (NASB), **A Prayer for Victory** (ICB), and above in the ESV, **With God We Shall Do Valiantly**.

The author of this song is King David, and interestingly, it is a repetition of Psalm 57 and Psalm 60. Psalm 57 was written when David was on the run from King Saul. Psalm 60 was written upon Saul's death and David's kingship. When David put both songs together for Psalm 108, he proclaimed God's victory and His faithfulness from the time that David ran and hid for his life, to the time that he was finally crowned king.

Psalm 108 is David's testimony, a story of God's faithfulness.

Maybe something new has come up for the people of Israel, and therefore, the words need to be repeated.

The Holy Spirit is not so short of expressions that he needs to repeat himself, and the repetition cannot be meant merely to fill the book; there must be some intention in the arrangement of two former divine utterances in a new connection; whether we can discover that intent is another matter. It is at least ours to endeavor to do so, and we may expect divine assistance therein.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 108:1-5 NLT

We have before us The Warrior's Morning Song, with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David begins Psalm 108 with praise to the Lord. And this song clearly is a glorious way to start the day. David sings to God in the morning. He starts the morning with a reflection upon the greatness and faithfulness of his God.

David also vows to proclaim God's goodness to all the people, among the nations. Why? Because God's greatness is higher than the heavens, beyond the clouds, and covers the whole earth with His glory.

What a beautiful way to start the day. A Warrior's Song. A believer's weapon. Praise the Lord. Psalm 108 is a good reminder to meet each day with praise for the Lord. Thank Him for His faithfulness; praise Him for His mighty works. Remember who He is and what He has done for you. There is no better way to begin the day, to

refocus upon Him who gives us strength. The One who loves us when all others fail. The One who walks beside us, who strengthens and provides. Praise the Lord.

Now Psalm 108 goes on to what David needs,
Psalm 108:6-13 NLT

David begins his prayer with praise, calling upon God's faithfulness. He knows God will provide and God will save, but he speaks it. Possibly to strengthen his own soul; possibly to calm his own heart. David even speaks a promise that God made to him.

David speaks words that God gave him. We know that David had a relationship with God. We know this through the words he wrote that are recorded in the Old Testament, and we know this through the testimony of others. God Himself, called David, "a man after His own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22).

David spoke with God daily. In the morning. He began his day speaking with His Father in heaven.

Here is God's promise as recorded in this psalm and Psalm 60,
Psalm 108:7-9 the Message

Here God speaks of the Promised Land and the tribes that live there. Commentators point out Shechem (a city) and the Succoth Valley (a region) were on the west side of the Jordan river and were both areas of the Israelite people. God then speaks of Gilead and Manasseh, regions on the east side of the Jordan river. Judah and Ephraim were central tribes of the Israelite people, and Ephraim being the largest tribe, according to commentators. These two tribes probably would have provided the most soldiers for these battles that are listed in Psalm 108, "Ephraim my helmet will produce my warriors (NLT)." Judah was David's tribe, "Judah my scepter will produce my kings (NLT)."

The tribe of Judah will also lead to Jesus, the Messiah.

Through David, God then speaks of His dominion over all the earth, all the tribes, all the nations. God speaks of three neighboring nations. In 2 Samuel 8, David conquered Moab, "But Moab, my washbasin, will become my servant (NLT)." In 2 Samuel 8 as well, David overthrew Edom, "I will wipe my feet on Edom (NLT)." And after a long time, God provided justice for David with the conquering of the Philistines, "shout in triumph over Philistia (NLT)."

David battled the Philistines as a teenager, and he conquered them as a king. Charles Spurgeon uses this to remind all believers of life as a follower of God,

The enemies with whom we battled in our youth are yet alive, and we shall have more brushes with them before we die, but, blessed be God, we are by no means dismayed at the prospect, for we expect to triumph over them even more easily than aforesaid.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 108:10 ICB—the strong walled city.

Bible commentators believe that David speaks of the great rock city of Petra, the fortified city of the Edomites. There is no record of David attacking Petra, which doesn't mean that he didn't, it just isn't recorded in the Bible. Possibly David used Petra as an analogy, to speak of the strength of God, that if God called him to conquer Petra, He would provide.

In Psalm 108, it seems that David was preparing for battle, and he called upon God to go before him.

Psalm 108:11-13 ICB

David knew that God was their strength. God would go before them to win the battle. God was victor. It is best, that when we prepare for battle, that we seek the Lord first.

You can get the horses ready for battle. But it is the Lord who gives the victory. Proverbs 21:31 ICB

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 109

May 30, 2022

Read Psalm 109
Help Me, O LORD My God
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 109 is titled: **Plea for Judgment of False Accusers** (NKJV), **A Prayer Against an Enemy** (ICB), **Vengeance Invoked upon Adversaries** (NASB), and above, **Help Me, O LORD My God** (ESV).

A song for the choirmaster. Whether that is the leader of worship in the tabernacle, or a song dedicated to the Master of all His choirs, God Himself, Bible scholars are not certain. This is a song of David. Psalm 109 is one of many *Imprecatory Psalms*.

Imprecation: *noun* a spoken curse.

While this is considered the strongest of what are called the Imprecatory Psalms, we need to remember that these are prayers—David calling for curses down upon his enemies. But the warrior king is committing vengeance to his God. David could have taken his revenge, he knew life as a warrior and knew how to take life with his sword, but he waited on God's timing. He looked to God for direction.

The Imprecatory Psalms can be hard for us to understand until we take the time to look at them a different way. What we have is a beautiful piece of history showing a deep, deep relationship between this warrior king and his God.

Do you not speak openly to God about your anger and frustration, about those who have hurt you? Does your tongue not cry out a similar demand for justice?

When we look at Psalm 109 as prayer of a frustrated warrior king with his loving Father God, it changes things.

Truly this is one of the hard places of Scripture, a passage which the soul trembles to read; yet as it is a Psalm unto God, and given by inspiration, it is not ours to sit in judgment upon it, but to bow our ear to what God the Lord would speak to us therein.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 109:1-5 NLT

In the first five verses of Psalm 109, David pleads with God for deliverance from his enemies. Whoever these "wicked" people are, David has tried, and he is frustrated. He has loved them and prayed for them, but they still seek his destruction.

David begs God to not let these wicked men have the last word because David is being falsely accused. What they say about him is not true. What a horrible place that is to be. He is surrounded with hatred and all they say is lies. He feels that he does not deserve the mistreatment and calls upon God to take care of it.

David could have called his many warriors to his service. He could have finished them off, but that is not how David did things. He had the power to; the Bible speaks of David's "Three" and "Thirty" mighty warriors. Read 2 Samuel 23:8-39 to learn more about these great warriors and their service and commitment to David throughout his life.

But David didn't call his mighty warriors, instead he waited on God. This is David's conversation with God in song and remembered through generations of Israelites and Christians.

Thus, we see the harmless and innocent man upon his knees pouring out his lamentation: we are now to observe him rising from the mercy seat, inspired with prophetic energy, and pouring forth upon his foes the forewarning of their doom.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 109:6-20 NLT

Bible scholars considered that these verses could be a summary of what David's accusers say of him. The idea that David is the one who should be brought to trial, who cares not for the weak and helpless, and therefore, should be cursed for generations to come. However, Peter is quoted in the book of Acts using a portion of this psalm in a sermon, and in this section, Peter refers to Judas Iscariot,

Acts 1:20

Peter speaks of Judas, an evil man rightly condemned, not a righteous man unfairly treated (as it would be if the words were about David). Therefore, Bible scholars lean toward these words being David's of the man (or men) who mistreat him.

David pleads with God to set an evil ruler over this man and send an accuser to bring him to trial. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for accuser is "Satan."

They say about me, "Have the Evil One work against him. Let the devil accuse him.

Psalm 109:6 ICB

Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

Psalm 109:6 KJV

David goes on to curse the one he speaks of. Although it is hard to hear a man of God wish that his enemies' children would suffer, he still refuses to cause the suffering. He merely wishes it. Jesus calls us to love our enemies and certainly to wish good upon their children. But there is still a battle in our minds, even in the godliest mind, of wishing for something bad to befall someone who has hurt us. We are, after all, only human. David was only human.

Did David predict the fall of these men? Was David speaking in prophecy? He was certainly wishing for God's judgment.

Psalm 109:20-31 NLT

May the Lord do these things to those who accuse me, to those who speak evil against me. (V20 ICB) This is what David desires of the Lord: that he be blessed, and his enemies suffer.

Is it okay that we do not fully understand?

Thousands of God's people are perplexed with this psalm, and we fear we have contributed very little towards their enlightenment, and perhaps the notes we have gathered from others, since they display such a variety of view, may only increase the difficulty. What then? Is it not good for us sometimes to be made to feel that we are not yet able to understand all the word and mind of God? A thorough bewilderment, so long as it does not stagger our faith, may be useful to us by confounding our pride, arousing our faculties, and leading us to cry, "What I know not teach thou to me."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The end of Psalm 109 is a reminder that even during the hardest of times, God stands beside His children. David was suffering, but the Lord was with him. There is no where we can go, no hole too deep, no trial too terrible, that we are alone. God is with us in good times and in bad. He stands beside and upholds us. He protects us and watches over us. His eyes are always upon His children. During difficult times this is what we must hold on to.

The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.

Psalm 34:15 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 110

June 6, 2022

Read Psalm 110
Sit at My Right Hand
A Psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This psalm is pure gospel; it is only, and wholly, concerning Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 110 is titled, **The Lord Appoints a King** (ICB), **The LORD Gives Dominion to the King** (NASB), **Announcement of the Messiah's Reign** (NKJV), and **Sit at My Right Hand** (ESV), among others.

David is the author. If anyone wishes to argue, we will just look to the words of Jesus in the New Testament which we will discuss shortly.

May the Spirit who spoke by the man after God's own heart give us eyes to see the hidden mysteries of this marvelous Psalm, in which every word has an infinity of meaning.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 110:1-3 NLT

The LORD (Yahweh) said to my Lord (Adonai). David was a prophet. God spoke to him words that he did not always have the ability to see or understand. Thankfully David was also a writer, and he wrote those prophetic words down so that now we can see how the words pointed to Jesus. Yahweh or God the Father is speaking to Adonai, Jesus. We know this is true because of Jesus's words as recorded in the book of Matthew,

Matthew 22:41-46

Psalm 110:1 is quoted several times in the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood before the crowd,

Acts 2:32-36

For now, Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. His work on earth is done. He waits for the day that God will send Him forth in a great battle over evil when He will rid the earth of it and bring His children home. For now, the work of Jesus's life and ministry flows out from Jerusalem.

Psalm 110:3 KJV

Jesus will rule all nations. All people will bow before Him. For now, His word, the Gospel spreads, like a "rod of strength out of Zion." The work He did throughout His life as a man spreads like wildfire across the land and throughout the peoples, from generation to generation. And when God arouses Jesus to return, all His children will be gathered to Him.

Praise Him.

Psalm 110:4 NLT

At the center of Psalm 110, this verse makes a power statement. The LORD (Yahweh, God the Father) promises something. What is His promise?

The promise of God the Father (YHWH) regarding God, the Son is His eternal priesthood. Jesus is High Priest "in the order of Melchizedek," who is mentioned in the Old Testament only once,
Genesis 14:18-20 NLT

God established the priesthood of Aaron in the Old Testament. Aaron and his descendants served in the tabernacle and the temple for many generations. In the promise in Psalm 110, God established THE priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus, the Messiah, is living, active High Priest of God's people in the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek: *is an old Canaanite name meaning, "My King is (the god) Sedek" or "My King is Righteousness."*—Salem is probably Jerusalem. (Britannica)

Hebrews 6 and 7 provide more information of the Old Testament account of Melchizedek.
Hebrews 6:20 NLT

Hebrews 7:1-3

Hebrews 7:24-26

Psalm 110:4 also tells us this "priest in the order of Melchizedek" is a priest forever. Since men die, the Levitical (sons of Levi) priests of old are gone now, this High Priest must only be Jesus Himself. And when Abraham met the High Priest of Melchizedek, Levi's parents were not even born yet. Abraham was Levi's great grandfather.

Psalm 110:5-7 NLT

These last verses speak of the final judgment, when God the Father will send Jesus the Son back to earth to redeem His children and put an end to pain, death, and evil forever.

Revelation 3:21

Revelation 19:17-19

When Jesus returns, He will free all of creation from the bondage of evil. He will rid the earth of corruption, and He will free God's children finally. Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess His name throughout the earth. And on that day, "He will refresh Himself from brooks along the way." Jesus will return to the earth as a man, as the Son of God, and He will be the greatest warrior the universe has ever known. He will lift up His head and be victorious.

Praise Him.

No matter the worry and pain and trials of this world, what you face today, God is good. He is near. You are loved. Someday, He will return and will drink of the streams as a great warrior of God. He will lead God's legions of angels, death and pain and evil will be destroyed, and we will live in the eternal light of the Father for all eternity.

Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 111

June 13, 2022

Read Psalm 111 Great Are the LORD's Works

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The first line of Psalm 111 is *Hallelujah*, Praise the Lord.

From there on, Psalm 111 is an acrostic poem. The beginning of each line follows the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. As children learn the important things in life, parents and teachers use things like rhymes and poems and songs for memorization. This ancient song and several other psalms (and in particular the one that follows this one) are just that: songs to be memorized, remembered, and passed down.

Psalm 111 is titled, **Praise to God for His Faithfulness and Justice** (NKJV), **The LORD Praised for His Goodness** (NASB), **Praise for the LORD's Works** (HCSB), and above in the ESV, **Great Are the LORD's Works**.

The sweet singer dwells upon the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Praise the LORD.

I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Psalm 111:1 NIV

The psalmist begins by calling all to praise the Lord- *Hallelujah!*—the Hebrew word for *Praise the Lord*. He vows to praise the Lord with his whole heart. Nothing but his entire being was enough to praise God. He would not honor God with only a portion, but with all his heart he will sing *Hallelujah*.

The author vows to praise the Lord with all of himself during the “council” and the “assembly” (above in the NIV translation). Bible scholars explain the difference here in the groups mentioned. *Sod*, the first Hebrew word indicates a smaller group, translated as company or council. The second group is the *Edah* which may indicate a larger group, as an assembly or a congregation. But the point must be the call to praise God in small groups and large with our whole self.

The New Living Translation of the Bible is a "meaning to meaning" translation, which seeks to convey an overall thought. However, translations like The New King James version attempts for "word for word" translation. In contrast, the Message is a paraphrase of the Bible, or someone else's words. Let's look at the differences and similarities as we seek to understand these first couple of verses of Psalm 111.

Read and compare Psalm 111:1—NKJV and NLT

Verses two and three are beautiful statements of God's character. His works are "great!" The works He has done throughout time and even now are "honorable and glorious." His goodness will "last forever!"

Compare verse 2-3—in the NKJV, NLT, and the Message

The hidden wisdom of God is the most marvelous part of his works, and hence those who do not look below the surface miss the best part of what he would teach us.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God's beauty is all around us. Anyone who looks up into the night sky or journeys into a deep cave or even stops to ponder the wonder of a glass of cool water knows that such things were divinely made. Even an unbeliever sees the beauty there and wonders how it is possible.

It is only possible with divine inspiration, a Creator. God the Father created all and makes everything possible. While there is so much that we do not fully understand, we can seek to. He has given us a desire to understand and an avenue to do so: a relationship with Him through worship, prayer, and studying the Bible. We can grow in understanding by spending time with Him in His Word.

Psalm 111:4-9 NKJV

Praise the Lord. Praise Him that we have His Word, that we can hold it in our hands. That during trials and times of worry, we can open it and see His faithfulness throughout time. The Bible, God's Word, is an amazing gift from a loving Father who desires that we know Him, that we know who He was and who He is. He tells us of His love in all of creation. He reminds us of His love with the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. He reminds us of His love as He sits beside us even when we do not acknowledge Him; He is there, always. And He reminds us of His love and faithfulness on every page of the Bible.

He is gracious and compassionate. Other Bible translations say, kind and merciful. And the works of His hands are verity and justice (NKJV), faithful and just (ESV), good and fair (ICB), just and good (NLT). And all His commandments are trustworthy.

This also should lead us to praise him, since it is of the utmost advantage to us to live under a sovereign whose laws, decrees, acts, and deeds are the essence of truth and justice. All his commandments are sure.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Bible scholars believe that the psalmist speaks of God's wondrous works of redemption when He saved the Israelites from Egypt. As we have studied in previous psalms, the people tended to forget God as their Savior, and so, the psalms often called upon them to remember. Remember when God saved you. Remember when He provided food when you were hungry. Remember the covenant love of God; remember His promises.

Psalm 111:10 NKJV

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is written in other books of the Bible.

Proverbs 1:7

Job 28:28

Proverbs 9:10

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

To an unbeliever, to "fear the Lord" means to fear death, judgment, and eternal separation from all that is good even if they do not acknowledge it. To a believer, to "fear the Lord" means a sense of awe and wonder, mixed with fear of His wrath.

Here is a good, simple article about fearing the Lord for more information: [Christianity Today- Fearing the Lord](#)

Lastly, Bible scholars see a link between Psalm 111 and Psalm 112. Psalm 111 speaks of God in an acrostic poem, and Psalm 112 speaks of the righteousness of man also through the memorization tool of an acrostic. It is good to study them together.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 112

June 20, 2022

Read Psalm 112 The Righteous Will Never Be Moved

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 111 and Psalm 112 are sometimes called twin or companion psalms. Both are acrostic poems probably used for memorization. Each of the twenty-two lines begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and both psalms open with *Hallelujah*, the Hebrew word for Praise the LORD (Yahweh).

While the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 112 is titled **The Righteous Will Never Be Moved** (above, ESV), **The Blessed State of the Righteous** (NKJV), **Honest People Are Blessed** (ICB), and **Prosperity of the One Who Fears the LORD** (NASB), among others.

Compare verse 1 in the ICB and the NKJV

Hallelujah! The one who follows the Lord is blessed. That does not mean that the children of God have it easy, it just means that they have a purpose, a direction, a path that's lit from above, and that they never walk alone. The world may fall apart around them, but the one who follows the Lord can still rejoice because his worth is in God, his strength is from God, his heart is protected by God.

Hallelujah! A psalm such as this and the previous are good reminders that we must always praise the Lord. In good times and bad. This psalm was probably taught and memorized for that very reason. We are human and it is easy to stray. But learning God's word and memorizing God's word is a way to hold fast.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Let us praise the Lord, in good times and bad. Remember how He has been faithful. Talk about it, sing about it, remember.

Let self-righteous men praise themselves, but he who has been made righteous by grace renders all the praise to the Lord. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Compare Psalm 112:2-3 in the NKJV and the ICB again.

God calls His children to be different, set apart. We walk on a different path and to a different tune. When non-believers look upon us, they should see a reflection of Jesus. Jesus was different, yet people were drawn to Him by the thousands. They ached to hear His words of love and hope. And that is what must always come from the mouth and the actions of God's children. That is what He asks of us.

And with that comes blessing. God will provide. If we look at these two verses in the physical and earthly sense, they are hard to understand. Many godly people are poor and suffering and unknown in the world. But what makes a man or woman "mighty on earth?" What are true "wealth and riches" to fill our houses here on earth with? Is it hope, love, integrity, honor, truth, compassion, peace?

These things do in fact bring blessings and may be counted as riches and wealth.

However, if we look at these two verses in a spiritual sense, they are even clearer. Despite what happens on earth, when the children of God keep their eyes toward heaven and what awaits there, what is "important" in this life on earth is meaningless.

What wealth can equal that of the love of God? What riches can rival a contented heart? It matters nothing that the roof is thatched, and the floor is of cold stone: the heart which is cheered with the favor of heaven is "rich to all the intents of bliss." -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The psalmist goes on in this mighty poem to describe the man and woman of God. The one who is faithful, whose hope is in the eternal and who is blessed on earth because of it.

Psalm 112:4-9 ICB

Verse 4 is so beautiful, compare it here in the NKJV and the NIV

What a beautiful promise that God not only is present in the darkness, but He shines through it. He uses the darkness to bring light to His children. And not only that beautiful promise, but His light reflects off those who love Him even in the darkness. He uses us to reach those who are lost. His light penetrates even the darkest places of this life to bring hope and peace and love. What a wonderful, faithful, gracious Father we have.

Praise Him.

It is good to be kind, fair, and merciful. The name of a good person will be remembered. This psalm speaks of integrity in this life. Some people are celebrated for evil things, but that is not the way of the Lord. And truly, deep down, this world needs integrity. It needs kindness and fairness and mercy. That is what we are called to, even in the darkest times and places. And we are called to have confidence in the Lord, not to be afraid. Honor is in these things; honor is in goodness and kindness, says the Lord repeatedly.

When this world feeds evil, anger, bitterness, greed, and lust, God's children must respond with kindness, fairness, mercy, and love. And we only have the power to do this because of the great God that we serve. Without Him, without His light in the darkness, we cannot succeed. But with Him, all these things are possible.

Isaiah 41:10

Joshua 1:9

2 Timothy 1:7

Finally, Psalm 112 closes with what will become of the wicked who see the goodness and kindness and mercy of the godly man. The one who sees and still chooses to turn his back on God will face exactly what they want . . . a place and life where good does not exist, where God cannot go. Darkness. Evil. Loneliness.

Psalm 112:10 ICB

Keep on reflecting the love of the Father, my friends. Praise the LORD. *Hallelujah.*

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 113

June 27, 2022

Read Psalm 113 Who Is like the LORD Our God?

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 113 is titled **Praise for God's Kindness** (ICB), **The Majesty and Condescension of God** (NKJV), **The LORD Exalts the Humble** (NASB), and **Who Is Like the LORD Our God?** (ESV, above), among others.

With this Psalm begins the Hallel, or Hallelujah of the Jews, which was sung at their solemn feasts: we will therefore call it THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HALLEL.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 113 begins a collection of songs referred to as the *Egyptian Hallel* or just *Hallel*. Psalms 113-118 are linked to Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt and were/are used in the Passover celebrations. Psalms 113 and 114 are sung before the meal, and Psalms 115-118 after.

Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD! Psalm 113:1 NKJV

A call to worship. Psalm 113 is a call to praise at the beginning of the Passover celebration when all in attendance sing this song. The group lifts their voices together and call upon the great, covenant name of the Lord, Yahweh. They praise Him for deliverance from Egypt; they remember His saving miracles. They remember how their ancestors painted the doorposts of their homes with lamb's blood and the Angel of the Lord "passed over" them to the homes without the blood, taking the first born of each family.

Praise the LORD.

Who is called to praise? The servants of the Lord.

What are the servants called to praise? The name of the LORD. The name YHWH. Even God's Name is to be praised. Three times the people sing, the Name of the LORD, Yahweh or Jehovah. Charles Spurgeon had an interesting point here,

The name of Jehovah is thrice used in this verse and may by us who understand the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity be regarded as a thinly veiled allusion to that holy mystery. Let Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all be praised as the one, only, living, and true God. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 113:2-3 NKJV

All His servants are called to praise Him. To praise His Name, the Name Yahweh. Forever. From the rising to the setting of the sun, all day long, forevermore. Praise His Name.

Continual praise. God must always be in our minds and His Name on our lips. That is how we remember His faithfulness in times of worry and trials. That is how we teach our children and grandchildren of His love. That is how we lead others into His Truth.

Creation praises the Lord all day long. The earth cries out for Him. So must His children.

Psalm 113:4-9 NKJV

Jesus sang this song before He ate the Passover meal the last night of His earthly life. On the night He was betrayed and handed over to human authorities, He sang this song to God the Father. What would that have been like? He knew what was coming, yet He still sang "Praise the LORD!"

Yahweh, Jehovah is greater than any king or ruler or nation that has ever existed or will exist. But more than that, He is greater than the heavens. Nothing exists or has existed or will exist that is greater or more wonderful than the LORD.

But our God "humbles Himself" to care for His creation. He is greater than anything we can imagine, yet He is real and present in our lives. King David stood in awe of this,

Read Psalm 8:3-4

God even cares for the lowest of low: the poor, the needy who dig through the ashes for food. And especially for those who feel in their hearts that they are the lowest of low, mothers unable to have children? Our God cares. In ancient days, a woman without children was a disappointment to her husband, to her family, to herself. Even today, that pressure exists in the hearts of women, that being a mother is the greatest calling. God knows. God cares.

When Jesus sang this song before He ate the Last Supper, did He remember us? The lowest of low. Did He think about the poor and the needy and the barren mother and remember why He would suffer and die. That He would choose to suffer and die for us. No greater love than that of Jesus.

The Lord who stands above all things, who is greater than the heavens, cares. He cares for each of us. So much so, He would not leave us to suffer in our own sin. He sent Jesus. Jesus took our sin upon His shoulders and paid our price. And because of Jesus's great love and sacrifice, our Father waits in heaven with open arms for His children.

Praise the LORD!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 114

July 4, 2022

Read Psalm 114 Tremble at the Presence of the Lord

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 114 is titled **The Power of God in His Deliverance of Israel** (NKJV), **God's Deliverance of Israel from Egypt** (NASB), **God Brought Israel from Egypt** (ICB), among others.

This song is the second in what Bible scholars call the *Egyptian Hallel*. *Hallel* means "praise" in Hebrew and these songs were (are) sung during the Passover celebration, Psalms 113-114 before the meal and 115-118 after the meal. Psalms 113-118 are reminders of God's provision and faithfulness to His people in Egypt.

It is fitting that the people would continue to sing these songs in remembrance of that time during the Passover, the night the Jewish people celebrate the Angel of the Lord "passing over" their homes during the last plague before they were freed from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus sang this song the night He was betrayed.

True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm. God is spoken of as leading forth his people from Egypt to Canaan and causing the whole earth to be moved at his coming.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 114 is a beautiful little song of God's provision, faithfulness, and power.

Compare Psalm 114:1-2 NLT and NKJV

The miracles and Israel's deliverance from Egypt are the central story of God's redemption and faithfulness in the Old Testament. The story was to be talked about and remembered. Always.

The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central act of redemption in God's Story as told in the New Testament. The people of ancient Israel did not have Jesus's life to celebrate, therefore, they remembered God's faithfulness and deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

The Israelites were slaves for over four hundred in Egypt. They struggled to survive in a foreign land with a "strange language." But God did not leave them there, just as He will not leave His children in a "foreign land" forever. This is not our home either, as Egypt was not the home of the Israelites, even centuries after they arrived seeking help during a famine. We, too, walk this land as strangers in a foreign land, sometimes even feeling as if the world speaks a "strange language," certainly a language void of truth and morality.

But . . . God is faithful. In His time, He will bring His children home. He will redeem what is His.

Judah was the largest tribe and from Judah's line would come David, Solomon, and eventually, Jesus. *Judah became God's sanctuary.* The tribe of Judah became the place God would reside.

No longer would the Israelites be ruled over by another people, Israel would be the Lord's kingdom.

Compare Psalm 114:3-6 NLT and NKJV again

The psalmist speaks of the parting at the Red Sea (Exodus 14) and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3) into the Promised Land. Bible scholars see the description of a "spiritual journey" here as the psalmist talks of the beginning of Israel's exodus from Egypt with the Red Sea parting and the end of their wanderings in the wilderness and the crossing of the Jordan into God's Holy Promised Land.

The idea almost following the life of a believer; God rescues, we walk on through a world that is of a strange language, then He calls us home. What a beautiful description of God's faithfulness.

Why did the sea part and river turn back? Because the Lord went before His people. All of creation submits in the presence of God. The mountains, the hills, the rivers, the seas all step aside in reverence to God, the Creator.

And now, all of creation waits for Jesus's return. All of creation waits to be set free, to become what it was intended to be by a perfect Creator (Romans 8:18-23).

Compare Psalm 114:7-8 NLT and NKJV

The psalmist calls upon the earth and all of creation to tremble in expectation of the coming of the Lord. He is coming; He will redeem His children. He will set all to right.

This psalm closes with the reminder that God provided water out of rock for His children as they wandered in the wilderness. He is all we need. He is our protector and savior. God is our provider.

He is all we need.

John 7:37-38

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 115

July 28, 2022

Read Psalm 115

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 115 is part of what Bible scholars call the *Egyptian Hallel*, Psalms 113-118. These six psalms are sung during the Passover feast, among other times. Psalms 113 and 114 sung before eating the meal, and Psalms 115-118, after eating. *Hallel* is the Hebrew word for "praise."

The Egyptian Hallel is a grouping of songs sung as reminders of God's faithfulness to the Israelite people during the four hundred years of bondage in Egypt, miraculous freeing, and subsequent wandering in the wilderness moving toward the Promised Land. The Old Testament book of Exodus tells this story.

Psalm 115 is titled **To Your Name Give Glory** (ESV), **The Futility of Idols and the Trustworthiness of God** (NKJV), **The One True God** (ICB), **Heathen Idols Contrasted with the LORD** (NASB), among others.

In memory of the exodus from Egypt, their salvation, and God's great providence, something had changed. At the point of writing Psalm 115, the people around the Israelites were mocking them, "Where is your God now?" "He saved you before but look at you now!" You can almost hear the mocking crowd, right?

The author begins,

Compare verse 1 in these translations: NLT, NKJV, ICB

All glory and honor be to God. All that we have, all that we are is because of His great love. His covenant *hesed* love promised to generation upon generation of those who love him. His unfailing love and mercy are poured out upon us not because we have earned it, but because of who He is.

This is a call to remember. To remember God's saving power, but also remember that it all happened for His glory.

Jesus sang this song on the night He was betrayed after sharing the Passover meal with His friends. On that night He knew what was to come and He sang this song: "Not unto me, O Yahweh, but to Your name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness."

Psalm 115:2-3 NLT

The "nations" might think they sneer at God, but they are so very wrong. Where else would God be? He is not in idols made of wood or stone, nor is He dead and buried; neither is He present only when we wake Him from

sleep through chanting or spells. Our God is in the heavens, where He should be. The place that He can see and hear all; the place He will rule with His might and power, with His love and mercy.

But our God is in the heavens- where he should be; above the reach of mortal sneers, overhearing all the vain jangling of men, but looking down with silent scorn upon the makers of the babel. Supreme above all opposing powers, the Lord reigneth upon a throne high and lifted up.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 115:4-8 NLT

The irony. Men worship things created with their own hands, made in the image of themselves. But these manmade objects have no life nor breath. They are not alive. The creator, man, cannot breathe life into them. But he worships them anyway as something more powerful than him? It does not make sense.

Our God is in heaven. He formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him with His own breath, in His own image. Therefore, God's creation worships Him.

Creation worships the Creator, not the other way around.

Genesis 2:7

Our God is a spirit, and his hands made the heavens and the earth: well may we worship him, and we need not be disturbed at the sneering question of those who are so insane as to refuse to adore the living God, and yet bow their knees before images of their own carving.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 115:9-11 NLT

After discussing the scoffing pagans and their idols, the psalmist calls upon the Israelites to fear God and trust in Him as their protector and helper. Always. In good times and bad.

Proverbs 3:5-6

No matter what goes on around us, when we are lost and afraid and unsure what direction to take, here is the answer. Open the Word of God and trust in Him.

Psalm 115:12-13 NLT

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, no matter who is scoffing or laughing at you. When we put our trust in Him, we walk in His light, and the path ahead is His doing. The path of His choosing will always be safer than that of our own choosing. The only way to find His path is to trust in Him and to seek Him every day. When we do this, He will bless us.

Psalms 115:14-18 NLT—Praise the LORD.

The psalmist turns to a blessing: that if we praise and fear the Lord, the children of God will be blessed. This isn't earthly blessing. This is spiritual blessing. Whatever happens on earth, will happen, but the children of God are so much better off "doing life" with their Creator rather than on their own.

Heaven and earth are the Lord's, and everything in them. The heavens, the sky and the universe, are God's. These verses may refer to Creation, in Genesis the Lord gave the earth to man for a time,

Genesis 1:26-28

God created the earth and everything in it before He created mankind. And although God oversees and ultimately controls everything, He did put the earth under the rule of mankind; to subdue and use, not to destroy and abuse. Free will. God rules over all, but like a loving parent, He allows His children to make their own choices, often to our own detriment and suffering.

We are responsible for how we use God's creation. All that He made is for His glory, so when we mistreat Creation, we mistreat the Creator, and we will answer to Him for this. That is why walking in the Light of the Lord is so important. How do we know the will of the Lord? How do we know what brings Him glory? By reading the Word first and foremost. By a personal relationship with God.

Sing the praises of the Lord. The dead do not sing. They are dead and gone. But we can sing, forevermore. The dead that cannot be heard anymore may be a reference to a heavenly choir that we cannot hear. To the living, the grave is silent. But there is a choir singing forevermore that we can join now. And when we pass through death, we will join the choir in the heavens.

Jesus sang this song during the Passover meal. His last meal with His disciples. He knew He was leaving them. He knew that they would no longer hear His voice. He also knew that He would pass, for a time, into a place (death) where there was no song. An empty, lonely place without God, the Father.

So, this song, probably broke His heart.

Thank you, Jesus, for your great sacrifice for us.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 116

August 1, 2022

Read Psalm 116

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalms 113-118 are called the *Egyptian Hallel* psalms and are sung during Passover as a time to remember God's mercies and power when He saved His children from the bonds of slavery in Egypt, went before them and provided for them as they wandered in the wilderness, and then finally brought them home into the Promised Land. Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the Passover meal, and Psalms 115 through 118 were sung after the meal. *Hallel* is the Hebrew word for *Praise*. Hallelujah.

Psalm 116 is titled **I Love the LORD** (ESV), **Thanksgiving for Escaping Death** (ICB), **Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death** (NKJV), **Thanks to God for Deliverance** (HCSB), among others. The theme is the psalmist's personal deliverance from suffering and death. As the song was sung during the Passover, the personal suffering of the psalmist became a way to remember God's providence and deliverance for all.

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was the culminating story of God's faithfulness throughout the Old Testament. As time went on from there, the people needed reminders to remember God's mercy, love, and great power. We all need reminders of God's faithfulness to us. When we feel He isn't listening or He isn't responding, we need to remember how He *was* faithful.

If He was faithful, He will be faithful. Doubt has a way of creeping into our hearts, but God calls us to have faith in His faithfulness.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the culminating story of God's faithfulness in the New Testament—and from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Jesus is the beginning and the end. He was there in the beginning, during Creation; He will return for a great battle in the end when God redeems His children and Jesus ultimately destroys the hold that evil has on the world.

The Alpha and Omega.
Revelation 22:12-13

When we study the *Egyptian Hallel*, we also remember that Jesus sang these songs the night He was betrayed. During the Last Super—also the Passover meal—Jesus taught His disciples to break bread in Holy Communion and they sang these songs together.

It is well that we remember the voice of Jesus in these psalms.

Psalm 116:1-2 NLT

The psalmist has a relationship with God. God knows him. God hears him. God bends down to listen to him. Like a loving Father, God takes a knee to hear His child speak and to wipe away tears. God answers our prayers, and we love Him for it. But more than anything, we need Him to listen. And He does.

Praise the Lord. *Hallel.*

Psalm 116:3-9 NLT

One Bible scholar explained Psalm 116 this way: imagine this one man or woman who has come to the temple with tears in his eyes and a story on his lips. He speaks of a terrible encounter with death. He speaks of fear and a cry for help. The crowds gather around to hear his story. He stops to speak of God's kindness and goodness and mercy; how God heard his cries for help. He was at the end of his strength, his faith that of a child calling to his father for help, and God saved him! As the people listened to his story of salvation, he proclaimed God's love and faithfulness. God saved him, provided for, and protected him; and now he would sing of God's mercy.

Psalm 116 is one man or woman's story. But it became the story of a nation.

Because of the Lord's provision, the psalmist made this declaration: "And so, I will walk in the LORD's presence as I live here on earth!"

Why has he chosen to walk in the presence of the Lord? The "and so" sends us back a verse. The psalmist will walk with the Lord because the Lord "saved him from death," "his eyes from tears," and "his feet from stumbling." Whatever happened, the Lord not only healed him, but also walked beside him, so closely that His presence was felt with a touch.

Likewise, Jesus sang these words on the night He was betrayed. The night that He knew would lead to suffering and death. Yet He still sang these words.

I believed in you, so I said, "I am deeply troubled, LORD." In my anxiety I cried out to you, "These people are all liars!" Psalm 116:10-11 NLT

I believed, therefore I spoke, "I am greatly afflicted." I said in my haste, "All men are liars." NKJV

I believed, so I said, "I am completely ruined." In my distress I said, "All people are liars." ICB
I kept on believing, even when I said, "I am completely crushed," even when I was afraid and said, "No one can be trusted." GNBDC

Psalm 116:10-11 are hard to understand, but reading the different translations helps. The Apostle Paul spoke of these verses in his letter to the church in Corinth,

2 Corinthians 4:13-14

Even during suffering and fear, the children of God must believe. And not only that, but they must speak. We must speak of our struggles and of our faith in God's deliverance. Even when God does not deliver, we hold fast to faith, and we speak of it.

Psalm 116:12-14 NLT

All we can give God is our praise. We praise the Lord for His faithfulness and His love. We praise the Lord in the presence of others. This is what the psalmist was doing when he or she could not contain themselves and just *had* to tell the story of God's grace. Which is what the Israelites did—and do—every Passover at the end of the meal, they sing this song and remember God's faithfulness.

But we all ask this question, don't we? "What do I have that is worthy of God? God has given me so much. What can I give Him so that He knows I love Him, and that I am thankful?"

The psalmist pledges praise in the presence of God's people, maybe in the temple, maybe at home, or when he walks the streets, or wherever he can get an audience. He promises to sing of the Lord's provision.

When Jesus sang this song, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the Lord," He gave His will over to the Father. That "cup of salvation" was for us.

Psalm 116:15-19 NLT

The psalmist has told his story of God's faithfulness, now he reclaims a commitment to God. "I am your servant." Verse 16 is also a powerful reminder and encouragement for parents,

Psalm 116:16

The psalmist remembers where he learned his faith; his mother taught him. Other versions say, "the son of Thy handmaid" or "the son of your maidservant." The reminder? Speak and teach of the Lord every day, everywhere, as often as we can, because we have the honor, the privilege, and the great responsibility of teaching the next generation. And God is watching.

The psalmist repeats his promise to praise and speak about God's faithfulness. He will continue to tell the story, and, wow, did he ever. His song became a national song of deliverance and sung for generations during the Passover meal. As sung by Jesus the night He was betrayed.

Praise the LORD.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 117

August 8, 2022

Read Psalm 117

Favorite verse (all of it!) or thoughts:

Interestingly, Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the Bible and the shortest with only two verses. This may just be fun Bible trivia, but truly God does nothing accidentally. There is meaning and joy and promise in these two powerful verses.

Psalm 117 is titled **The LORD's Faithfulness Endures Forever** (ESV), **Let All Peoples Praise the LORD** (NKJV), **A Hymn of Praise** (ICB), among others and is considered one of the *Egyptian Hallel* psalms sung during Passover. Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before eating the Passover meal, and Psalms 115 through 118 were sung after the meal. *Hallel* is the Hebrew word for "praise" and these six psalms are remembering the time in Israel's history when the Lord saved them from slavery in Egypt.

Our Lord Jesus sang these songs during the Last Supper—the Passover meal—on the night He was betrayed. The story of the Lord's deliverance of His people from Egypt is the culminating story of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of God's faithfulness and provision for His people as He brought them home into the Promised Land. But the story of Jesus, the Son of God, His life, death, and resurrection is the culminating story of all history from creation to the day He will return to redeem the world.

Let's look a couple of different translations with this tiny, yet mighty psalm of the *Egyptian Hallel*,

Praise the LORD, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth. Psalm 117:1 NLT
Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! NKJV
Praise the LORD, all nations! Glorify Him, all peoples! HCSB

This little psalm of joy, sung at the end of the Passover meal as a reminder of the Lord's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt, calls *all people, all nations*, even "you Gentiles" to praise the Lord. From the beginning, the Lord chose the people of Israel as His own, but His intention was that all people of the earth would know Him through His chosen people.

Genesis 12:1-3

The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in his letter to the Romans (Romans 15:11). In this chapter, Paul is telling the people in Rome that God has called him to minister to the Gentiles, to them,

Romans 15:16b

God intended for all people to know Him. The story began with Israel and spread from there. It's not unlike our own families: God has called you and I to Himself. Then we are expected to take His love and spread it to our neighbors and whomever we meet. God's love and provision and eternity are for anyone from any background, a free gift.

And in the of the Passover meal, the Jewish people stop to remember this. They stop to sing and to thank God for His provision for all mankind.

For his unfailing love for us is powerful; the LORD's faithfulness endures forever. Praise the LORD!
Psalm 117:2 NLT

For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!
NKJV

For His lovingkindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD! NASB

Psalm 117 opens with a call for all to worship the Lord. The psalm closes with a reminder of the power of God's love for all mankind, all His creation. The psalmist calls on the Lord's covenant love, *hesed*. The Hebrew word *Hesed* (or *Chesed*) is translated into English as—unfailing love, lovingkindness, steadfast love, unfailing love, loyal love, etc. The word is used some 250 times in the Old Testament, and Bible scholars believe that the translations do not do the meaning of the word justice. As we struggle to understand the greatness of God, His love is sometimes the hardest to comprehend. God Himself used *hesed* to explain His love to His people,

Exodus 34:6-7

The love of God is so great it is hard to understand, but as we seek to walk with Him every day, He will teach us through His word.

Let's read it one more time! Psalm 117:1-2 NLT

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 118

August 19, 2022

Read Psalm 118

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 118 is the last of what Bible scholars call the *Egyptian Hallel* Psalms (Psalms 113-118). *Hallel* is the Hebrew word for praise. Hallelujah. These six psalms were sung during the Passover meal to remember God's deliverance from Egypt as recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus. Psalms 113-114 were sung before eating the Passover meal, and Psalms 115-118 were sung after the meal.

Our Lord Jesus would have sung these songs on the night He was betrayed. The night He washed His disciple's feet, taught them the Sacraments, and shared the Passover meal, He too was singing these songs in remembrance of the power of God the Father. Can you imagine the conversation that night between the Father and the Son? How did the Father strengthen and empower the Son to face what was to come? What message did He give Him? Were the words of the *Egyptian Hallel* Psalms a reminder to Jesus of the Father's redemption plan? Of His love and faithfulness throughout time? Did they fill Jesus with hope?

Psalm 118 is titled **His Steadfast Love Endures Forever** (ESV), **Praise to God for His Everlasting Mercy** (NKJV), **Thanksgiving for Victory** (ICB), among others.

There are reasons to believe that King David wrote this psalm, although it is not signed by him. At the dedication of the second temple in Jerusalem, the people also sang portions of this song,

Ezra 3:10-11

As the people attributed the song to David in ancient Israel, we can assume him to be the original author of Psalm 118.

However, Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. It is beautiful and reassuring and awe-inspiring when we study the psalms and see that Jesus is in every one of them. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

Psalm 118:1-4 NLT

For he is good. This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 118 opens with a call to praise, and you can almost hear the trumpets resound in a call to worship. Some translations even begin with an exclamation,

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. (NKJV)
 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! (ESV)

Oh—give thanks to the Lord. Why? Because His love endures forever. David calls upon God's covenant *hesed* love for His people Israel. *Hesed* is translated as lovingkindness, steadfast love, mercy, faithful love, and seeks to encompass God's commitment and faithfulness to His people throughout time. It's a big word and one that Bible scholars have tried to explain and cannot do it justice. Some things about God are impossible to explain in human words. But in these verses, the people are reminded to give thanks to God, not for something particular at that time, but because He is who He says He is, and because He has always been faithful. *Hesed*.

So, in those days when times are good, and we are filled with joy and hope for life we must give thanks to the Lord.

And in those days when hope teeters on fear and joy is filled with pain, we also must thank the Lord. Why? Because throughout time He has been faithful. He was faithful. He will be faithful.

These words sound like David but remember that Jesus also sang these words the night He was betrayed,

Psalm 118:5-6 NKJV

Our Lord Jesus knew what was to come, and He also knew that the Father was on His side, and that was more important than what man could do to Him. These verses don't mean that God will free us from pain and evil, maybe He will, maybe He won't. What these words do mean is that the presence of God in our lives is more important than anything else. With God by our side, we have all we need.

In our distress who do we call out to? David may be speaking of a time when God intervened and gave him victory over his enemies. God did that often for David. But these two verses mean more than that. In our distress we can cry out to the Lord, and He will be there for us. He will set us free. But free from what?

Fear. Loneliness. Worry.

David said that God answered him and set him free. If we have the Lord on our side, we are never alone. God is for us. Nothing in this world is bigger or stronger than our God. And nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39

But we must call out to God first. He is there. Waiting. But we must call to Him. And when we became a child of God, there is now nothing in heaven or on earth or below the earth that can remove His love and His presence from our lives.

I will not fear. He does not say that he should not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favor of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Hebrew poetry uses repetition to make a point as it does in this psalm. "It is better to take refuge in the Lord, than to trust in people." (NLT) And David tells of a time or a summary of times when he was surrounded and attacked, but God rescued him. God gave David the "authority of the Lord" or "with the name of the Lord" or "in the power of the Lord" an ability to persevere and triumph.

Psalm 118:14 NKJV

The psalmist says that the Lord is his strength and song and salvation, not that He became the author's strength or that He gave the author strength. The Lord *is* our strength. He is all we need. The Lord doesn't just give strength and victory to His children, He is our strength and victory.

He is our strength when we feel weak. He is our song when we need joy and hope. He is our salvation and will rescue and deliver us. He will never leave us.

The Israelites sang these words just after the Red Sea closed behind them and covered their enemies, and they walked across dry land to freedom:

Exodus 15:4-5

The psalmist continues to celebrate his deliverance from death and his victory in the Lord.

Psalm 118:17 NKJV

As our Lord Jesus sang this song on the night He was betrayed and would give His life for all, He knew the suffering to come. He knew the Father would turn away. But He also knew that the story did not end there. Jesus knew He would conquer death. "I shall not die, but live, and I will tell of the works of the Lord."

Psalm 118:19-21 NKJV

Through times of pain and suffering on this earth, we can hold onto this promise that someday the gates of righteousness will be opened to us, and we will walk through them and praise the Lord together forever.

This is the promise. This is all we need.

Psalm 118:22-24 NLT

Matthew 21:42

Ephesians 2:19-20

This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Jesus is the cornerstone. He is our Rock and our Redeemer.

Psalm 118:27-29 NLT

Hallelujah.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 119

August 26, 2022

And now we come to Psalm 119 with its whopping 176 verses!

Psalm 119 is daunting to read, let alone to study. But here are a couple of golden nuggets to get us started,

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:103

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. Psalm 119:105

You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope. Psalm 119:114 NLT

And so, as we begin to study this beautiful behemoth of a song, let us pray these words over our time with the Lord,

Father in heaven, open our eyes that we may see the wonderful truths in your instructions (Psalm 119:18 NLT). Amen.

Favorite verse(s) or thoughts:

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, but it is *so* worth our time and study. Commentators speak of people throughout history who memorized this chapter, some even singing it upon their martyrdom. Although the psalm is not signed, Bible scholars believe it to be a work of David.

However, God did not include a signature, so we will leave it at that.

Psalm 119 is a ginormous acrostic poem! The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters. This psalm is divided into 22 sections, each verse of those 22 sections (eight verses in each section) begins with that same letter of the alphabet. For example, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *Aleph (Alef)*, and the first section of Psalm 119 is titled such, and then all eight verses begin with *Aleph* as well. *Beth (Bet)* is the second, and so forth. If you skim through Psalm 119, you will see the headings, all twenty-two of them.

Bible scholars may not say with certainty who wrote Psalm 119, but they do agree that it was written over the course of someone's life and probably compiled later. When we study the psalm, we can see a youthful faith in the beginning, age and wisdom by the end. Bible scholars also see the later compilation of the many songs or poems into one because the sections do not necessarily flow from one to the next logically other than following the Hebrew alphabet.

The 18th century English minister, Matthew Henry, calls Psalm 119, "a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links."

And the 19th century preacher, Charles Spurgeon, says this in his commentary on Psalm 19, "Other psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean."

Now here is the key that unlocks this beautiful psalm: nearly all of the 176 verses of Psalm 119 mention the Word of God. Some scholars argue about a couple that they believe do not (verses 84, 90, 121, 122, 132); however, an ancient group of Jewish Bible scholars called the Masoretes said, all except verse 122 mention the Word of God in some form. Here is verse 122,

Ensure your servant's well-being; do not let the arrogant oppress me. Psalm 119:122 NIV

Why not in this verse? If 175 verses (or 171 for some modern scholars) of this song mention God's Word, why not this one? Since nothing happens in God's Word without His knowing and His hand and His will, this is important to think about. Maybe we will never know why, but we can wonder at our marvelous God. We can be amazed at a song as long as this one that sings of God's faithfulness to His people through His Word in nearly every verse. How God's strength and His love and His forgiveness and His mercy is poured out to us through the Bible. How 171 or 175 verses mention the Word of God and its power given freely to the one who seeks Him with his heart.

The author of Psalm 119 would not have held the Bible in his hands. No one knows what ancient Hebrews like David had as a written Word of God, possibly the Torah (Pentateuch), or the first five books as written by Moses. Maybe some of the psalms were compiled. Otherwise, much of the Old Testament was that of an oral record, stories passed down for generations and then written down later. Possibly bits and pieces of poems and writings that might have been written down and in someone's possession but were taken and compiled later to be shared by all.

Still, Psalm 119 talks about the beauty and the hope and the salvation found in the Word of God in nearly every verse.

Each verse mentions the Word of God using the following eight Hebrew words: *Torah* (law as revealed to Moses), *Dabar* (Word), *Mispatin* (Judgments), *Edut/Edot* (Testimonies), *Miswah/Miswat* (Commandments), *Huqqim* (Statutes), *Piqqudim* (Precepts), *Imrah* (to speak).

Here is an explanation by Pastor David Guzik if you're interested. He also has a nearly ten-hour commentary on Psalm 119! [Pastor David Guzik: Psalm 119 Introduction](#)

Psalm 119 speaks of God's Word throughout its entirety, but does it also prophecy the coming of the Messiah? Does this psalm point to Jesus? Can we see Him in this song?

Absolutely.
John 1:1-5

John wrote his gospel in Greek originally. However, in the Orthodox Jewish Bible, the Hebrew translation for "Word" that John uses here is: *Dvar Hashem*. Now, I am not a Hebrew scholar; however, in my research of what this word means and my prayers that God would reveal the Truth to me, this is what I found,

Dvar is a form of *Dabar* which we know means "Word" or "spoken Word of God" or "revealed Word of God." *Dabar* is used throughout the Old Testament to refer to God's Word. *Hashem* is used in reference to God and literally translates as "the name." The Hebrew language has many names for God, some are so revered that they are not spoken out loud nor written down. So *Dvar Hashem* translates literally as "Word of the Name."

John 1:1 says *Dvar Hashem* was with God in the beginning. "Word of the Name" or "Word of God" was with God in the beginning.

Jesus was with God in the beginning. Jesus is the incarnate Word of God. Jesus as *Dvar Hashem*.

Therefore, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior is all over Psalm 119. [Study Light Language Studies: Dabar](#)

I recommend using the You Version Bible app to read Psalm 119 two times. Choose a couple of different translations, turn on the audio, and let someone read the song to you while you follow along. I recommend a word-for-word translation (like the ESV, KJV, or NASB) and a meaning-to-meaning translation (like the NIV or NLT). Each of these has an audio version on the You Version Bible app.

There are many books written about Psalm 119. Thousands of pages, volume after volume of notes and thoughts and ideas from Bible scholars much smarter than me are out there and many of them are old enough that you can find them for free online. So, look around if you're interested in learning more.

Here are couple more golden nuggets of encouragement as you read this song:

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11 ESV

My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word! Psalm 119:25 ESV

My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! Psalm 119:28 ESV

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Psalm 119:34 ESV

I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. Psalm 119:55 ESV

My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. Psalm 119:81 ESV

You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word. Psalm 119:114 ESV

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 120

September 26, 2022

Read Psalm 120

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalms 120-134 are called the Song of Ascents, Song of Degrees, Song of Steps, Gradual Psalms, or Pilgrim Songs. Four of these psalms are attributed to David, one to Solomon, but the remaining are unsigned. And really not much is known with certainty.

Throughout history, as required by God in the Old Testament, the Jewish people have made the pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem for three annual festivals,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

And while the pilgrims climbed or "ascended" the uphill road into the city, they would sing these songs. Bible scholars believe that ancient Jewish priests would also sing these songs as they climbed the fifteen steps into the temple. But scholars cannot say with certainty what the original purpose of these psalms were nor why they were given the title that remains.

The 17th century English minister, Matthew Henry, made an interesting comment in his day,

That they [the song of ascents] are all short psalms, all but one very short (three of them have but three verses apiece), and that they are placed next to Psalm 119, which is by much the longest of all. Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms, which, being short, were sometimes sung all together, and made, as it were, one psalm, observing only a pause in between each as many steps make one pair of stairs. -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 120 has titles in some Bible translations: **Deliver Me, O LORD. A Song of Ascents** (ESV), **Plea for Relief from Bitter Foes. A Song of Ascents** (NKJV), **A Prayer of Someone Far from Home. A song for going up to worship** (ICB), and the New Living Translation says simply, *A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.*

Compare Psalm 120:1-2 ESV and NLT

Who do we go to in the tough times? When those around us spew lies and try to deceive us? The world we live in now is filled with deceit, and it is hard to find anything that is trustworthy—not unlike how this ancient psalmist felt. When everything around us is confusing and we are bombarded with messages that go against the Bible and the Lord, who do we turn to for the Truth? When we feel attacked for what we believe, where do we go? When we feel alone and lost and confused, what do we do?

When the lies start to take hold and we doubt ourselves and maybe even God, what do we do?

We must take these worries, fears, and anxieties to God. We must hold everything up against the Truth within the Bible. God is the only One who truly listens and understands. He already knows what plagues us, what fills our hearts and minds. He already knows, but there is healing in speaking it, in crying out to Him for help. God hears us, and He listens to us. His ear is always turned toward the cries of His children.

1 Peter 3:12

Psalm 34:15

God was faithful. He is faithful. He will be faithful. The righteous must hold this Truth close their hearts. It is God's promise, and God is faithful.

This little song is a good reminder of God's faithfulness.

Compare Psalm 120:3-4 ESV and NLT again

Here, the author turns his attention to the lying and deceitful tongue with a warning. In ancient days, an attack or a siege would include flaming arrows. To kill a man with an arrow, the archer had to be precise, well taught, and have the eyes of an eagle. But a burning arrow did not need to be precise; fire would do the work. And fire was a major worry when your homes were possibly made of stone, but roofs were constructed with wood planks, thatch, or branches. Fire distracted and made defending secondary.

The author of this psalm trusted that God would have the final say. The Lord provides us with this sweet Truth. Through faith, we believe that the Lord will avenge and through that belief, we can "extinguish" the lies of Satan.

Ephesians 6:16

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul teaches us to put on the Armor of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes prepared to share the Good News, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.

When the world attacks the children of God, it is Satan, it is evil intent upon destroying all that the Lord loves. Which he cannot do. He still tries, doesn't he? Thankfully God prepares us, He provides for us, He watches over us, and He never ever leaves us. Brother or sister, put on the armor of God!

Psalm 120:5-7 ESV and NLT

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. The author of Psalm 120 craves the peace amongst God's people in His holy city. Beginning the Song of Ascents with Psalm 120 and these three verses makes sense. The pilgrim travels from home longing for God's community and releasing the worry and stress of living amongst the ungodly. And as he or she finally crests the hill with Jerusalem in sight, he or she sings this song.

Our poet felt himself to be as ill at ease among lying neighbors as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries "Woe is me!" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gypsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false-hearted ones who had assailed his character.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Bible scholars point out that these two tribes (Meshek and Kedar) lived so far apart that the psalmist could not be saying that he lived amongst them both. He is merely painting a picture of what it was like for him to live away from God's people and God's community.

And the pilgrim sings this as he or she walks up the hill into Jerusalem to celebrate.

We are sojourners, travelers, passing through a land filled with evil and deceit and lying tongues and flaming arrows, all aimed at our destruction because of Who we belong to. This is not our home. This is not what God intended if sin had not entered the world.

Therefore, Psalm 120 can also be our song.

Psalm 120 is our song of hope in the faithfulness of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 121

October 3, 2022

Read Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Father in heaven, may the words of this song speak to our hearts, and may we remember the truth today that you are bigger than anything in this world and you are always with us. Amen.

Psalm 121 is titled **My Help Comes from the LORD**, *A Song of Ascents* (ESV); *A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem* (NLT); **The LORD the Keeper of Israel**, *A Song of Ascents* (NASB); and **The Lord Guards His People** (ICB), among others.

Psalm 121 is the second of fifteen psalms with the heading: song of ascents, song of degrees, pilgrim songs, song of steps, or gradual songs. Some of these psalms are signed, this one is not. But Bible scholars believe that Jewish pilgrims would sing these songs as they ascended the hill into Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). Some scholars also believe that ancient Jewish priests would sing these as they climbed the fifteen steps into the Temple.

Not much else is known about Psalm 121 with any certainty.

As we will learn, Psalm 121 is a fitting song for weary travelers in ancient days as well as today.

Wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of; and this psalm directs and encourages us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do, with an entire resignation and satisfaction, in singing this psalm. -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

I will lift up my eyes to the hills- from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2 NKJV

I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from GOD, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains. Psalm 121:1-2 MSG

The singer looked at the hills ahead. Maybe Jerusalem is a long way off still. Maybe it is the hill of the city that he looks toward. But clearly, the psalmist knows that God, the Maker of heaven and earth and mountains and seas, is our help in time of trouble and worry. He sees the beauty and awesomeness ahead, but within that, he knows that God is greater. And he speaks with great certainty that God goes with him along the journey.

God is not just at the end, the final destination, the Lord travels along the road of this life with His children. Always. This promise was true in ancient times and is still true today.

Compare Psalm 121:3-4 NKJV and the Message

What an awesome promise! The traveler may sleep in peace, far from home, because the Lord never sleeps. The Lord doesn't take a break from watching over His children; He doesn't close His eyes while on watch.

The Lord will not allow His children to stumble. Certainly, to a weary traveler or pilgrim on the road to Jerusalem firm footing was a blessing. However, believers do stumble, our feet do slip sometimes. But to us—the modern reader of Psalm 121—God is still our firm foundation. He is our Rock upon which we can lean and trust and find refuge.

Hmmm, but believers still stumble. God protects us always from things we cannot see. He guides our steps around evil that is invisible to human eyes, but we still do stumble. When we stumble, is there not hope in the fact that God saw our pain? That God *saw* it and therefore He will see us *through* it. It is the journey through this world.

Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Compare Psalm 121:5-6 NKJV and the Message this time.

The psalmist repeats his point, that God is a Protector for the pilgrim. God doesn't sleep or doze off; therefore, He is our protection from the hidden perils of night and our shade during the heat of the day. The author uses the metaphor of the sun and moon, realities for a traveler on foot in the ancient middle east.

None but the Maker of heaven and earth could shelter us from the sun and the moon. None but the Creator of the thing could do that. No one is more powerful.

Day and night the loving Father watches over His children. What a beautiful thought and reminder.

Rea Psalm 121:7-8 NKJV and MSG

The Lord protects His children from the elements, *and* He shields them from evil. He guards our lives *and* our souls. He watches over His children day and night, coming and going, beginning to end.

Also, these two verses call upon the LORD (all caps), using God's covenant name- YHWH, Yahweh, or Jehovah. The LORD watches His children. God has mighty angels that do His work, but these verses make a solid statement that it is the LORD, Yahweh, who is present always for those He calls His own.

Day and night, coming and going, good times and bad, the great I AM, the Creator of the universe, the Alpha and Omega stands protectively over His children.

Exodus 3:13-15

Praise the LORD.

Note: do you worry? do you wake up in the night and have trouble sleeping because of all the things that bounce around in your head? From someone who completely understands, I would suggest memorizing some verses that will remind you of Who is with you always, even in the dead of night when everything seems so much worse. And this psalm is the perfect one. Memorize Psalm 121 and recite it to God during those sleepless nights and see what happens. xo

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 122

October 24, 2022

Read Psalm 122

A song of ascents. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 122 is a Psalm of Ascents, also called Pilgrim Psalms, Song of Steps, Song of Degrees, or Gradual Psalms. There are fifteen of these songs in the Psalter (Psalms 120-134). Bible scholars believe that Jewish pilgrims would sing these songs as they entered the city of Jerusalem for the three annual feasts as required by the Lord in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Four of the fifteen Pilgrim Songs are attributed to the hand of David, including this one.

David wrote it [Psalm 122] for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts in Jerusalem. It comes third in the series and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their foot stood within the city.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

David wrote Psalm 122 with a spirit of prophecy. He never made a journey as a pilgrim from afar, entering Jerusalem to celebrate one of these feasts. But he wrote for those to come, who after a long hard road, finally stood within the walls of the great city that he loved.

Psalm 122 is titled **Let Us Go to the House of the LORD** *A Song of Ascents. Of David.* (ESV); *A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.* (NLT), **The Joy of Going to the House of the LORD** *A Song of Ascents. Of David.* (NKJV), and **Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem. A Song of Ascents, of David.** (NASB), among others.

Psalm 122:1-2—Compare the NKJV and the MSG

David sings of the "house of the Lord," yet during his time, no house existed yet. David knew that his son would build an extravagant temple for the Lord, but he never saw it. The Lord promised David that his son would do this, but that David himself would not be given the privilege (2 Samuel 7). Yet still, David sings of the people coming together in joyful celebration to enter into worship together within the "house of the Lord."

Certainly, David knew that God did not exist solely within the walls of the church, but he also knew that the church was the place for God's children to gather in joy and fellowship and in worship. In the spirit of prophecy, David spoke of God calling His children together to worship Him in the church, and that it would be a joyous occasion.

How is your heart when you enter your house of worship? Does it "leap for joy?" Do you feel community when you enter? Do you long to enter the house of the Lord? If your answer is no, Pastor Guzik has these words of encouragement and warning,

If going to the house of the Lord is not a glad thing, the problem may be in the heart of the one who comes, or it may be in what happens at the house of the Lord- but the problem should be prayerfully diagnosed and lovingly addressed. -Pastor David Guzik, www.enduringword.com

God wants His children to enter His house of worship with joyful hearts. He desires to meet us there, but our hearts must be ready and in the right place. Isn't that hard though? How many of us fought to get out the door and possibly, in one way or another, in the car on the way there, and maybe even up to the door of the church? All of us have been in that situation, where we enter God's house with pain or sadness, anger or guilt at something that happened before, maybe even as we walked through the door of the building. God understands this. He clearly does.

Psalm 122:1 is a good reminder to us. Next time, no matter what happened on the way to church, let us stop at the door, take a breath, and rejoice for we are entering the house of the Lord and He does meet us there.

Psalm 122:3-5—compare the NKJV and the NASB

David sings of the city that he conquered—through the will of the Lord—a city for "all tribes." There were twelve tribes of Israel, yet all were God's children. As such, David calls for the city of Jerusalem to be a meeting place, a place worship, a place to gather and give thanks to the Lord as one tribe.

Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body. Observe that the tribes were all of them the Lord's, whether Judah or Benjamin, Manasseh or Ephraim, they were all the Lord's. Oh, that all the regiments of the Christian army may be all and equally the Lord's own, alike chosen, redeemed, accepted, and upheld by Jehovah. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

To the Testimony of Israel: another Hebrew word/translation for the Ark of the Covenant; Ark of the Testimony. During David's time, the Ark of the Testimony—meaning the elaborate container that housed God's commandments—was kept within the tabernacle in Jerusalem. Later, the Ark was moved into the temple that Solomon built.

During the three Jewish festivals, the Jewish people traveled to the holy city of Jerusalem and then made their way toward the tabernacle/temple to the place the Ark was kept. The place they could meet God at. The place they could gather as one tribe—as the children of God—to give thanks to the Lord. The Lord required this gathering of His children and as such, He met them there.

Psalm 122:6-9—compare the NKJV and the MSG

David had reason to love the city of Jerusalem, and later as the pilgrims made their way through the gates, they too could celebrate the history, strength, and resiliency of their people. However, David reminds us here that the

most important reason to come to and find joy and love in the city of Jerusalem is because it is the house of the Lord. The throne of God, God's holy mountain. Jerusalem is His city, and the place He will reside someday.

For modern believers, we love and care for the church because it is first and foremost a house of God.

But Psalm 122 is also a reminder to pray for peace for Israel and within the walls of the holy city. Jerusalem has a special place in God's heart, and someday Jesus will return to take the throne and restore the city. He will return just as he left (Acts 1:11, Zechariah 14:4, Revelation 14:1).

Until then, we pray for peace and prosperity for those we love. We pray for peace and prosperity within the house of God—the church. And, according to this psalm, we pray the same for the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 122:9 NLT

We are—all of us—pilgrims on a journey through this life, and we must keep our eyes on the One who knows the way home.

When it seems easier to walk away from political issues or vaccine/mask frustrations or other problems that cause derision within the church now, nothing matters more than keeping our eyes on Jesus. Because with His help, we can love those around us despite our differences. *That* is what keeps the peace in God's house.

Jesus keeps the peace in God's house. Only through Jesus is this possible.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 123

October 31, 2022

Read Psalm 123

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 123 is the fourth of fifteen psalms titled, Song of Ascents (also called Pilgrim Songs, Gradual Psalms, Song of Degrees, or Song of Steps). Tradition tells us, that Psalms 120-134 were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate three festivals as required by God in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

Psalm 123 is titled **Prayer for Relief from Contempt** *A Song of Ascents* (NKJV), **Our Eyes Look to the LORD Our God** *A Song of Ascents* (ESV), **A Prayer for Mercy** A song for going up to worship (ICB), and **Prayer for the LORD's Help. A Song of Ascents** (NASB), among others.

The theme of this short song is a plea for God's help.

"I lift up my eyes" is a sign of someone who is helpless, anxious, or maybe just a weary traveler, who watches her feet cautiously, afraid to stumble. Psalm 121 started the same, *I lift up my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from?* The pilgrim singing these words on her way to Jerusalem is tired. She is anxious. She needs God's help, protection, and provision. She anxiously lifted her eyes to the One who saves.

I lift up my eyes to you. Oh, that we could see Him—the Father—sitting on His throne of glory in heaven. Wouldn't everything else just fade away? The problems of this world, of our lives would be miniscule, nothing but a fleeting moment in time when looking upon God on His throne. We may not be able to see Him, but we still can lift up our eyes to where He is and trust in Him and know full well that even though we cannot see Him, He is there.

Psalm 123:1-2—Compare the NLT and the NKJV

Verse 2 does not promote servitude or slavery, but the historical context makes this relationship and the meaning of this psalm understandable. Today, we can see God as our Master and better understand the analogy. We watch the "hand of God" (our Master) because His hand means strength, protection, correction, guidance, provision, and help.

Therefore, as one commentator pointed out, we better be in a position where we can *see* Him. If we cannot see God, we cannot "watch His hand."

Believer, where are you standing? Are you trying to see Him, or do you look the other way?

We must fix our gaze upon God. *I lift up my eyes to you.* How? Start the day by reading the Word of God and talking to Him. Every decision, every step we take, we seek His direction first. Even if we cannot see Him, we walk in faith every day.

How long do we wait and watch? How long do we "watch His hand?" Until He returns or calls us home.

The first step (Ps. 120) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 123:3-4—Compare the NLT and the MSG

Have mercy on us! Have mercy, LORD! Whatever the psalmist needs, he is begging now.

Has there ever been something that you were so anxious about (a loved one's path ahead, a diagnosis, a loss) that you felt yourself begging God for help? Does this psalm reaffirm that for you? It should. It's okay. *Have mercy, God! Answer me, please!*

These two verses are heavy. Whatever was going on for the people when this psalm was written was terrible.

Contempt: the feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving of scorn. *Oxford Dictionary*

For we are exceedingly filled with contempt (NKJV). The people needed God's help and begged for it. They were "kicked around" for so long, in such a horrible way, that worthlessness and scorn were now filling their own hearts. They were losing hope. Maybe they were losing faith.

We could pray the same prayer. Couldn't we? When we feel the anger, bitterness, and selfishness of the world seeping into our hearts, it is time that we cry to God for help. Have mercy, God!

Someone else knew contempt. He knew ridicule. He was kicked around by arrogant brutes. The proud scoffed at Him; the arrogant scorned Him,

Isaiah 53:3

Jesus has walked this road. He understands. Not only do we have a Father in heaven who created all and is powerful enough to end all suffering if it be His will, but He has walked the road of suffering. When Jesus came to earth, God in human flesh (an old friend used to say "God with skin on"), He experienced life, and not an easy life. God understands.

There is nothing that we experience in this life that He does not see and understand and walk with us through. Praise the Lord.

Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honor in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

To Whom do you belong?

John 3:16

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 124

November 7, 2022

Read Psalm 124

A song of ascents. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 124 is titled, The LORD the Defense of His People *A Song of Ascents. Of David* (NKJV); *A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David* (NLT); Our Help Is in the Name of the LORD *A Song of Ascents. Of David* (ESV); Praise for Rescue from Enemies. A Song of Ascents, of David (NASB); and simply, The Lord Saves His People (ICB); among others.

Psalm 124 is number five of fifteen psalms known as the *Song of Ascents* (or *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Pilgrim Songs*). The Song of Ascents were sung as pilgrims made their way into Jerusalem to celebrate the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

Four of these psalms are attributed to David, including this one. And in this short little song, David is encouraging the Lord's people to sing in thanksgiving for His saving grace in the past and acknowledging that same faithfulness will carry them into the future.

A good reminder for us all. When we find ourselves worrying about the future, remember the times that God was faithful in past. If God was faithful, why would He not continue to be faithful?

Matthew Henry reminds New Testament believers of someone else to be thankful for upon reading this psalm. David did not know Him, but he often sang of our Savior.

In singing this psalm, besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the power of darkness.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Compare Psalm 124:1-5 NKJV and NLT

These verses are powerful.

First, *If the LORD had not been on our side* is repeated twice! What **if** God was not on our side? What a terrible, frightening thought that is. But here, in Psalm 124, David calls the people to remember that it was God. God did it. God saved them. God *was* on their side. It was all because of God.

Second, David calls for "all Israel" to repeat the words: *What if the LORD had not been on our side?* Everyone must remember. Everyone must understand that their victory—their salvation—came from the Lord, and from nowhere else.

And finally, let all Israel say it, repeat it! Other translations say, *Answer, O Israel!* (GNBDC), *Let Israel repeat this* (ICB), *All together now, Israel, sing out!* (MSG). In this song—and as pilgrims made their way into the city of Jerusalem—David reminded the people to not just remember, but sing it, to say it, to repeat it.

Tell everyone everywhere that if God had not been on our side, we would have been overwhelmed. We would have been washed away, swallowed alive. But God *was* on our side, and we are saved all because of Him.

One commentator mentioned the "messy" grammar of this first verse. Translators have tried patching it up to make it cleaner and easier to read in English. But if we read it today in all the messiness, we can sense urgency, excitement, and a feeling of overwhelming appreciation. Like this,

Had it not been Jehovah! He was for us! Oh, let all of Israel repeat! If it had not been Jehovah!

The thought of God not being there, of God turning His back on His children, the thought is frightening. But He has always been there for us. He has and He will continue to watch over and protect His children.

And here, after the scary thought of *what if*, we now turn to praise and worship of our faithful Father.

Psalm 124:6-8—compare in the NKJV and NLT

When we look back and see where we were, compared to where we are, we can see God's hand upon us. His direction and protection. We marvel at how we had the strength to get through that, and then we remember that we were not alone. We don't usually say, "what if God wasn't with me? What would've happened?" But it's true. Many people walk this earth without Him. Praise the Lord that we are not them.

Praise the Lord that we have been saved. We did escape the trap that was set for us, the trap was broken. God broke Satan's trap the moment that Jesus died on the cross for you and for me.

It [verse 6] implies that none can harm us till the Lord permits: we cannot be their prey unless the Lord gives us up to them, and that our loving Lord will never do . . . He has given us to his Son Jesus, and he will never give us to our enemies.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Praise the Lord that we never have to ask *what if*? God is with us. Always.

When the angel of the Lord spoke with Joseph, the man pledged to Mary, he said this,

Matthew 1:22-23

Isaiah 7:14

God with us. Take heart today as you face whatever trials or worries cross your path or fill your mind because God is with you. He walks beside you; He clears the way ahead for you. He does so much more than we are even aware.

Why? Because He loves you.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 125

November 15, 2022

Read Psalm 125

A song of ascents

Favorite verse or thoughts:

The 18th century English minister Matthew Henry wrote a commentary about the Book of Psalms. He explained Psalm 125 simply through the words of the prophet Isaiah. The simple summary is this (as found in the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament),

Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done. Isaiah 3:10-11

Psalm 125 is one of fifteen psalms referred to as the *Song of Ascents*, *Song of Songs*, *Song of Steps*, *Song of Degrees*, or *Pilgrim Songs*. Jewish pilgrims would sing these psalms as they approached and entered the city of Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Psalm 125 is the sixth of the fifteen *Pilgrim Songs*.

Another step is taken in the ascent, another station in the pilgrimage is reached.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 125:1-2 NKJV and NLT

What a beautiful picture these first two verses paint. Those who trust in the Lord are like an immovable mountain. And not just any mountain, but like Mount Zion. God holds His children in His hands, and He surrounds His children with His presence.

Verse one—like many others, especially in the Psalter—mentions Zion. What is Mount Zion? Let's do a little mini study of this term/place found throughout the Bible.

Today, Zion is a hill outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. It is called "the western hill," or "the temple mount," on which sits the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic Shrine built in 692 AD/CE.

In David's time, Zion referred to the ancient city of Jerusalem (also called the city of David). David captured an ancient Jebusite fortress called Zion (2 Samuel 5:7) and renamed it the City of David. He eventually built a tabernacle, a place of worship, at the top of the hill to house the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6).

But Zion was also mentioned in the Bible prior to David. When God called Abraham to do the unthinkable and sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, Abraham travelled to Mount Moriah to do what God commanded. God saw his faithful heart and provided a different sacrifice, then named that mountain "the LORD will provide." To this day it is said, "in the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided" (Genesis 22:1-24). Mount Moriah became commonly known as Mount Zion after the first temple was built, and thus "Zion" expanded to include the ancient city *and* the hill the temple was built upon.

2 Chronicles 3:1a ESV

Zion is mentioned 152 times in the Old Testament, and twelve times the name "Zion" appears in the New Testament (Britannica.com).

One Bible commentator said that the name "Mount Zion" has religious and emotional qualities that don't exist in the same form when referring to the city just as "Jerusalem." When you hear or say "Zion," do you feel something? Does the name pull at your heart in some way?

The Old Testament explains why. Simply that, while Zion is a real place in history, it is most importantly the dwelling place of the Lord on earth,

Isaiah 8:18 NLT

Psalm 74:2

Isaiah 24:23

Psalm 132:13-14

Zion is where God is; where He was, and where He always will be. So, for believers, our hearts long for Zion. It is why thousands and thousands of believers still walk the road to Jerusalem to this day.

God holds His children in His hands, they are as immovable as Mount Zion. His presence goes before and behind and all around them, throughout time. Now and forevermore. What a promise.

Psalm 125:3 NKJV and NLT

This idea is seen throughout the Old Testament, where God sends Israel's army or plagues or other disasters to rid the land of a pagan group of people. Sometimes these are the stories that are hard to read, and often are

especially difficult because we read them in condensed form—hundreds or even thousands of years condensed into a paragraph or a page without the understanding of the many years of struggle leading up to it.

Also, we study history with a modern western lens of understanding and opinion. We didn't live during that time. We don't know all the circumstances, nor do we know how we would have responded. But the Truth is that God will not stand long while evil tempts His children to turn from Him.

For example, we can look back at Noah's story as found in Genesis and say: "what about me and my family, we would have been on that boat!"

But the fact is that centuries had gone by (Noah was 600 years old when he built the ark) and evil had grown and spread. Those who had believed were long gone.

This matters to God. But He is also slow to anger, not wanting any to perish. Both of these facts about God can be true at the same time.

Genesis 6:1-5

This is hard for us to understand, but it matters to God. The world had been corrupted by the sons of God (also called the Nephilim). Smarter-than-me people have speculated on who these men were, but I will not. Whoever they were (or are!) they ruined the earth during that time. God intervened.

Genesis 5 gives a genealogy from Adam to Noah: 1,656 years!!

A lot of time had passed and some interesting characters, whether fallen angels/demons or some sort of supernatural giant or the Canaanites, got involved and made an evil mess of the world.

This matters to God. He will not stand long (1,656 years in the time of Noah) and watch evil cause His children to fall. He won't have it. Our God is loving and kind and merciful, but He is also judge, jury, and executioner. It's good to remember.

Exodus 34:6-7

The wicked will not rule forever because God will not stand by and watch His children fall to their schemes for long. In the above verses, God referred to Himself as gracious and compassionate and slow to anger, yet He is also a God who will not let the guilty go unpunished. He said these things about Himself.

They may seem like conflicting characteristics, but they are not. Again, both are true at the same time.

It seems that even righteous men are in peril of sinning in evil days, and that it is not the will of the Lord that they should yield to the stress of the times in order to escape from suffering. The power and influence of wicked men when they are uppermost are used to lead or drive the righteous astray; but the godly must not accept this as an excuse, and yield to the evil pressure; far rather must they resist with all their might till it shall please God to stay the violence of the persecutor and give his children rest.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 125:4-5 NKJV and NLT

Oh, that we do not follow evil. We must be on the lookout. Daily we must pray for wisdom to see the schemes of the wicked. If we do not walk with the Lord daily, we run the risk of walking in evil instead.

But let's also remember that when Jesus came as a sacrifice for us all, He came for those who believe and those who do not. We are never too far gone for Jesus to reach us. He is trying to reach our hearts every day, every moment.

Romans 5:6-8

Thanks be to God. Peace be on Israel!

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 126

November 28, 2022

Read Psalm 126

A song of ascents

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 126 is titled **Restore Our Fortunes, O LORD, A Song of Ascents** (ESV); **Thanksgiving for Return from Captivity. A Song of Ascents.** (NASB); **A Joyful Return to Zion A Song of Ascents** (NKJV); and simply, *A Song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem* (NLT).

Psalm 126 is the seventh of fifteen psalms commonly referred to as the *Song of Ascents*, or *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Pilgrim Songs*, or *Gradual Psalms*. Jewish pilgrims making the journey to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament would sing these songs as they came upon and entered the holy city of Jerusalem.

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress that this psalm was penned, most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time. Though Babylon be not named here yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity both in itself and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 126:1-3—Compare the NASB and NLT

We were like those who dream. It was like a dream. It seemed as if we were dreaming (ICB).

These words paint a beautiful picture of exiles returning home. They never dreamed it would happen; it always seemed too good to even be a possibility. Finally, they approached the holy city. They were home, and they felt like they were dreaming. All they could do was laugh and sing and shout in joy.

"Look what the Lord has done for us!" "He has brought us home!"

In fact, the Jewish people returning home were filled with joy and laughter and thanksgiving to the point that their neighbors even joined in.

"Look what the Lord has done for them!" "The Lord brought them home!"

The Jewish people knew the promise of restoration. It had been foretold that they would return home someday. God promised so. But when time goes by—day after long day—hope starts to fade. And yet, God's promises never fail.

And when the day finally arrived, the streets were filled with joy. And as the people returned home, neighboring nations watched, and even joined in with the celebration.

These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good. It is a blessed thing when saints set sinners talking about the lovingkindness of the Lord . . .

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Oh, that our joy in the Lord would be evident to those around us. God is good. Always. We can proclaim it with our mouths, we can shout it from the hilltops, but we can also walk daily with joy pouring from us in quiet ways.

A smile, a nod, a kind deed.

So that unbelievers look at us and see that something is different. Then someday they might ask, what is it? What is different about you? Where does your joy come from?

1 Peter 3:15b

There is so little of happiness abroad that if we possess a full share of it, we ought not to hide our light under a bushel, but let it shine on all that are in the house. Let us avow our joy, and the reason of it.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 126:4-6 NKJV and NLT

The Good News Bible translates verse four: "LORD, make us prosperous again, just as the rain brings water back to dry riverbeds." The Message says: "And now, God, do it again—bring rains to our drought-stricken lives."

Some commentators see a hesitation here, a restrained joy possibly. Although many had returned home, maybe some were still in captivity, or maybe some were still on the journey home. Maybe relatives were missing, so joy was hard.

Or maybe verse four is simply, "let's not forget!" In our joy of restored relationships and answered prayers, let us not forget where we were. Let us rejoice and thank the Lord with a humble heart.

Joel 2:12

What hope. We may struggle for a time, but we will come home again with joy. This is God's promise.

So those who went off with heavy hearts will come home laughing, with armloads of blessings.

Psalm 126:6 MSG

Even in times of heartache and worry, we must go out and "sow our seeds" in the world. We must continue on. Time might pass before we see that answered prayer, before we see the loved one's salvation, before we see healing or a restored relationship. Time might pass as we wait.

But God's promise is clear,

Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy.

They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

Psalm 126:6 NLT

Believer, God's word never fails. He is good always, and we will return from the harvest with shouts of joy and armloads of blessings.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 127

December 12, 2022

Read Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 127 is one of fifteen psalms commonly called the *Song of Ascents*. These psalms are also referred to as *Song of Degrees*, *Pilgrims Psalms*, *Song of Steps*, or *Gradual Psalms*. Jewish tradition tells us these psalms were sung as pilgrims made their way to the city of Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Psalm 127 is titled, *A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of Solomon.* (NLT); *Unless the LORD Builds the House. A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.* (ESV); *All Good Things Come from God. A song for going up to worship. Of Solomon.* (ICB); *A Song of degrees for Solomon.* (KJV); among others.

Some translations say *of Solomon*, some say *for Solomon*. Either Solomon wrote this psalm about himself, or David wrote it for his son looking toward the future. Either way, the message is clear and important still today.

Psalm 127:1-2—Compare the NLT and NKJV

Psalm 127 can be summarized as this: our homes, families, cities, and nations are strong when the Lord is the head of them. Simple.

We are taught here that builders of houses and cities, systems and fortunes, empires and churches all labor in vain without the Lord; but under the divine favor they enjoy perfect rest.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

God's word clearly teaches us in the Old and the New Testament that the foundation of life, marriage, parenting, governments, etc. must be the Lord. He is the Rock upon which we must build our lives. If we don't, when bad things happen, the foundation of our lives and our homes and our marriages will crumble.

An interesting point here is that God always requires human effort. "The watchman must also stay awake." "The builder needs to labor." "The sentry must guard."

The French say *c'est la vie*, "oh, well," "that's just life." Some Christians may also say the same, "whatever is going to happen is up to God and out of my hands." But God clearly tells us to build our lives upon Him. To build is a verb and requires action. God calls us to build, then to stand ready.

God gives rest to His loved ones. We can sleep knowing that God watches over us, *if* we build the foundation of our lives and our homes and marriages and cities upon Him. If God is the Master, His eyes are upon us even as we sleep.

Psalm 127:2-5—compare the NLT and NKJV

Maybe we see David's hand upon these verses—a wish for his son. A thankfulness for his children. But by either hand (father or son), the message is this: build your marriage and your home upon God, then your children will be secure and blessed by the Lord.

The Bible is clear that children are always a blessing. Whether wanted or not. Born healthy or sick. Whether easy to raise or hard. Children are a blessing from God, like "arrows in the hand of a warrior."

This points to another mode of building up a house, namely, by leaving descendants to keep our name and family alive upon the earth. Without this what is a man's purpose in accumulating wealth! To what purpose does he build a house if he has none in his household to hold the house after him.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Again, we are dependent upon God's blessing for children. Likewise, children are a blessing given to us by God Himself.

Sadly, the Bible tells us that Solomon lost his way. Despite gathering women like sheep, history only records the story of one of his sons (two daughters are mentioned but only due to their marriages). He probably had many children, but we know very little of them and Solomon doesn't speak of them by name in his writings.

Solomon's first son and successor, Rehoboam, saw the separation of Israel into two nations—the north and south, Israel and Judah. And things did not go well for Rehoboam, king of Judah (1 Kings 14:21-31).

However, God did not forsake Israel when she was broken in two—the north and the south. He did not leave her when evil kings rose and fell.

Children are blessings, like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Always.

God sees us this way. When we are lost in our sin and sadness, He is there. God never leaves us, ever. He loved us so much that He sent His Son to be sacrificed on our behalf.

Interestingly, Psalm 127 speaks of a quiver of arrows not of sticks. Arrows are fashioned and cared for, sharpened and straightened. They can be used for good or for evil. But the one who has many of them has cared for them and stands ready with purpose and strength and might. The psalmist draws a picture between a quiver of arrows and one's children when brought up in the Lord.

How do we do this in a world such as ours? Above all,
Deuteronomy 6: 5-9

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 128

December 21, 2022

Read Psalm 128

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 128 is the ninth of fifteen psalms referred to as the *Song of Ascents*, sometimes called the *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Gradual Psalms*, or *Pilgrim Songs*. Jewish pilgrims sang these songs as they travelled to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Psalm 128 is titled: *Blessings of Those Who Fear the LORD. A Song of Ascents* (NKJV); *The Happy Home. A Song for going up to worship* (ICB); *Blessedness of the Fear of the LORD. A Song of Ascents* (NASB); and *The Reward of Obedience to the LORD* (GNT).

Charles Spurgeon compares Psalm 128 to the previous psalm,

There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also, a progress in happiness, for children which in the last psalm were arrows are here olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we are done with "peace upon Israel." Thus, we rise step by step and sing as we ascend. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 128:1-2—Compare the ESV and ICB

"Happy" and "blessed" are believers who walk the walk with the Lord. Many believers talk the talk, but do not walk the walk. Psalm 128 is teaching that God's blessings are upon those who "walk" in His ways—who fear Him, who work hard, and obey His Word. These "blessings" do not mean that life is perfect. A true believer of the Lord knows this is not His promise. But throughout life's normal ups and downs, the believer who has a relationship with the Lord is blessed by His presence, by His promises, and by His faithfulness.

What does it mean to fear the Lord? What does it mean to walk in His ways?

Fear of Lord means two things. One, God as the Creator of the universe is able to smite all of humanity with one word from His mouth. He created all and by Him all things work. A healthy dose of "fearing the Lord" in all His might and glory is not a bad thing and can keep human pride in check.

Secondly, to fear the Lord is great respect and awe at who He is. His faithfulness throughout time. His presence, even now. And the fact that all things were created by Him, yet all things are still held together by Him.

Fear of the Lord—awe and reverence, great respect, mixed with a bit of terror and loads of humility.

May we fear the Lord and walk in His ways.

Here are a couple of examples from the Old Testament. Oh, that God would say this of us as well,

Genesis 5:22b-24—Enoch

Genesis 6:9b—Noah

God calls us to walk with Him. He calls us into relationship with Him. To "walk" with someone is a close friendship, an intimate relationship.

Micah 6:8

Blessed and happy is the one who walks in fear of the Lord. This does not mean that all goes well all of the time. But there is something different about experiencing trials with the Lord on our side. He truly is all that we need.

Psalm 128:3-4—Compare the ICB and NKJV

A wife and children—vines and olive branches. This is a metaphor that ancient Israelites would understand. Today, we too can read these verses and understand that marriage and children are blessings from God. Good and honoring to God.

A helpmeet was needed in Paradise, and assuredly she is not less necessary out of it.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Life was not meant to be walked alone. Even in the Garden of Eden, God wanted Adam to have a companion.

While ancient Israel had rules and expectations around marriage and families, that is not so today. The couple that does not have children can also be blessed by God. The wife who does not bear children can still be the pride and joy of her husband. The man or woman who remains single throughout his or her life will still be blessed by God for walking in His ways. After all, Jesus was single. He had no children.

Psalm 128:5-6—compare the NKJV and ICB

What a beautiful blessing to end this song with. Yes, may the Lord bless His children, those who walk in His ways. Yes, may we watch our grandchildren grow up.

But this is also a blessing upon Jerusalem. God's Holy throne resides on Mount Zion and according to the Bible He will someday literally rule from that throne. But until that day, Psalm 128 ends with a blessing to the children of Israel, that they will see good come out of Jerusalem. And as the pilgrims made their way into Jerusalem for the annual festivals, this would be on their minds.

Peace and good things be upon Jerusalem.

Numbers 6:24-26

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 129

January 2, 2023

Read Psalm 129

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 129 is the tenth of fifteen psalms referred to as *Song of Ascents* (or *Pilgrim Psalms*, *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Gradual Psalms*). The *Song of Ascents* were traditionally sung by Jewish pilgrims as they made their way into Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

The Festival of Unleavened Bread is the week of Passover and celebrates the Israelite's freedom from slavery in Egypt. The Festival of Weeks or *Shavout* is a celebration of the grain harvest or first fruits, and then later, Pentecost. The Festival of Tabernacles or also called the Festival of Booths, *Sukkot*, is a remembrance of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness (and living in "booths"), a festival of gratitude and thanks.

Psalm 129 is titled *Song of Victory over Zion's Enemies. Song of Ascents* (NKJV); *They Have Afflicted Me from My Youth. A Song of Ascents* (ESV); *Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion's Enemies. A Song of Ascents* (NASB); and *A Prayer Against the Enemies. A song for going up to worship* (ICB), among others.

Psalm 129:1-4—Compare the NLT and NKJV

Many a time from my earliest youth they have afflicted me. Bible scholars believe "from my youth" refers to the time of captivity in Egypt, a time when the nation of Israel was young, just beginning to develop into the culture that we know have now stood the test of time. The psalmist's voice speaks, "I" and "me" speaking as the Israelite people as a whole. He calls to remembrance persecution, captivity, and slavery throughout the peoples' history.

There is something amazing about God's faithfulness and the remembrance thereof. When we find ourselves worried or uncertain, the best thing to do is to remember God's faithfulness. If He was faithful before, why wouldn't He be again? God walks with His children throughout time. It's proven. He is reliable, steadfast, and always, always good. The Bible is filled with these stories.

There is a reason God tells His children to "remember" and to "tell your children and grandchildren." Remembering God's faithfulness brings us hope, security, and peace.

In Psalm 129, the author does the same. Many times, our enemies afflicted us, *but* they have not prevailed.

We may have "furrows" on our back/scars from beatings in our skin, but God has always rescued us.

In her [Israel's] present hour of trial, she may remember her former afflictions and speak of them for her comfort, drawing from them the assurance that he who has been with her for so long will not desert her in the end. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The statement is repeated twice for emphasis, and rightfully so. Th Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Syrians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Roman Catholics, the kings of Europe, the Muslims, the Czars, and the Nazis all have done their best to wipe out the Jews. Yet they remain. -Pastor David Guzik, www.enduringword.com

But the LORD is good (NLT). But the LORD is righteous (NIV). But the LORD does what is right (ICB).

Praise the Lord for His faithfulness. Praise the Lord for His goodness, throughout time and even now. God was faithful. He is faithful. He will be faithful.

Psalm 129:5-8—compare the NLT and ICB

Many, throughout time and even now, seek the destruction of the church and of God's children. Even today. And not just in Jerusalem. We see this today as Christians, all we believe is under attack. Satan would see the complete destruction of all that God is and loves. But he will not win.

We know how God's story ends. What a wonderful heavenly Father we have that He would tell us the ending of the story so that we always have the hope of it to hold on to.

Even then, the psalmist prayed for the same. That all who seek to destroy Jerusalem be defeated, shamed, despised, and refused.

The psalmist ends Psalm 129 with the prayer that those who pass by the wicked will not say, "it was the Lord that blessed you" or "may the Lord bless you." In Matthew's gospel, Jesus said similar words when sending the Twelve out into the world to spread His Good News,

Matthew 10:11-14

But the Good News is truly that for believers, God's face is upon us. His blessings rain down. His goodness lasts forever. And that despite the evil in the world, God is good. God is faithful.

And He has told us the end to this story. Hope.

Numbers 6:24-26

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 130

January 9, 2023

Read Psalm 130
A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

What a beautiful song of God's unfailing love and forgiveness.

Psalm 130 is one of fifteen psalms called the *Song of Ascents*. Jewish pilgrims would sing these songs as they entered Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

In other Bible versions, Psalm 130 is titled, *My Soul Waits for the Lord* (ESV); *A Prayer for Mercy* (ICB); *Hope in the LORD's Forgiving Love* (NASB); and *Waiting for the Redemption of the LORD* (NKJV); among others.

God is so good, faithful, and merciful. His redeeming love is the greatest and most important thing in our lives, in this world, and throughout time.

And as the Jewish pilgrims climbed the hill into Jerusalem—and then the steps up to the temple—they gave their hearts to God again step by step. May we also give our hearts to the Lord as we study this psalm.

Psalm 130:1-2 NLT

The "depths of despair" is a horrible, dark place. Have you been there before? This dark place that the author finds himself in is due to sin. And from this dark place of sin and despair, the author reaches up to God the Father for help. Begs for help.

Using two different Hebrew names for God, the author cries out to the One who saves. The only One who can save.

He calls to the "LORD" (translated YHWH/Yahweh or Jehovah), the covenant name of God and a name that the Jewish people believe is too sacred to even say out loud. Secondly, the author calls to the "Lord" (translated Adonai), a Hebrew word meaning "master" or "the one who has lordship over him."

Lord, hear me.

This plea not only begs of God to turn His ear toward His son or daughter but requires a closeness. And really, we know that God never moves away from His children. We are the ones who do the moving. We are the ones who turn our backs on our loving Father. He is still always there, waiting.

God hear me. God come close enough to me that you can hear me.

Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 130:3-4 NLT

We are all sinners. No one is perfect; we all make mistakes. Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden as recorded in the book of Genesis, mankind has fought against temptation and sin. Never really winning. We can never be "good enough" for God's love. Ever.

We can never win God's attention with goodness or good works. Not ever. Thankfully, that is not how God works.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome,

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
Romans 3:23

But praise the Lord the sentence continues. Right?

Yes, we are all sinners and fall short of what God expects of us. But He has made a way. When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not leave them. He closed off the garden. And there were *big* consequences for their choices. But He never left them. He still watched over them, protected them, and guided them. He still walked with them.

God made a way. Thank you, Lord, for the rest of that sentence,

and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24

Prior to the redemption of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for our sins, how did believers find forgiveness? Psalm 130:4 says, "but you offer forgiveness." All of humanity, beginning to end depends upon the redeeming love of Jesus on the cross. Believers of the Old Testament did not know the story of Jesus, but they knew He would come. They believed. They had faith in the promises found in God's Word. And Jesus is spoken of throughout the Old Testament.

Faith in God and His Word is the basis for what we believe—and has been throughout time. Faith.

Psalm 130:5-6—Compare the NLT and NKJV

This is faith. The author begins his song by calling for the Lord's attention. Hear me, Lord. Then, he waits for the Lord and has great faith that the Lord *will* answer him. He believes that, as sure as the dawn comes, the Lord will forgive and redeem.

Why or how? Because it is written in God's Word. And because God has always been faithful.

As the weary watchman longs for morning to relieve him of a nighttime of stressful wakefulness, so we wait for the Lord. Dawn will come. It always does.

The Lord will respond to our cries and our needs. He always does.

If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 130:7-8 NLT

Where the author begins by crying out to the Lord for help and forgiveness, he ends with a reminder of God's promise to all the people of Israel—a reminder of God's covenant *hesed* love (translated- unfailing love). The author has been redeemed, and he wants to tell others about it. The one who knows God's forgiveness and unfailing love wants to share it with the world.

Do you feel the same way?

Psalm 66:16

Matthew 28:18-20

My friend, have you been redeemed? Have you known God's unfailing love (*hesed*)?

Follow the author of Psalm 130's lead, tell others. Tell all. And if you can't speak it, show it. Show the love of God by loving your neighbor, by loving your family, and being different (set apart) from our culture and this world so that when others see you, they wonder what the difference is.

And Jesus said,
Matthew 5:16

And finally, put your hope in the LORD, for His love is unfailing, and with Him is full redemption.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 131

January 16, 2023

Read Psalm 131

A song of ascents. Of David.

Favorite verse:

The International Children's Bible translates Psalm 131:3, *But I am calm and quiet. I am like a baby with its mother. I am at peace.*

Father today, as we study this psalm may we find this calm, quietness within our souls, like a child resting safe in her mother's arms. Because only in the safety of your loving arms can we find true and lasting peace. Draw us near into your embrace. Amen.

This psalm is David's profession of humility, humbly made, with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vain glory.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 131 is the twelfth of fifteen psalms referred to as the *Song of Ascents* (Song of Degrees, Song of Steps, Pilgrim Psalms, or Gradual Psalms). These songs were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they made the journey to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Psalm 131 is *of David* or *for David*. Either way, David is believed to be the author. Some see a timeframe within this short little song, maybe it was written sometime during David's flight from the hand of King Saul (1 Samuel 18-30). Another commentator suggested that maybe David wrote it after being chastised by his wife for dancing in front of the Ark "un-kingly-like" as it made its way into the city (2 Samuel 6:20-22). Neither are certain.

Titled, *I Have Calmed and Quieted My Soul* (ESV); *Simple Trust in the LORD* (NKJV); *A Childlike Trust in the LORD* (NASB); and *A Childlike Spirit* (HCSB); among others.

It is one of the shortest psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Here is Psalm 131 from the Message, a paraphrased version of the Bible by Eugene Peterson,

Psalm 131

GOD, I'm not trying to rule the roost, I don't want to be king of the mountain. I haven't meddled where I have no business or fantasized grandiose plans.

I've kept my feet on the ground, I've cultivated a quiet heart. Like a baby content in its mother's arms, my soul is a baby content.

Wait, Israel, for GOD. Wait with hope. Hope now; hope always!

What a beautiful psalm. But what a difficult one to live out.

"Lord, I'm trying not to be prideful and arrogant!" Wow, that goes against human nature though, doesn't it? Everything about us is self-seeking, opinionated, and self-righteous. We are out to make our lives better, to better ourselves, to tell the world about *us*—our needs, our wants, our dreams, our goals. Whether a person has a high esteem of themselves or a low, it is still self-absorption.

And our culture celebrates this.

We think about ourselves way too much. And the belief that there might be a better way to live goes against everything in our culture and everything within human nature.

Except, that within every person lies a desire and a need to know his or her Creator. Some call it a "Jesus sized hole in the heart." We want to fill this need or hole within us with ourselves, with stuff, possessions, people, etc. When our souls actually cry out in need of God.

That is how He created us.

But when our culture and our nature drive us in a different direction, how do we fight it? How do we put aside ourselves, recognize the need in our hearts, and surrender ourselves over to the only One who can save?

The only place that we can find true and lasting peace?

We look to Jesus. He was different. But He made ripples. He made people mad, but He also drew people to Him. Why? Because He was different. There was just something about Him that drew people in.

Isaiah 53:2

He was "different." But there was just something about Him. And He is our example.

Jesus is the Son of God. Our Redeemer. He was there at the beginning of time; He saw creation. He saw the creation of man, and He saw the fall of man. Likewise, He will be in there in the end. The Bible says so. He is God, and yet, when He walked this earth, He was also a man.

What a beautiful plan God started from the very beginning. He is not a God who doesn't understand. He is not a God just floating up in the sky with no knowledge of life here on earth. He came here. He lived here. He intimately knows the needs of His children.

And He is our example. He lived differently. Therefore, we have no excuse but to *try* to do the same.

John 13:13-17

Selfless. A servant.

David didn't know Jesus, but he knew this expectation of God. That he was to cast aside all human nature, all self-seeking behaviors and seek the Lord. But when Jesus came to earth, He showed us how to live. To love and serve others. Thus, bringing glory to God.

Because when we are "different," people will ask why. And we will tell them the Good News.

And "Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them." (John 13:17 NLT) These words in the book of John are *red*, and therefore, recorded as the actual words of Jesus.

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Philippi, writes about Jesus,
Philippians 2:1-11

Sometimes in this world, a life like Jesus might feel impossible. But we have the answer here in this psalm. How do we live this way? How do we honor God and bring Him glory when everything in our very being is selfish? And everything around us screams love of self?

Become like a child. Like a baby in his mother's arms.

Complete dependence upon God. Rest in His arms. Trust in His love. Depend upon His faithfulness. And know, my friends, that He is good.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 132

January 25, 2023

Read Psalm 132

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 132 is the thirteenth of fifteen psalms referred to as *Song of Ascents*, *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Pilgrim Songs*, or *Gradual Psalms*. Traditionally, these were sung as Jewish pilgrims made their way toward Jerusalem to worship at the temple as required by God in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Jewish pilgrims would travel from their homes to worship, sacrifice, and honor God with gifts three times a year for these feasts. And, as they came up to the city or as they climbed the hill and then the steps up to the temple, they sang these songs. And what a beautiful scene it would be. Voices raised together in song, worshipping God as they travelled through the city.

And this psalm is a stark reminder that long ago God claimed Zion as His home. God claimed it! Then David began the battle to make it home for the Israelite people. And history proves that the enemy is still trying to keep God out of His home on Zion. Even today. *As I read through these again, this hits home again today, April 30, 2024.*

Today, Temple Mount—the hill in the Old City of Jerusalem where David's tabernacle and Solomon's temple used to sit—is the home of an Islamic Mosque called the Dome of the Rock.

Despite the conflicts in modern Jerusalem, the fighting between cultures and peoples who claim these sites as their holy spaces, Temple Mount is still a place of pilgrimage today. Muslim pilgrims, Jewish pilgrims, and Christian pilgrims flock to the site, and the Jewish state attempts to keep it a safe place for all.

Psalm 132 is titled, *The LORD Has Chosen Zion* (ESV); *The Eternal Dwelling of God in Zion* (NKJV); *Prayer for the LORD's Blessing upon the Sanctuary* (NASB); and *In Praise of the Temple* (ICB); among others.

Psalm 132:1-5 NLT

As the Jewish pilgrims climbed the hill for their festivals, this song reminded them of at least two things. One—that Zion is the Lord's home. And two—that Jerusalem, the place they go to worship, was hard won.

The people sing, "Remember David." "Remember your love for David." "Remember his battle for Jerusalem." Maybe the people are saying "don't forget us!" "Don't forget your promises to David!"

David fought for the site because God told him to, and David was Israel's beloved king. He fought long and hard to make this a place of worship.

But why do some verses in the Old Testament say things like, "remember me, God"? Or "remember David"?

As if God forgets?

God doesn't forget. He doesn't forget you or me. He hasn't forgotten David. And He certainly will never forget His promises.

Maybe, in asking God to remember, the people of Israel doing the remembering. They remember God's promises and faithfulness. They dwell upon His character.

God doesn't need to remember. We do.

Psalm 132:6-9 NLT

As recorded in 2 Samuel 5, David conquered Jerusalem not long after being crowned king. As he made his home there, his life was dedicated to defending the Israelite people and to building a house for the Lord to dwell in and for His people to worship Him at.

And traditionally, the place the Israelites could "meet" God—prior to the church or the temple—was the temporary, movable tent called the Tabernacle. There were many things the people carried around with them for this travelling place of worship, but the most important piece was the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark is gone now, but it's believed to have held the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's staff.

Exodus 25:22

The pure gold cover, called the Mercy Seat, had two gold cherubim with wings spread, facing each other. The place in the center was where the Spirit of God would hover.

Therefore, it was of the utmost importance to David that the Ark be found and brought "home." During the time of Saul, the Ark was lost or forgotten. So, David went looking for it.

1 Chronicles 13:1-4

The people needed a place to worship. David needed a place to worship. They were finally settled in the holy city of Jerusalem and yet not all was complete.

David instituted a search for the ark. It had to be hunted for high and low; and at last, at Kirjathjearin, the forest city, he came upon it. How often do souls find Christ and his salvation in out of the way places! What matters where we meet with him so long as we do behold him, and final life in him? Eureka which is embedded

in our text- "we found it."

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

And as the pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem sing this song, they remember the Ark and King David, but more importantly, they remember God and His faithfulness.

Psalm 132:10 NKJV

David and all his sons who became king after him were God's anointed kings, at least the ones that kept their eyes on the Lord. And this verse is asking that God be with them all. But the psalmist is also asking that God remember His promise of the coming Messiah.

Psalm 132:11-12 ESV

And here is a reminder of God's promise to David, that his family line would lead Israel forever. What God meant was in the sense of earthly kings and actual sons and grandsons of David, until Jesus Christ was born in David's line. And Jesus is the Messiah and the One who will sit on the throne over all the earth forever.

But God says, "I shall teach them." How cool is that?!?!

God doesn't expect perfection. He expects us to walk in His Word, then He will guide us and lead us in the way He wants us to go. "If your descendants obey the terms of my covenant and the laws that I teach them, then your royal line will continue forever and ever." NLT

When David took the throne and built his home in Jerusalem, God spoke to him through the prophet Nathan.
2 Samuel 7:15-17

Jesus sprang from the race of David, as the evangelists are careful to record; he was "of the house and lineage of David": at this day He is the King of the Jews, and the Lord has also given him the heathen for his inheritance. He must reign, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. God Himself has set Him on the throne, and no rebellion of men or devils can shake His dominion.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 132:13-18—Read the Message here, I love this.

What a beautiful site it would've been to see pilgrims approaching Jerusalem while singing this song. As they sing, they are reminded that Zion is God's dwelling. God has always desired Zion for His home. This is where the Ark and the Tabernacle no longer moved from place to place, this is where Solomon built his magnificent temple for the Lord, and this is where Jesus will reign on earth someday.

Someday we will all raise our voices again together. Will we sing this song as we walk toward Zion where we will worship Jesus as King over all the earth forever and ever?

Won't that be amazing?

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 133

January 30, 2023

Read Psalm 133

A song of ascents. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 133 is number fourteen of fifteen psalms referred to as *Song of Ascents*, *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, *Pilgrim Psalms*, or *Gradual Psalms*. Psalm 133 is also one of four *Song of Ascents* signed by David.

Traditionally these songs were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they travelled to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Families travelled in big groups of other families three times a year to Jerusalem to worship God and bring their offerings. And as they approached the city, climbed the hill, or even the steps up to the temple, they would sing these fifteen psalms.

This particular song is titled, *When Brothers Dwell in Unity* (ESV); *Blessed Unity of the People of God* (NKJV); *The Excellency of Brotherly Unity* (NASB); and *The Love of God's People* (ICB) among others.

There is no certain indication as to when this song was written by David. But some scholars see the gathering of the people and the unity among tribes as an indication that David wrote it around the time he was crowned king (approx. 1007 BC). During this time, all tribes would've gathered in Hebron for his anointing. And there were some tribes that didn't get along or see eye to eye, but they would've come to the ceremony anyway. (2 Samuel 5:1-4)

This psalm is a brief encomium on unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we should think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 133:1 NLT

Simple and true. A peaceful home. A need of the heart.

The Hebrew word used here is translated as "harmony" or "unity" in most Bible translations.

In English, *harmony* has a number of definitions, but for in this text it means, "the quality of forming a pleasing and consistent whole."

Unity is defined as "the state of being united or joined as a whole." Oxford-American Dictionary

Harmony amongst God's people is "wonderful" and "pleasant." And this reflects God's heart. In John's recording of the Gospels, Jesus prayed the following words to His Father in heaven,

John 17:20-21 NLT

Jesus prayed to His Father, asking that those who believe in Him would be one, united, living in harmony as brothers and sisters. He prayed that they would find unity with each other and unity with believers who have gone before. And a unity that is so close that it resembles the relationship between Father and Son.

Despite our differences, we are called to love each other with a unity like that of the Father and the Son. Because Jesus said so, and He even prayed this would be so. And it's written down in the Bible. Jesus prayed for us to get along.

Brothers and sisters, this doesn't mean that we turn a blind eye to evil or allow bad things to go undiscussed. If your brother was walking off a cliff, you would stop him. At least to the best of your ability. We need to love our brothers and sisters in Christ so much that in sharing Truth or in guiding back to the Truth we do so with great love. Love that only comes from Jesus.

Psalms 133:2 NLT

Oil? On someone's head? Oily beards and messy robes may sound weird to us, so let's discuss instead what this would have meant for people during David's time.

Harmony/unity among us is like the anointing oil God used to pour over Aaron's head. That oil was special, and God is very specific about what it is made of, how much is used, and what it is used for (read Exodus 30:22-29),

Exodus 30:30-33

This oil was special. And when it was poured upon priests of the time it was as if God was pouring it from heaven to sanctify and purify them Himself. It was like the love of God, His wisdom, and His mercy was given to these men through this process of anointing with oil.

And David says—when we all get along, brother and sister, our harmony and unity is like this beautiful cleansing practice of anointing God's high priests with oil.

And not just on the head. But also dripping down the beard and to the collar or even to the edge of the robe (scholars are uncertain if the Hebrew word used here means collar or bottom of the robe). Sounds messy. But also, expensive. Important. Set apart. An honor. Chosen.

David was anointed three times, so he knew its power and the honor it was coming from the Lord. (1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Samuel 2:4, 2 Samuel 5:3)
2 Samuel 5:3-5

To all of Israel, and especially to David, the anointing of oil on head, beard, and robe was something significant.

What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high priest alone! It is a diffusive thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 133:3 NLT

A descriptive picture of the restoring and strengthening of God's people, united and living in harmony. As dew that falls upon the desert. As special oil runs down one's beard and collar. So are the blessings from the Father to those who seek harmony and peace among each other.

Under Saul, the Israelites had been divided. Now, the people came together to celebrate God's chosen king, anointed and chosen by the Father. Bringing peace to the people once again.

For Geography folks—Mt. Hermon is the highest peak on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Today, the mountain range straddles the Lebanon-Syria border. Part of the southern slope resides in Israeli controlled Golan Heights. (www.britannica.com)

The gift of the Father is life everlasting in His presence. A place with no pain or tears or suffering. A place of peace and harmony. His command is that His children work toward living in unity now. And this harmony amongst brothers and sisters will bring us peace and joy and blessings while we complete our work still to be done here on earth.

According to John's account in the Gospels on the night Jesus was betrayed, He explained this very thing to His disciples. Let us close our study of Psalm 133 with a portion of His prayer. The prayer that He prayed for you and for me and all our brothers and sisters that have gone before and are yet to come.

May the words of Jesus, who loves more than His own life, bring you peace today,
John 17:13-26

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 134

February 6, 2023

Read Psalm 134

A song of ascents.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 134 is the last of fifteen psalms referred to as *Song of Ascents*, *Pilgrim Songs*, *Song of Degrees*, *Song of Steps*, or *Gradual Psalms*. Jewish pilgrims sang these songs as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals as required by God in the Old Testament,

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Psalm 134 is titled, *Come, Bless the LORD* (ESV); *Praising the LORD in His House at Night* (NKJV); *Temple Guards, Praise the Lord* (ICB); *Greetings of Night Watchers* (NASB); among others. These titles are interesting and can give us a better understanding of the psalmist's meaning and the historical circumstances surrounding it. Headings, chapters, and verses were added later to aid in reading and finding things in the Bible.

Just imagine, Psalm 134 is the last psalm sung as the Jewish pilgrims arrived at the temple with their gifts. Maybe they arrived at night and called out to the priests who were there waiting for them. And then the priests answered with their blessing upon the weary travelers.

Or here is another theory,

The Pilgrims are going home and are singing the last song in their psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers, they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates, they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Can you picture it? The pilgrims on their way home look back one more time,
Psalm 134:1-2 NLT

The priests from inside the temple respond,
Psalm 134:3 NLT

A beautiful scene. A long journey to reconnect with the Lord. To offer thanks and bring gifts. To worship and sing songs. To praise His name with families, relatives, and friends. And leaving the sanctuary or temple, which holds a special place in their hearts, they turn back once more in excitement to shout this blessing and to receive just one more for themselves for the long journey home.

Also, Bible commentators explain that Psalm 134 is a good reminder for us to pray for our pastors and religious leaders. And not just pray, but also to encourage.

The pilgrims are leaving, and they holler back one more encouragement to the priests or attendants behind them- Continue on! Keep it up! Keep praising the Lord. Keep speaking of the Lord. Keep doing His work faithfully, even at night. And not just with your mouths and your prayers, but also with your hands! Raise your hands and praise the Lord.

Is verse three like a benediction at the end of church service? As you leave this place and go back into the world, be blessed. May God bless you and keep you. In the case of Jewish pilgrims, may the Lord bless you from Zion/Jerusalem while you are away, and until we meet again.

Numbers 6:22-26

He is your Creator, and he can bless you with untold mercies; he can create joy and peace in your hearts and make for you a new heaven and a new earth. May the Maker of all things make you to abound in blessings.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

What a blessing our walk through the *Song of Ascents* has been for me. I have learned so much and appreciate these beautiful words of God so much more. I wish I could walk to Jerusalem and sing these songs, praising God with my family, carrying my gifts of thanksgiving, to meet with God again on that Holy Mountain.

Someday.

Someday, my friends, we will make that pilgrimage together. We will climb that hill together. And at that time, we will see the King of kings on His throne in all His glory.

Jude 1:24-25—Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 135

February 13, 2023

Read Psalm 135

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This is one of the Hallelujah-psalms; that is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its Alpha and its Omega.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. In Hebrew, *Hallelu Yah*.

Psalm 135 is a beautiful compilation of many texts already in the Old Testament. And here are few of its titles from different Bible translations- *Your Name, O LORD, Endures Forever* (ESV); *Praise to God in Creation and Redemption* (NKJV); *Praise the LORD's Wonderful Works. Vanity of Idols*. (NASB); and simply, *God Saves, Idols Do Not*. (ICB).

Psalm 135:1 NLT

[Psalm 135] is mainly made up of selections from other Scriptures. It has been called a mosaic and compared to a tessellated pavement.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Interestingly, Psalm 135:1-2 is like the previous psalm (Psalm 134:1-3) where we saw an end to the fifteen psalms collectively called *The Song of Ascents*. Jewish pilgrims had celebrated with family and worshiped God with their festivals and their gifts and were now heading home. The first three verses of Psalm 134 were a last call back to the temple in excitement and joy as they turn their backs on the Holy City and make their way home. Again—*Praise the Lord!*

The call is to praise the Lord from the temple. Those who serve the Lord, be glad and praise Him. Those who live within the courts of God's house, praise Him. Such a great reminder for us to encourage, pray for, and support our pastors, their wives and children, and all religious leaders. Most especially those in our lives. Many of us already pray for our pastors and their families, but let's also tell them. Let's praise the Lord with them.

Psalm 135:3-4 NLT

Why should we praise the Lord? Because He is good and lovely, and we are His chosen treasure. God loves us, and we love Him. Other translations say, because He is gracious (RSV); for it is delightful (HCSB); for it is pleasant (ESV); and because He is kind (GNBDC).

A reminder—Jacob and Israel are the same person. Jacob was the son of Isaac (grandson of Abraham). God changed his name to Israel, and he had twelve sons, "the twelve tribes of Israel." (Genesis 35:9-10, Genesis 35:23-26) God often refers to Jacob as Israel, and He also refers to Jacob's family line as the Israelites.

Psalm 135:5-12 NLT

The stories of Sihon and Og (both kings of the Amorites during Moses's time) are found in Numbers 21:21-35. Canaan is the land that God promised the Israelites, the Promised Land. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the people finally crossed into the land God promised to Abraham (Genesis 17:3-8). Today, the ancient land of Canaan is believed to include Lebanon, parts of southern Syria, and Israel.

The Lord is great. He is above all things for all things were created by Him. He does what pleases Him. He causes the sun to rise and set. He brings the rain, and He calms the storm. But what we always must remember is that all He does is good and for His glory.

God is always good. Even when bad things happen, God is good.

As my family mourns the loss of a young friend this week, this is real to us. Is God good? If so, why do these bad things happen, especially to His children?

In Psalm 135, the psalmist lists ways that God enacted His justice upon Egypt and Pharaoh, upon Og and Sihon and the kings of Canaan. But even in those cases, when God served justice due, there were innocent lives in the way. The first-born children and the animals of Egypt, and certainly war always causes innocents to suffer, for example.

It is with these questions and with the loss of our young friend that we must walk in faith. We must trust God. His promises are true. And He is always, always good. Even Jesus said this, knowing the suffering He would face. The suffering that His Father would allow, Jesus still claimed God's goodness.

Luke 18:19

Why would Jesus not consider Himself good? Jesus was so good when He walked this earth. It's hard to understand.

So, when we don't understand, we walk in faith. When the tornado comes or the earthquake or war or the loss of someone so young, we just say it out loud: God is good all the time.

He is not only "good" when He stops bad things from happening. Although, He does this more than we even know. But He is always good. He is always good because He is there. He is there in the storm. He is there through the storm. He is even there after the storm has passed and a new life must be forged.

His hand of goodness is upon us all the time, even in death and grief.

Psalm 100:5

The Lord is good. Always. We just keep saying it.

Psalm 135:15-18 NLT

These four verses are repeated from Psalm 115:4-8. In ancient days and even now, there are people who worship actual idols made by human hands. Objects made by the hands of man that cannot respond, that do not see, that do not understand, do not breathe, have never walked the earth. And yet, people put their trust in them and worship them. They look to them for protection, for comfort, and peace.

Likewise, we create objects for ourselves. Things that we put our faith in, our trust in. Things we worship and put above God in our hearts.

Whatever these things are, they will never be what we need.

These verses are a reminder that while an idol made by man does not see, speak, hear, breathe, or understand—God does.

God sees us. God hears us. God speaks to us. God is trustworthy. He is real and present and faithful. He is alive.

So, because of this great news Psalm 135 comes to a beautiful conclusion,

Psalm 135:19-21

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 136

February 20, 2023

Read Psalm 136

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Wow what a refreshing responsive reading. Can't you picture this—the priest reading a line and all the people replying in unison, "His love endures forever!"

Psalm 136 is titled, *His Steadfast Love Endures Forever* (ESV); *Thanks for the LORD's Goodness to Israel* (NASB); *Thanksgiving to God for His Enduring Mercy* (NKJV); and I always love the simple titles from the International Children's Bible, *God's Love Continues Forever*.

The saying "*His love endures forever!*" is found many times in the Old Testament. It seems that this song or saying was a favorite of God's ancient people.

Psalm 118 echoes these words. After the Ark finally came to Jerusalem, and David first appointed Asaph to minister before the Ark and within the tent, he sang these words,
1 Chronicles 16:34

1 Chronicles 16:41

Then again, when Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord in Jerusalem,
2 Chronicles 7:1-3

No one knows for sure when Psalm 136 was written, nor by whom. Maybe at some point, a priest decided to write all the "give thanks" responses down. Maybe all along people just responded this way. When the priest said, "the Lord has done great things!" The people would always just reply, "He is good; his love endures forever."

Until finally someone wrote it all down.

As Jeremiah stood within the ruined city of Jerusalem, a captive himself of the Babylonian guard, God spoke to him. The city was destroyed. People were dead or taken away. Yet God made a promise then,
Jeremiah 33:10-11

God doesn't call us to praise His name only after He has saved us. He calls us to sing these words during pain and suffering. During worry. Or grief. Even when we don't find any good, we don't see any good, or when don't feel thankful, God wants us to sing these words.

A reminder that even during our suffering or disbelief or hopelessness, God is still working. God is still present. God is still good.

Psalm 136:1-3 NLT

The psalmist begins by calling the congregation to give thanks to the Lord for who He is. God of gods. Lord of lords. The psalmist calls upon the LORD (in all capital letters) first with His covenant name—YHWH. The Jewish people believed that YHWH (Yahweh) was a name too precious and revered to say out loud even. The Great I Am. He is above all, for He created all.

He is good beyond all others: indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the perfecter of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people. For his mercy endureth forever.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 136:4-9 NLT

Praise the Lord for His creation. Praise the great Creator God. Everything is in its place, and everything points back to its Creator. From the inner working of the nearly invisible atom to the vastness of the known universe and beyond, all has His signature upon it. And it all shows His character, His heart, and His goodness. He is not a God of carelessness or chaos; He is a God of order and goodness whose perfect plan began with a perfect hand and whose hand keeps all in perfect motion.

Psalm 19:1

God is good. *His faithful love endures forever!*

Psalm 136:10-16 NLT

Reminders of the God who saves. He saved His people from slavery in Egypt. He protected and provided for them during their many years of wandering in the wilderness, and He brought them through their suffering finally to the Promised Land.

Often in the Old Testament, God reminds His people about the Exodus, when He performed mighty miracles and saved them from Pharaoh. Why does He do this?

Because we forget, don't we? We don't remember how God saved us. How He came through for us when we needed Him most. When we face a new obstacle or a new worry, we forget the times He was there already. We forget and we cry to Him in fear as if He can't save us or won't save us or doesn't hear us.

But He already has been faithful. So, we remember. He calls His children to remember His faithfulness. Talk about His faithfulness. Tell others of His faithfulness. We need to remember His faithful love.

Psalm 136:17-22 NLT

God was faithful then. Won't He be faithful in this new struggle ahead? Remember the times He was faithful. When you feel afraid or hopeless or faithless, remember the times that God was there for you already.

The psalmist reminds the people, as in Psalm 135, when God led Israel to defeat the kings of the Amorites and take possession of their land along the Jordan River (Numbers 21:21-35). The people remember this great victory because these two kings were mighty men—some say giants even—and their armies formidable. The Israelites did not believe they stood a chance and felt they would be destroyed. But God led them to victory.

Remember what the Lord has done. His faithful love endures forever.

Psalm 136:23-26 NLT

What a beautiful psalm. A reminder of God's faithfulness. Whatever you face today, God has brought you to this point. He has been faithful. He will be faithful. He will see you through.

His faithful love endures forever.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 137

February 27, 2023

Read Psalm 137

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 137 is a sharp contrast to the last few psalms. No more *Song of Ascents*, no more "praise the Lord" or "His love endures forever" here. This song is a remembrance of war and destruction, grief and loss, sadness and hopelessness.

Titled—*How Shall We Sing the LORD's Song?* (ESV); *Longing for Zion in a Foreign Land* (NKJV); *An Experience of Captivity* (NASB); and *Lament of the Exiles* (HCSB), among others.

Psalm 137 is a beautiful piece of poetry, filled with deep emotion. And sadly, what is written here is an actual account of what happened to God's people.

For 70 years, somewhere around the year 597 BC, the Jewish people were taken captive by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II and Jerusalem was destroyed, thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Daniel 9). Terrible things happened to the Lord's people during this time in history, the temple was destroyed; the people were abused, killed, and taken captive; and all the sacred and important things carried away from Jerusalem.

And the people who survived wept. They felt abandoned by God. The city they loved, the Promised Land, their families and homes, the place they worshiped the Lord—all gone.

Psalm 137:1-4 NLT

The ones who survived the battle in Jerusalem became captives far from home. Psalm 137 paints a vivid picture of a Jewish musician being mocked by his captors as he mourns for the loss of his home, his culture, his people, his family, and his freedom. As he stood before one of Babylon's mighty rivers—the Tigris or Euphrates—he feels lost, alone, and broken.

Lamentations 1:7

This musician is done with music. His harp is hung up on the branch of a tree. He stands beside a river he does not know, in a land far away, without his loved ones beside him. And the people near him chide him, knowing his sadness, to sing about the place his heart longs for. They don't do it because they want to hear a song about the Lord, they do it to cause him more pain.

Psalm 137:5-6 NLT

The sacred city must ever be first in their thoughts, the queen of their souls; they had sooner be dumb than dishonor her sacred hymns and give occasion to the oppressor to ridicule her worship.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

In the book of Ezra, the prophet lists the Jewish exiles as they are freed to return home to Jerusalem. Ezra 2 lists the tribe or head relative, their job within the community, and how many of each. Verse 41 says this about how many musicians returned home to Jerusalem after being in exile in Babylon,

The musicians: the descendants of Asaph 128
 Ezra 2:41

Maybe Psalm 137 was written by one of these musicians who finally got to go home. He would be a very old man now as he walked through the gates into the city—the ruined city. Or maybe sadly, the author of Psalm 137 died in captivity and other singers remembered his song.

While in captivity, the Israelites did not want to lose sight of their "greatest joy," also known as "home." Truly God was with the Israelites when they were in Babylon, but worship and fellowship with other believers was not the same. They were not in the place their people had worked so hard to establish, the place of their ancestors with the temple and the Ark of the Covenant. All these things were essential to the faith of the Israelite people. These things were now gone, and the people were living amongst the Babylonians who had very different beliefs. Thus, their deep desire to keep Jerusalem as their "greatest joy."

Do you think God allowed His children to be broken so that they would see His faithfulness in a foreign land? He made them uncomfortable—very uncomfortable. He took away all the things they thought they needed, maybe so that they would look to Him again. So that they would remember His faithfulness.

And as some time passed, they returned to Jerusalem and began to rebuild. As the builders laid the foundation of the new temple, all the people gathered around to praise the Lord. There was weeping and rejoicing—a bittersweet joy,

Ezra 3:11-13

The vow to remember Jerusalem was a painful blessing. An unattainable memory to the captive. A bittersweet vision to the one who made it home again and began the long and difficult process of rebuilding.

Psalm 137:7-9 NLT

Fierce was the heart of the Jew who had seen his beloved city the scene of such terrific butchery. His heart pronounced like a sentence upon Babylon. She should be scourged with her own whip of wire. The desire for righteous retribution is rather the spirit of the law than of the gospel; and yet in moments of righteous wrath the old fire will burn; and while justice survives in the human breast it will not lack for fuel among the various tyrannies which still survive. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The singer now calls upon God to remember what happened, to serve His justice.

Remembering Jerusalem was painful, but the city and its people were on this singer's mind. He vows to remember the city. He vows to remember the songs. He will not sing them now, but he *will not* forget them. And likewise, he will not forget who caused his people to suffer.

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's (Israel) brother. They were Israel's long-ago relatives and neighbors within the middle east. But the Edomite people banded together with the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take away her people.

Lamentations 4:21-22

Because of Edom's involvement in the destruction of God's people, Edom is gone. Babylon and Edom are lost in history. Yet Jerusalem—although battle-worn and often tittering on the edge of war—still stands to this day.

Finally, the description of soldiers hurting children is a horrible reminder that all suffer in times of war. The man who weeps at the river in Babylon is haunted by traumatic memories of what most certainly happened in Jerusalem, and he calls upon the just hand of the Lord to respond. *Again, today in April 2024, the thought of hurt Jewish children hurts my heart. And it hurts God's heart.*

The prophet Isaiah spoke God's words regarding the future of Babylon in Isaiah 13. The whole chapter is God's promise of retribution, it's not easy to read. But the Truth is that God is always good, even we don't understand why things happen the way they do or why innocent ones must suffer.

Isaiah 13:19

There is so much in this beautiful little poetic psalm. So much sadness and grief. But mixed in with all of that is a belief in the power of God, the importance of waiting for God, and trusting in His faithfulness.

Psalm 137 is a reminder that God will avenge wrongs done. It is His place, not ours. And it is also His promise. He will do it—in His perfect time.

Deuteronomy 32:35

Psalm 137 is also a reminder that God is faithful, even in darkness and times of grief. God was faithful when the people were making Jerusalem their home. He was faithful when Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people were captives in Babylon. And He was faithful when they set to rebuilding the temple yet again.

God is faithful today. He has watched over His children always, and He will continue to do so. He is a good Father. Always present. Always faithful. Always good. When you doubt if God is listening or if even cares, remember these stories. He was faithful. He will be faithful.

Exodus 14:14

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 138

March 6, 2023

Read Psalm 138 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 138 brings us right back to the singer of songs and author of poems, the mighty warrior and shepherd king, a man "after God's own heart." David.

Commentators point out stark differences between the last psalm and this one. Psalm 137 is a vivid picture of destruction and grief where the author refuses to sing the holy songs while his captors chide him. Then, Psalm 138 is David's call to sing praises to the Lord with abandon. Loudly and proudly. So that even the kings of the earth will hear and join in.

Titled, *Give Thanks to the LORD* (ESV); *Thanksgiving for the LORD's Favor* (NASB); *The LORD's Goodness to the Faithful* (NKJV); and *A Hymn of Thanksgiving* (ICB), among others.

It is a call to praise.

There is no indication of when David wrote this. Possibly as an older man, because he speaks with maturity and like one who has experienced God's goodness. But David sang the Lord's praises as a teenager even, so no one knows for certain. Some have suggested that David may not have written this because of his use of the word "temple." The Bible tells us that David's son Solomon built the temple after David died. And that David worshiped the Lord in the Tabernacle. But others say that David had called the house of worship a temple in his other writings, so the use of "temple" does not discredit the Davidian authorship.

Psalm 138:1-3 NLT

This is David's prayer of love and adoration to his Father in heaven. David was a sinner. His sins are spelled out in the Bible for generation upon generation to read and learn from—hopefully. But David loved the Lord. And the Lord loved him.

God and David were (are! 😊) close. David's life was not easy. Not at all. But the story of his life not only speaks of a great king who stood up for what was right in the eyes of the Lord and against all odds, but his life is also proof that during times of grief, pain, danger, fear, and evil, God never left him. In the good times and the bad. David's life is one great story about how God was faithful; how He protected and watched over David, always.

What did God expect of David? Faith. Trust. His heart.

[David] is resolved to praise the Lord, and to do it with the whole force of his life, even with his whole heart.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Even David's wife, Michal, chastised him for dancing and singing in praise to the Lord as the Ark of the Covenant finally came into Jerusalem. She claimed he acted unkinglike. He responded with this,

2 Samuel 6:21b-22a

David would sing with all his heart. Before all the fake gods of the world. Even if everyone laughed at him, including his own wife. He would sing and dance for the Lord.

He would bow down, not something that kings did (or do) easily. David was a great beloved king, but he would bow in humility before his God.

The Bible records David's physical strength and his strength of character. He was a great warrior that men followed, pledged their lives to. But, according to David, his strength came from the Lord. Not of his own accord. All praise went to God. Always.

David had a great love for the Lord.

Psalm 138:4-6 NLT

Every king in all the earth will thank the Lord—Once they hear Him speak, they will praise His name? More like, once they hear His voice, they will all fall flat on their faces!

David uses the covenant name of God (in English translations this Hebrew word is LORD in all capital letters), YHWH. A name that the Jewish people believed was too sacred to even say out loud and therefore we don't even know how to pronounce the name to this day. It is simply referred to as the tetragrammaton. The Lord gave Himself this name when Moses asked what name he would give the Israelite people when he took God's message to them in Egypt,
Exodus 3:14

David believed that if the kings of the earth could just hear His Name, they would believe. Faith.

David says that the Lord avoids the proud, but He cares for the humble. Earthly kings were/are not known for their humility. So, what do these words mean?

Maybe David is saying that if men could only hear the words of the Lord, they would believe. And he, David, needed to be that messenger. Possibly David thought of himself as a missionary. His praising, his loud singing and dancing with abandon, would reach the ears of his neighbor kings and all the kings of the earth. David wanted his praise to be so loud and proud that when they heard it, they would believe.

Worship and praise the Lord with abandon, so others will hear and wonder what the reason is for our joy and hope.

There was something about David that attracted people to follow him. They believed in him. They trusted him. He had influence. But down David's family line was an even greater man.

The greatest man. Jesus.

And when we strive to live a life in accordance with God's will and word, we present ourselves as mirrors of Jesus. At least, that is what we are called to do. David understood this, if he could just sing and praise the Lord all day long, more would come to know the Lord.

1 Peter 3:15

King David didn't know Peter, nor did he hear these words. But he lived this way. He would sing and dance before the Lord. He would make a fool of himself in front of man (or his wife). His eyes were upon the Lord, not upon what others thought of him.

No matter what people say of you or me, may we only care to please the Lord.

Psalm 138:7-8 NLT

Bible commentators point out three things that David teaches us in the second half of this psalm.

The first is that God favors the humble, sometimes called the "poor in spirit" in the Bible. And God gave us the greatest example of this characteristic in His Son, Jesus.

The second is that God takes care of His children. David, though a powerful man and king, needed his God. He knew that the only true help came from His Father in heaven. God sees you and He loves you. He walks beside you in good times and bad. Never doubt that He is there. Never doubt that He sees your pain; He knows your worries and fears, and He has you in the palm of His hand.

And finally, David's Psalm 138 reminds us that whatever God has begun within His children, He will finish. He never walks away. He never throws His hands up and says, "you're too hard to work with!" He has a plan for your life and even when you are weak and scared, He is strong. Even when you cannot see the path before you, He is leading you.

Philippians 1:6—Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 139

March 14, 2023

Read Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 139 was written by David and dedicated to the Chief Musician (some translations say to the Director of Music or the Choir Director). Some believe the Chief Musician to be God Himself. Others say Asaph or the sons of Asaph—those in charge of worship in the temple or tabernacle. Maybe it is all of them and especially to God Himself!

Many claim this as David's greatest song.

2 Samuel 23:1b

Titled, *God's Perfect Knowledge of Man* (NKJV); *Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart* (ESV); *God Knows Everything* (ICB); and *God's Omnipresence and Omniscience* (NASB).

If you have ever felt like you walk this life alone and no one truly knows you or understands you, this is the psalm for you.

It is a beautiful song and a good one to memorize and treasure in our hearts. God is everywhere. God knows all. He created all, and He keeps it all moving in His hand. Yet, He knows you. He sees you. God knows your thoughts. He knows your heart. And He loves you.

A prayer of David.
Psalm 139:1-6 NLT

You know me, God.
Whether I sit or stand. Whether I am here or there. At home or out and about.
You search my heart and even know what I will say and do before I say or do it.
You walk ahead of me on my path, and you follow behind me.
You lay your hand upon my head in blessing.

I do not understand you. I cannot understand how vast yet how personal you are to me. My mind cannot comprehend it.

There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment in which we shall be beyond his observation.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Jesus reminds us,
Matthew 10:29-31

There is nowhere that we can go where He does not go before us and behind us. He knows our hearts and our words before we even say them. This brings comfort.

And is also uncomfortable.

The fact that God sees all is a reminder to watch what we say, keep control of our tongues, and mind our thoughts. Because God is everywhere and sees all, He knows our sin before we even do. He knows the thoughts in our minds that would be embarrassing to say out loud. We cannot turn our backs and say the word we don't want Him to hear. We cannot hide our response in the car when someone cuts us off. When we lose our tempers and speak hurtful things, He already knew what we were going to say.

God's constant presence is a comfort and a reminder to walk the path He lays before us.

The NIV says, "He hems me in behind and before," like a protective barrier. When bad things break through—which they do—we know that God allowed that bad thing through. This is something that is hard to understand. If God protects us and knows and sees all, why would He allow that bad thing around His wall of protection?

Many of these things will not be revealed to us in this life. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to understand.

Psalms 139:7-12 NLT

We cannot hide from God. Adam and Eve learned this in the Garden of Eden when they ate the forbidden fruit and then heard God's approach. They could not hide (Genesis 3). Jonah tried to hide from God by running away. He ended up in the belly of whale (Jonah 1).

We must be, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body. This makes it dreadful work to sin; for we offend the Almighty to his face and commit acts of treason at the very foot of his throne.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

When we do the thing that He told us not to do, He is watching. When evil lurks in the dark, God sees it like we see the day. He sees all.

Even in the darkness of night when our fears and worries grow, God is there. The night is as the day to Him. That is comfort.

In fact,
John 8:12

Wherever we go, He is with us. He is the Light of the world. In the darkness of night when it seems like evil lurks, God is there. He does not bring light, He is Light.

Psalm 139:13-16 NLT

God knows you now, but He knew you before you were born. His love for you did not start on your birthday, it began when you were conceived. His hands knit you together, and the days of your life were ordained in His book before your birthday.

Life is precious to God. Because God knows and loves children at conception, so should those who love Him. This could not be clearer than in Psalm 139. God values every life within the womb, from the beginning. Period.

Here is what God said to the prophet Jeremiah,
Jeremiah 1:5

God says, "Before you born, I knew you." "Every day of your life was recorded in my book before even one came to pass."

Psalm 139:17-18 NLT

Verses 17 and 18 paint a beautiful picture of David's awe and gratitude toward his God. The God, the Creator of all, thinks about you and me. That is hard to wrap our minds round. And David says that God's thoughts of him are more than grains of sand on the beach.

Oh, that we would live our lives with this kind of awe and passion toward the Lord. That David's songs and prayers would be reminders to live as he did, his eyes always up, on his Father in heaven.

Psalm 139:19-22 NLT

David's words switch quickly, from nothing but awe and wonder of his God, to utter hatred of evil. David loves the Lord so much that the thought of someone else dishonoring Him fills David with hatred. He wants to defend the honor of the Lord.

Christians are often afraid or apprehensive of passages like these. But . . .

Can we truly love the Lord—who is nothing but good—without hating what is evil?

Evil exists simply to destroy God's plan and the things that God loves. Everything Satan does is to destroy the children of God.

Therefore, can we love the Lord and not hate what is evil?

Proverbs 8:13—Compare the NIV and ICB here

We do not hate the person that God created, we hate the sin. This strong feeling keeps us running or fighting. It keeps us aware of, and on the lookout for evil so as not to be tempted ourselves.

Note, sin is hated, and sinners are lamented, by all who fear God.
 -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalms 139:23-24—NLT and ICB

David goes from hating evil to seeking God's help to keep his feet on the right path—Test my heart. Show me where I am messing up. Help me to stay on the path you have laid before me. Help me to see evil and sin so as not to fall into its snare.

This could be a painful prayer. When we open ourselves up to God's direction, He will point things out. Things we need to work on. Things we need to flee from. Things we need to clean from our minds and hearts. But it will ultimately lead us to a deeper relationship with Him.

Trust God with your heart.

Remember—He knows you. He knew you before you were born. He goes before you and behind you. He lays His hand upon you. He knows your thoughts and what is in your heart.

And . . . He loves you still. You are never alone.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 140

March 20, 2023

Read Psalm 140

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 140 is titled, *Prayer for Deliverance from Evil Men* (NKJV); *Prayer for Protection against the Wicked* (NASB); *Deliver Me, O LORD, from Evil Men* (ESV); and *A Prayer for Protection* (ICB).

Some Bible scholars see Psalm 140 as an extension of David's previous song, Psalm 139. The ideas and the writing style are similar, and we have seen this idea with other psalms. But David was a writer and a singer. I wonder sometimes if he journaled regularly, and these are his daily prayers or thoughts. So, it would make sense that yesterday he felt one way, and today he had similar style and worries and thoughts.

Someday we can ask him.

Also, some scholars believe this psalm, due to the content, was one David wrote while running and hiding from King Saul. There is a sense of peril in his writing here. He is in fear for his life, running, fleeing, and hiding from some great danger.

Psalm 140:4 NLT

Rescue me. Protect me. Keep me out of their hands.

David had reason to fear for his life, many times. And, although he did not know the prophet Isaiah, he believed these words about his Father in heaven,

Isaiah 41:10

David was a renowned warrior. Men followed him, even as a young man. The Bible records what people would say about him,

1 Samuel 18:7

David had strength and experience; he had warriors watching his back, yet the strength he sought was from the Lord. This is humility. And what the Old Testament describes as "poor in spirit." This is meekness. And, ultimately, this is faith.

James 4:10

Whatever the specific occasion for its writing, Psalm 140 is David's cry for help and mercy *and also* an expression of his great anger. David shares his fear and frustration at the circumstances he finds himself in. Righteous anger.

The Message (which is one man's modern-day paraphrase not an actual translation of the Bible) can be a useful tool when used in comparison with other versions.

Psalm 140:9-11 MSG

David calls for justice. He calls for God to destroy his enemies. He calls for God to do to his enemies what they did to him. But despite all of that (in this psalm and others), David is not remembered as a revengeful king. History does not record that about him; he never took matters into his own hands. He could have. He had the power and resources to.

But instead, he put his trust in God. Psalm 140 (among others) is his words crying out to his Father in heaven whom David knew *would have justice*. David knew that God would have the final say, and he fully believed that God would avenge the wrongs done to his son, David.

It may be that his appeals to the great King cooled his anger and enabled him to leave his wrongs unredressed by any personal act of violence. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord;" and David when most wounded by undeserved persecution and wicked falsehood was glad to leave his matters at the foot of the throne, where they would be safe with the King of kings.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

If scholars are correct and David wrote Psalm 140 during the time that he fled King Saul's wrath (or journaled it as a prayer to God), the story is told in the first book of Samuel (1 Samuel 20-31).

1 Samuel 20:1

1 Samuel 22:1-2

1 Samuel 23:14

1 Samuel 27:1

Then the second book of Samuel begins with the death of King Saul and his sons, including Jonathan whom David had grown up with and loved as a brother.

David called, many times, for the Lord to save him and strike down his enemies. To have justice served. To see the Lord's anger burn and destroy those who have done David wrong. And often, in his early years, the "enemy" he referred to was King Saul and his followers.

The shepherd boy David was a teenager when he killed the giant Philistine named Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Some say a young teen, maybe only thirteen years old. Samuel anointed him as future king of Israel when he was approximately fifteen years old.

1 Samuel 16:10-13a

Finally, David was crowned king after Saul's death at the age of thirty (2 Samuel 2).

That's fifteen years or so (approximately, no ages are known for certain). What was happening to David during that time? Was David running in fear for his life all those years? Maybe. For some of it, he was part of Saul's household guard and like an adopted son to the king. But even then, David was watching his back from that volatile King Saul.

Fifteen years is a long time to wait on God and His promises.

There are two points that we can take away from this psalm and this reminder of the life of David. The first is to wait on the Lord.

Have you been waiting? Has been a long time? Years maybe that you have been waiting for Him to answer a prayer. Especially when it comes to the salvation of someone we love, this is hard. Waiting is hard.

But God is faithful. Even when we are waiting, He is working. All we see is silence on a matter, but God is never still. He is working. While David waited (fifteen years!), he grew in strength, in faith, and in spirit. God prepared him to be the king that the people needed. As David waited, God brought more and more warriors (and probably their families) into community with David and therefore into God's presence.

Waiting for the Lord is hard. We want to see change, and we want to see it quickly. But we do not know all that God will do or is doing for us or for others while we wait. So let the story of David and his fifteen years of waiting be a reminder that God is present, active, and we must respond with faith.

Isaiah 40:31

And, maybe, the second point we can learn from David and this psalm is how he acted toward Saul. His words to God are the words and prayer of a man calling to his Father for help. Like a prayer journal. His actions toward Saul are different, set apart. We are called to be different. We are *in* this world, but we are not to be *of* this world. David had opportunities to kill Saul and end his exile, but he was set apart (1 Samuel 24 & 26). God called him to be different.

And when it was all over, and Saul was dead, David did not rejoice. He tore his clothes, wept, and wrote an elegy for Saul found at the beginning of 2 Samuel,

2 Samuel 1:17-18

Tell God how you feel. When you're angry and wish to have him strike your enemies with lightning, tell Him. When you grieve the loss of someone or something, tell Him. When you're angry and wondering where He is in all your worries, tell Him.

When all is well and goodness surrounds you, tell Him!

God can handle our grief, our anger, our joy, our fears. He wants to hear it all. But, like the story of David, He certainly expects us to handle our actions differently. Our feelings are all okay with God. Tell Him.

David had great faith as he waited on the Lord. Let's renew our faith as we wait.

Psalm 140:12-13 ESV

On earth ere long, and in heaven forever, the pure in heart shall sing unto the Lord. How loud and sweet will be the songs of the redeemed in the millennial age, when the meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace!

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 141

May 1, 2023

Read Psalm 141

A psalm of David

Favorite verse or thoughts:

David was in distress when he penned this psalm, pursued, it is most likely, by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? Let him pray; David did so and had the comfort of it.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

Psalm 141 is titled, *Give Ear to My Voice* (ESV); *A Prayer Not to Sin* (ICB); *Prayer for Safekeeping from Wickedness* (NKJV); and *An Evening Prayer for Sanctification and Protection* (NASB).

Bible scholars and translators are perplexed by the middle portion of this psalm—several verses are hard to understand/translate. One commentator claimed the "colorful Hebrew" made discovery of meaning difficult. Charles Spurgeon said, "it's meaning lies so deep as to be in places exceedingly obscure."

But the first verses are clear and meaningful. We would do well to memorize these and sing them to the Lord each morning,

Psalm 141:1-2—Compare the ESV and NLT

In the Old Testament, the required daily gifts to the Lord were very specific, including a morning and an evening offering (Number 28:4). God set these rules up as soon as the people were freed from slavery in Egypt. While many of the rituals are foreign to us today, God commanded them, at that time, to keep the eyes of the Israelite people upon Him. To keep them focused daily—morning and evening. It's often too easy to look around at what others have or how others do things and be led astray.

There is a lesson and an expectation for us today: speak with God first thing in the morning and last thing before you close your eyes to sleep.

Like bookends to your day.

If David did write this while he fled Saul all those years, then he did not have access to the tabernacle and the daily rituals that he believed strongly in. Therefore, his prayer to God was that He would "accept my prayer as incense before you. May my prayer in the morning be sufficient to keep my eyes upon You." Then ended his day in the same way, "and my hands held high in praise as the evening sacrifice."

Revelation 5:8

As incense is carefully prepared, kindled with holy fire, and devoutly presented unto God, so let my prayer be.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Let my prayer be like incense placed before you. (ICB)

Psalm 141:3-7 ICB

Good men pray against the sweets of sin.
 -Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

David did not want the same mouth that prayed incense for the Lord in the morning to become wicked and deceitful the moment he set foot in front of others. Someone tended to lead him astray, and every morning David prayed against this battle. David is clearly asking God to reveal sin and wickedness. David wants to see it clearly so that he won't step in it and fall into its trap.

Although David fights the trap of sin, he welcomes the righteous to correct him, to point out sin's trap ahead, the trap that he sometimes fails to see.

Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! (NLT). It's not easy when someone says, you're going the wrong way, it is a kindness. David reminds us that our eyes should remain on the Lord. When we look to heaven and the life beyond, the temptations of this world fall away in comparison.

The reminder: do not seek to please men, instead, seek the Lord always. *Like oil on my head.*

These words are confusing,
 Compare Psalm 141:5b-7 in the NKJV and the NLT

David speaks to the righteous again here. He prays against the schemes of the wicked. He sees the day when their judges/leaders fall. It is, then, that the people must hear the words of David as comfort and hope. Meaning (possibly?) when Saul falls, which he will because God told David so, the people will turn to David and David will speak of God's faithfulness and His promises. A promise that David, as God's anointed king, will not harbor ill will but will see them through.

Note the differences in verse 7.

Whatever the meaning of verse 7 (whose bones are scattered?) it is bad. Like a body buried, then dug up and the bones scattered around from animal scavengers or grave robbers or worse. Complete disrespect for the dead. Does David fear the future for himself or his people? Is David speaking metaphorically about what Saul has done to the Israelites, scattered them, broken them, caused disunity? Or is he speaking of the day that Saul will fall and the evil people that follow him are scattered?

How often have good men thought thus of the cause of God! Wherever they have looked, death, division, and destruction have stared them in the face. Cut and cloven, hopelessly sundered! Scattered, yea, scattered at the grave's mouth!
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Whew, thank goodness for the last three verses then. What is a believer to do? *Look up!*

Psalm 141:8-10 NLT

But God, dear Lord, I only have eyes for you. Psalm 141:9 MSG

I look up to you Lord.
I only have eyes for you.

My friend, where are your eyes set today? Are worries and fears keeping you up at night? Is something or someone pulling you away from the Truth of God's love for you? Is it your own heart or head telling you lies about your worth? Do you fear the traps that so easily entangle us?

May we take David's example in Psalm 141 (and others!) to seek God in the morning, first thing, and again in the evening before we close our eyes to sleep.

Even when we do not *feel* it, God's love and strength are being poured out upon us. Even when we doubt His faithfulness, He remains faithful. We see it throughout every page of the Bible.

Thank the Lord that His faithfulness does not rely upon ours.

How do we keep our eyes on the Lord? How do we walk this earth/this life blamelessly? How do we see the trap of temptation ahead? How do we stop the fear and worries of this world creeping into our hearts and minds?

Book end your day with the Lord. With His word. With prayer. With praise.

Deuteronomy 31:8

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 142

May 15, 2023

Read Psalm 142

A maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 142 is titled, *You are my refuge* (ESV); *A plea for relief from persecutors* (NKJV); *A prayer for help in trouble* (NASB); and simply, *A prayer for safety* (ICB).

The *maskil* or *maschil* is sometimes translated as "a contemplation" or "an instruction." Also, the NIV's side note says- *probably a musical or liturgical term*.

David's meditation set to music.

A prayer when he was in the cave. He was in one of his many lurking places, either Engedi, Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul and his bloodhounds. Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The stories of David hiding in these caves are found in 1 Samuel 22 (Adullam) and 1 Samuel 24 (Engedi). Bible commentators lean toward the cave of Adullam; therefore, Psalms 34 & 57 were written then as well.

If the cave of Adullam is the setting, then God answered David's prayer of loneliness and fear of abandonment here,

1 Samuel 22:1-2

He was not alone for long.

David ran in fear for his life. He was God's chosen king over Israel, but for more than a decade he lived in fear of King Saul's volatility and jealousy. He had an interesting and embarrassing encounter in Gath (1 Samuel 21:10-15), then he ran from there and hid himself in this cave. Here in the cave of Adullam he was alone and afraid. No one was on his side. No one cared about him anymore.

Or so he felt. But God was there.

And God sent others to him.

Psalm 142:1-2 NLT

It is a beautiful, humbling thought that God is always with us. We are never alone. David was physically alone and afraid. He felt like he alone stood up for what was right and what God had planned. He was God's chosen king, the anointed one to lead the people. But he waited on God's word and God's timing. For many, many years, David waited.

And in that cave, he felt completely alone. But he wasn't.

When anxiety threatens to suffocate and fear makes it hard to breathe even, when you feel utterly alone, these are the words . . . memorize them, treasure them, cling to them,

I cry out to {You} LORD.
I lift up my voice to {You} LORD for mercy.
I pour out before {You} my complaint.
Before {You} I tell my trouble.
Psalm 142:1-2 NIV

David used his voice to cry out to his God. No one was around. He was alone in a cave and so he cried. He called to God. He begged for help.

David *poured out his complaints*. Was David actually complaining to God? Possibly not in the sense that we think of, the meaning could be lost in translation. But even if he was—is complaining a bad thing when we are talking with God?

Complaint: (noun) a statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable; protest. Or, an illness or medical condition, especially a relatively minor one. (Oxford Dictionary)

The word is scarcely "complaint;" but even if it be so we may learn from this text that our complaint must never be of a kind that we dare not bring before God. We may complain to God, but not of God. When we complain it should not be before men, but before God alone.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Later in Psalm 142 David asks for help dealing with his enemies. Likely by "complaining," David is pouring out his worries and anger toward these evil people that are out to get him. Whether it is the Philistines or Saul or someone else, David "pours out" his worries to the only One who never abandons him. The only One he can completely trust, and the only One that he truly needs.

Psalm 142:3-4 NLT

David felt completely alone and isolated. Cut off from his family and friends. God had chosen him, but, so far, all that brought David was loneliness.

My friends, have you ever felt cut off from those you love because of your faith? Do you sometimes feel like you are standing alone?

When we share our faith and stand up for what is right, we do go against the world and will be attacked. That is the truth. But in those times, remember the words of Jesus and what is important,
John 15:18-19

Let David remind us—He is always by our side. In suffering. In worries. In grief. In the dead of night. In a cave.

In this world filled with fear and worry, what is there to do?

Psalm 142:5-7 NLT

I cry to you, O LORD (ESV). LORD, I cry out to you (ICB). I cried unto Thee, O LORD (KJV).

This is the second time David uses these words in this short psalm. David remembered that even though he was physically alone, the Creator of the universe was his Father and always by his side.

That is what is important. Who do we seek to please? Man or God?

The New King James Version translates verse 5,

I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.
Psalm 142:5 NKJV

God is our Father in heaven, but He is all that we need in this life as well.

*It is sometimes easier to believe in a portion in heaven than in a portion upon earth: we could die more easily than live, at least we think so. But there is no living in the land of the living like living upon the living God.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892*

Lord, you are our Rock to lean upon; you are our shield of defense against evil. You are everything good in this world.

Good things are not promised to us in this life. But the truth is that He is all we need.

David, in his loneliness and fear, closes Psalm 142 by asking God to save him so that he may sing of the Lord's goodness. *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise your name (NKJV). Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name (ESV).*

God knew David's heart. He knows our hearts. He wants to hear what we need and even what we want.

And then, like Jesus, we claim it. That whatever happens, we will praise His name. We will thank Him and sing of His goodness.
Mark 14:36

Your will be done, not mine. But whatever comes, I will praise your name.

David claimed it. He knew God would rescue him. And God did, He always came through for David. But David had to wait and trust in the Lord. Yet even in the waiting, David sang of God's faithfulness.

How?

How can we do this? How did David believe so strongly that God would be faithful? He ran for his life for many, many years. How could he continue to believe so strongly?

Because God *was* faithful to David. If He *was* faithful, He *will be* faithful again.

And just because David claimed God's faithfulness in this psalm, doesn't mean he felt it or knew it or believed it even. He just said it. Repeatedly.

Even if we don't see a way out or don't understand the road ahead. Or even if we have lost our faith, speak it. Say it. "God *was* faithful. He *will be* faithful again."

God is good and faithful. Say it. Claim it.

We all have periods of believing this and periods of unbelief. Speak it in both.

This beautiful psalm penned in a cave opens with a cry and closes in praise. That is how prayers go. When we are worried and afraid, even doubting at times, we can cry out our "complaints" before God. He listens. He is present. And then something happens, as it did for David in this psalm.

We remember what is important.

1 Peter 3:12

Jesus said,
Matthew 28:20b

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 143

May 22, 2023

Read Psalm 143

A psalm of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 143 is one of seven psalms referred to as the *Penitential Psalms* (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). The *Penitential Psalms* express penitence or the author's sorrow over his sin. As early as the second century, Bible scholars and church leaders were using this grouping of seven psalms for days of confession and repentance. Pope Innocent III (1161-1216 AD) even ordered these be recited during Lent and Holy Week in the Catholic Church.

However, there is not much confession of sin in Psalm 143.

Why it has been set down as one of the seven Penitential Psalms we can hardly tell; for it is rather a vindication of his own integrity, and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 143 is titled, *My Soul Thirsts for You* (ESV); *An Earnest Appeal for Guidance and Deliverance* (NKJV); and simply, *A Prayer Not to Be Killed* (ICB).

A Psalm of David. A Song of David.

Nothing else is noted, but Bible scholars see correlations between this psalm and others that were written by David as he fled the volatile and jealous King Saul. The setting is likely then, as well. These stories are found in the books of Samuel.

Psalm 143:1-2 NLT

David calls, as he often does at the beginning of his psalms, for God to *hear my prayer. Give ear to my pleas* (ESV). *Listen to my cry* (ICB). And then he says it again, *listen to my plea!*

David is in crisis and knows that all will be okay if only God would just listen to him. If God turned away, David would be ruined. But if God was on his side, David knew that eventually all would be well. And until then, his strength would be in that hope. His peace would be in that promise. The promise that . . .

the Lord never turns away. He is always listening for the cries of His children.

Isaiah 65:24

Psalm 34:15 (also written by David)

Proverbs 15:29

My friends, do you need the Lord to listen? Do you need Him to come close to you? May we all start our prayers like this: Lord, I need you, come close to me.

But David knew, as we also know, that God was listening. How was he certain of this?

Because God is faithful, and He is righteous. Not because David deserved it; not because David was faithful or righteous. The Lord listens to His children because that is who He is. He is our loving Father who waits expectantly for His child to speak, to cry, and to ask.

Thank goodness we don't have to be good enough.

Not because of what I have done, Lord. David knew that he was not innocent before God. He was a sinner. And he asked God to listen to him and help, not because he earned it or deserved it, but solely because God is good and faithful.

Romans 6:23

New Testament believers have this promise, David did not. But David was still covered by grace. His sins were forgiven, and God never turned away from him. And He never turns away from you and me.

Doesn't that promise just lift a burden off of our shoulders?

We cannot earn God's love. We can never be good enough to deserve the one true God's mercy. Ever. Thankfully, Jesus is the way to the Father. And His gift to us is free.

Psalm 143:3-6 NLT—Interlude.

David's enemies, whether the Philistines or Saul or something else, did force him into hiding in a cave, *he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead* (ESV). In these verses, David may well be in hiding, or he may be remembering the times he hid in darkness.

But whatever the circumstances, David is hopeless and afraid.

Have you felt like you are *losing all hope*? Have you been *paralyzed with fear*?

God is so good to us. He was good to David, and He is still good today. When you feel hopeless or afraid, remember what David did. What did David do? (my Footloose reference, ha)

David *remembered the days of old*. He *pondered all the Lord's great works*. If God was faithful, He will continue to be faithful. That is who He is.

In times of fear, look back on your life and remember the times when God was there. Thank Him for those times. Sing His praises. Lift your hands in prayer and thanksgiving for God's faithfulness.

A parent of a small child might call this "counting your blessings." But it's true. If God has been faithful in your life, why would He stop now?

Selah. It was time to pause, for the supplication had risen to the agony point. Both harp strings and heart strings were strained and needed a little rest to get them right again for the second half of the song.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 143:6—I love the ICB's translation of this verse.

You can just feel the urgency, the great need. David knew that all he needed in his life was the Lord. With God on his side, David could face anything mortal man threw at him. Anything.

But if God were to turn away, David would die. He would wither and die.

And then in verse 8, such a beautiful request,

Psalm 143:8

Have you ever needed the Lord so badly only to hear silence? Have you asked and asked and asked without an answer?

What does that silence mean? Does it mean He isn't listening? Does it mean He doesn't care or even that He isn't there? Like David, do you wonder if He has turned away?

Take heart, my friends, David wondered too. And God wanted David's words of anguish and fear of abandonment to be in His Bible for us to read thousands of years later. He wants you to know that your worry, doubt, and fear are okay. God understands.

Take a breath and do the next right thing in front of you. And then the next, and then the next. Sometimes God reveals the path ahead, but other times, He just shows a step at a time.

Take that next step, knowing that your Father looks upon you with love always. He has not turned away.

Was David trying to fall asleep as he hid in that cave or somewhere hiding in darkness from his enemies? Did he long to hear God's voice? *Cause me to hear your lovingkindness in the morning, for in you do I trust* (NKJV).

Did David go to bed weeping and long for the morning to refresh him and give him a new hope? (another movie reference. I'm on a roll)

Lord, my sorrow makes me deaf, cause me to hear: there is but one voice that can cheer me- cause me to hear thy lovingkindness; that music I would fain enjoy at once- cause me to hear it in the morning, at the first dawning hour.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 143:9-12 ESV

Here is where David trusts in the Lord. After asking for the Lord's provision and a new hope in the morning, David claims God's saving grace. He doesn't say how or when. He just trusts in the Lord and in His timing.

David *knows* that the Lord will save him. He prays that God will renew his faith and hope, but he asks for deliverance, for God's saving hand.

Teach me to have faith. Lead me in the way that I should go.

Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of John,
John 14:1

Trust in the Lord and claim His faithfulness. He was faithful; He will continue to be faithful to you. He was faithful to David. He saw David through this crisis.

I fight his battles. It is a warrior's prayer, and smells of the dust and smoke of battle.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 143:11-12 The Message

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 144

June 14, 2023

Read Psalm 144 *Of David.*

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Of David. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 144 is clearly David's hand. Bible scholars point out wording in verses 2 and 10 which may suggest that David was about to be coronated as king over all tribes. Maybe he wrote this for his day of coronation, or possibly right after the ceremony as he pondered his new station. Either way, David is now leading the people. There is still work to do, but David is pledging his faith in the Lord.

It is to God the devout warrior sings when he extols him as his strength and stay.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Titled *My Rock and My Fortress* (ESV), *Prayer for Rescue and Prosperity* (NASB), *A Song to the LORD Who Preserves and Prospers His People* (NKJV), and *A Prayer for Victory* (ICB) among others.

There are similarities in wording and ideas with Psalm 18 which is considered David's great psalm of thanksgiving to God for saving him from his enemies, including the volatile King Saul. For Psalm 144, something great has also happened, and David is *still* giving God all the glory.

May this song be a reminder in good times to be thankful *but* to keep right on praying. David never looked to his own strength, nor to the strength of his mighty warriors. David always looked to God.

Psalm 144:1-2 NLT

All David is and all that he has is because of God. David had strength and power. He had mighty warriors of great renown, and David was a well-respected warrior himself.

Yet David knew that without the Lord none of his strength and might would hold.

David was called to be a man of war, and he was eminently successful in his battles; he does not trace this to his good generalship or valor, but to his being taught and strengthened for the war and the fight.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The Lord was his rock. The Lord trained him and strengthened him. The Lord was on his side—a fortress, a tower, and a deliverer. The Lord was David's shield of protection and safety.

All that David accomplished in his life was due to the Lord's provision.

Do we say the same?

In our culture, people are quick to accept responsibility for the good things in their lives. They attribute blessings to hard work, persistence, and strength. Interestingly, these same people will then blame someone else for the bad things in their lives.

"What is good is all me." "What is bad is always someone else's fault."

In all things may we remember to give God the glory. In good times and bad.

In verses 1 and 2, David uses quite a few different names for God. All of them claim the Lord as a mighty warrior God—One who protected and trained David, even teaching his fingers what to do. All of these "names" are words describing God's character and who He has been to David as a shepherd, as a fugitive, as a soldier, and now as a warrior king.

But note this little nugget of wonderfulness . . .

David begins this list with the beautiful, descriptive word translated as *loving ally* (above in the NLT). In other translations—*My lovingkindness* (NKJV), *Loving God* (NIV), *He is my steadfast love* (ESV). In the Orthodox Jewish Bible—*My Chesed* (TOJB2011).

Hesed/ Chesed—is a Hebrew word that is difficult to translate into English, and there is no single word used to translate it, hence the differences between Bible translations above. *Hesed* is the noun that God used to describe His own love and commitment to His children. It's no wonder that humans have struggled to understand and translate this word. We can similarly spend our whole lives struggling to understand His love for us.

Exodus 34:6-7

Isaiah 54:10

Hesed—lovingkindness, steadfast love, mercy, unending love, devotion, grace, loyalty. Yet each of these English words falls short. The truth is that God's love is supernatural and multifaceted and only can truly be experienced through a relationship with Him. It cannot be described with words. All words fall short.

Psalm 144:3-4 NLT

LORD (when in all caps) is the Hebrew tetragrammaton "YHWH"—Yahweh or Jehovah. The greatest name for God. Another word that we cannot comprehend fully outside of an intimate relationship with God Himself. And what a contrast here in this verse between "LORD" and "man."

Compared to the greatness and majesty of the LORD/Jehovah, David wonders what even is man that He would notice or care what happens to them? Man is just a shadow that passes quickly. Just a breath of air. The Message (one man's paraphrase of the Bible) says, "just a puff of air."

But why *does* God even care? Another mystery. Another beautiful mystery of our loving, mighty, creator God.

The Lord thinks much of man, and in connection with redeeming love makes a great figure of him: this can be believed, but it cannot be explained.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

If God loved mankind so much, even though we are but a puff of air, then should we also love each other. Jesus came as the greatest example of this. Jesus is God in human form, and He came to show us His love.

And did He ever,
John 13:34-35

Matthew 22:35-40

This is not a part of David's psalm, but it is most definitely a part of the Gospel.

Psalm 144:5-8 NLT

This is David's version of "Please, Lord Jesus, come!" And isn't it a scary thought? David knew that he was on the right side when the Lord returned, but he also knew it would be terrifying. Lightning bolts and arrows flying from the sky. God's own hand reaching down from the heavens! Mountains shaking and smoking!

The International Children's Bible translates David's words as, "LORD, tear open the sky and come down!"

Revelation 22:20

For whatever reason, David knew he needed help, and he pleaded with God to help. David was a renowned warrior himself. He had a whole army of experienced men ready to do battle in the name of the Lord. But in this moment, David called for the supernatural. He called for God to reveal Himself and His mighty power. David wanted to be rescued by God. He wanted God to "tear open the sky and come down!"

Jehovah—what is man that you care for them? He is but a breath. Like a fleeting shadow. Like a puff of wind compared to You.

If Jehovah would appear, nothing could stand before him; if the mighty mountains smoke at his touch, then all mortal power which is opposed to the Lord must end in smoke.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 144:9-10 NLT

Now, I will sing a new song!

With each passing grace, every time the Lord rescues or answers our prayers, sing a new song. God's grace is new every day, may we likewise sing a new song to Him each morning.

For He grants victory to kings! God was there for David as a young shepherd. He was with David on the battlefield facing a giant with only his sling and a few stones. God was with David on the run, hiding in caves, fleeing for his life from the moody King Saul. And now, at the time he wrote Psalm 144, God was with David as king over the people.

And this required a new song.

Psalm 144:11-15 NLT

Here are David's specific prayer requests now that he is king,

- Rescue from his enemies, those lying, deceitful enemies who promise the truth yet tell nothing but lies.
- That the children of Israel would grow healthy and strong.
- That their barns be filled with all they need and the flocks multiply beyond imagination.
- May there never be anyone who comes to attack the walls of Jerusalem to take them into captivity.
- May there never be any cry for help within the town meeting spaces.
- May all be filled with joy.

One commentator made an interesting point. David's list of requests focused on normal everyday people, the working class. Their homes would be safe. Their sons tall and strong, their daughters sturdy and graceful. Their storehouses, full, and their herds big and growing bigger by the minute.

David also calls for peace within the walls of Jerusalem. That the people would dwell in safety.

Protect us from invasion and exile—eliminate the crime in our streets. MSG

If these things happened, the people would live in peace and joy. Joy would fill the streets. Joy would fill their homes. Joy would fill the palace.

But, again, David knew where true joy comes from. Not in peace and safety or good fortune. But truly, the joy of the people is in the LORD. Despite our circumstances, our joy can be in the Lord.

Despite what goes on in the world around us, God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and will be tomorrow. God doesn't change. His promises are true, and He is faithful. God has been faithful; therefore, we can be reassured that He will continue to be faithful.

In Nehemiah 8, the prophet was reading God's word to all the people after they returned to Jerusalem from exile and captivity. They wept and mourned as they realized their sin and how far they had fallen from God, and they cried out to Him.

But this is so beautiful! Read what God said to them through the prophet Nehemiah, Nehemiah 8:10

The people cried out to their God after a long separation. They knew their sin. They knew how much they needed Him. And God wrapped His arms of forgiveness around His children and filled them with His covenant *Hesed* love. This is their strength, the joy of the Lord.

This, too, is our strength. No matter our circumstances, no matter what is going on in the world around us, no matter how far we have fallen from God, the JOY of the Lord is our strength.

"This can be believed yet cannot be explained."

Jesus said,
Matthew 28:20b

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 145

June 26, 2023

Read Psalm 145

A psalm of praise. Of David.

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 145 is titled, *A Song of God's Majesty and Love, A Praise of David* (NKJV); *Praise to God the King, A song of praise, Of David* (ICB); *Great is the LORD, A Song of Praise, Of David* (ESV); and *The LORD Extolled for His Goodness, A Psalm of praise, Of David* (NASB).

Some have called Psalm 145, "The Song of the Faithful Servant."

David had blessed God many a time in other psalms, but this he regarded as his peculiar, his crown jewel of praise. Certainly, David's praise is the best of praise, for it is that of a man of experience, of sincerity, of calm deliberation, and of intense warmth of the heart.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

A Praise of David. Commentators point out that the previous five psalms were David's prayers, and the next six psalms, to the end of the book, are psalms of praise. This psalm is the last to be signed by David.

Psalm 145 is an alphabet song, an acrostic poem, each line begins with the next letter. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters. Psalm 145 has twenty-one verses, verse 13 is split in half in some translations (see the NIV for example). In the original Hebrew text (called the Masoretic Text), the letter *nun* is missing. While other ancient texts (the Septuagint as one) do have this second half of verse thirteen which includes that "missing letter." Why was one letter left out in the original text? Why that letter in particular? Why are Bible translations so different with this psalm?

Some are quick to point out a mistake, and when people start pointing out what they call "mistakes" in translations, it becomes easy for others to dismiss all of God's Word. The annoying battle of the Bible translators really can and does lead people astray, away from God's Truth and what really matters.

The piece that translators argue about is this: *The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does* Psalm 145:13b (NIV). This piece does not exist in the ancient Hebrew text. Did David leave *nun* out and why that letter? Why did some add it back in? There are whole blog posts about the letter *nun* and why David might choose to leave that one out on purpose.

But let's remember this important point . . . *Nothing* happens by mistake in God's Word. Nothing. *The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.*

Our takeaway here: read the Bible in different translations and pray for understanding. We can learn so much more when we do.

Psalm 145:1-3 NKJV

Extol—*verb* to praise highly; to glorify (Merriam-webster dictionary). Other translations use—exalt, praise, proclaim, lift high.

God placed David as king over His people, yet David would solely sing praises to the King of kings. Every day in every way forever and ever, David would sing of the Lord's goodness. What gave David such peace and joy despite his circumstances? What gave David the humility to praise God like this?

David was a warrior king, renowned, battle worn, strong, and faithful. He was capable as king and as general. He was loved and respected as a warrior and king. Yet, David did not praise himself. All he had, and all he was, was completely due to the Lord's favor.

Do we say the same? No matter the circumstances going on around us, do we praise the Lord?

That is not how our culture does things. Typically, good things that happen are due to persistence and strength, and bad things are someone else's fault. That is not what God expects, and it is not the example that David gives us in the Bible. Do you ever feel like a fish swimming upstream?

Sometimes the Lord is hard to understand. And we often struggle to see and understand His plan and see His goodness in all things, especially when bad things happen. It is in those moments, like David, that we must say "Great is the LORD and I will praise Him. His greatness is unknowable."

Not all the minds of all the centuries shall suffice to search out the unsearchable riches of God; he is past finding out, and, therefore, his deserved praise is still above and beyond all that we can render to him.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Psalm 145:4-7 NKJV

David says—God is so good and so powerful that one generation must pass the stories on to the next. David's life is a testament to this. Is this why he wrote so much that is recorded in the Bible? He wanted God's character to be known throughout the generations, even to you and me.

Declare. Meditate. Speak of. Remember.

1 Peter 3:15

Deuteronomy 11:18-20

Fix these words. Tie them and bind them to your hearts. Teach them, talk about them. Write them down. Always.

Psalm 145:8-13 NLT— [145:13 As in Dead Sea Scrolls and Greek and Syriac versions; the Masoretic Text lacks the final two lines of this verse.]

David gives a whole lot of reasons to love the Lord here—kindness and mercy, slow to anger and full of love, good to everyone, glory and power and majesty, forever and ever.

The International Children's Bible says, "with love He takes care of all He has made."

When you think of God, do these characteristics come to mind? Or does the fear of God lean the other way? Do you believe God is good? Truly? If God is good, why do bad things happen? How do you explain this to someone who asks?

The Truth is that God *is* good and all He does *is* for the good of those who love Him.

Romans 8:28

Charles Spurgeon said this, "these things can be believed but sometimes cannot be explained."

However, to someone who asks, we must be ready to explain why we believe. Who God is to us. What He has done for us. We must be ready to explain, then we trust that God will do the rest.

Psalm 145:14-20 NKJV

God holds all of creation in the palm of His hand. That is a scary and also a reassuring thought. Nothing happens outside of God's knowledge. All we do is seen. He does not sleep; He does not look away, even when we might wish He would.

That which makes life bearable is the tenderness of the great Father.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

We see God's loving hand in creation around us, from the smallest insect to the ruling of nations and the ordering of the universe. Everything evil, pain and suffering, sickness, disease, and death are a direct result of sin and the fall of mankind. That is not how God intended His children to live. But He still sees all.

We can know this with certainty, because even though we sin and our sin causes pain and suffering, God has not abandoned us. He has not turned His back. He provides. He watches over. He comforts. He heals. He shows up in small ways and mighty ways.

Because of this, we can say,
Psalm 145:21—Compare the NLT and the HCSB

David ends where he began. *I will praise your name forever and ever* (1). He concludes with *I will praise you and may all living things praise your name forever and ever* (21).

These are the last (certain) words of David in the Bible. What a way to end. David's life was a testament to following God in the ups and downs of life. David was not perfect; therefore, he is a good example for us to live our lives by. Many look at David's sins plastered all over the Old Testament with contempt. His sins were great, and they affected many people's lives, not just his own. But may we not be so quick to point a finger.

Remember: David was a man after God's own heart. God loved him. He never abandoned David. Ever.

God never abandons you. David's life is a testament to God's mercy and great unfailing love. No matter how far you have fallen, no matter the guilt or shame that eats your heart, see David's example of God's forgiveness and grace.

David was a sinner, yet God loved him. And God loves you.

Whatever others may do, I will not be silent in the praise of the Lord: whatever others may speak upon, my topic is fixed once for all: I will speak the praise of Jehovah. I am doing it, and I will do it as long as I breathe. And let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 146

July 10, 2023

Read Psalm 146

Favorite verse or thoughts:

And here begins what are traditionally called the "Hallelujah Psalms."

Psalms 146-150 are a great hallelujah chorus of praise! Each of the five chapters opens and closes with *Hallelu Yah*. Translated *Hallelu*—"praise" and *Yah*—a condensed form of Yahweh/Jehovah/YHWH (translated as LORD in all caps), and the most sacred name of God. So sacred that, to this day, there are Jews (including the Complete Jewish Bible below) who will not say it or write it. Instead, they may use other names for God like *Adonai* (below) or *Hashem*. Modern day Jews may just write "G-d."

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! Psalm 146:1 ESV
Halleluyah! Praise ADONAI, my soul! Tehillim (Psalm) 145:1 CJW- Complete Jewish Bible

The Psalter is filled with a whirlwind of emotions. We saw great pain and suffering, sickness and death. We saw God's saving power and loving mercy. The ups and downs of a nation struggling to walk with the Lord over time.

But here, now, nothing is left but to sing praise to the Lord. *Hallelu Yah*.

This life is short. There are many things we can spend our time on earth doing. There are many things that we can give our thoughts, our worries, our fears, even our joy to. But all is meaningless if we do not praise the Lord. We have one life on earth and one soul—we do not have time to waste.

And in the end, we will sing *Hallelu Yah* again together in that great chorus of praise,

Revelation 19:6

Today, praise the Lord. And praise Him loudly and with all that you are. Whether that is through actual singing, or maybe your praise is through speaking the Gospel to a friend, maybe it's helping a neighbor, loving your family, or serving in some other way . . . praise the Lord. Whatever you do today, praise the Lord,

Colossians 3:23-24

Whether you actually speak these words, *Hallelu Yah*, or you wash someone's feet in service, may your heart and soul praise the Lord today.

And may those who do not know the Lord around you hear and wonder at your joy, your strength, and your love that seems to not end. May you be "different" enough from the world and culture around you for them to wonder what it is that makes you so.

When David danced before the ark, even his wife scoffed at his behavior,
2 Samuel 6:20-22 MSG

Keep on dancing, my friends. *Hallelu Yah.*

Psalm 146:2 NLT

Although the psalm is not signed, there are many who believe these are David's words. If you've been following along with me through this study, you might say the same. These words sound like David, or like those around David who wrote songs and poems for God during that time. But God did not want this psalm signed, He just wants us to sing *Hallelu Yah.*

God clearly wanted the closing songs of His Psalter to be this great chorus of praise.

I will praise the Lord as long as I live and with my dying breath.

Psalm 146:3-9 NLT

Are we too quick to put our trust in earthly princes? Do we look to powerful people to save us? Do we look up to those same people as the goal of what to become? There is only One to keep our eyes upon. There is only One who holds our future in His hands. There is only One who we should try to please.

Psalm 20:7

We may look up to some people. We may even depend upon some. But we must always remember that a man is but a man, just a breath of life, here one day and gone the next. It is to God alone that we look to for strength and that we put our trust in. And anyway, a good man or woman should point us to the Lord.

Oh, how blessed a thing it is to know that God is our present help, and our eternal hope.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The psalmist is confident of these two things: the ungodly will wither away like dust in the wind and the godly—meaning those who have given their hearts to the Lord—have the Creator of the universe watching over them. And the attributes of God listed in these verses are reminders of why we should sing Hallelujah,

He is our helper.
He is our hope.

He is the creator of everything.
 He sets us free.
 He breaks the burdens upon our hearts and our backs.
 He protects us all, even those who are different.
 He helps us to see.
 He provides justice.
 He is all that we need.
 His promises are true.

And we are loved.

How can we thank Him for all that He is and all He has done throughout time? How can we even begin to thank Him? Praise the Lord. Each day choose again to praise the Lord. *Hallelu Yah.*

Read Psalm 146:10—NLT and the Complete Jewish Bible (on the Bible app)

Tziyon- Zion, the hill and the city of Jerusalem. Also means, "holy place" or "kingdom of heaven."
 (www.vocabulary.com)

Psalm 146 ends where it began, with praise. Praise the Lord. Praise Him now. Praise Him always. His reign has no end. All generations will know Him.

Choose today. Do not wait another day. Don't say, "tomorrow I will get right with God." Do it today. Right now. Choose to praise the Lord.

Revelation 22:12-13

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 147

July 17, 2023

Read Psalm 147

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 147 is the second of five songs called the "Hallelujah Psalms." Psalms 146-150—the last five songs of the Psalter- are a great chorus of praise to the Lord. *Hallelu Yah*.

Hallelu (Praise) *Yah* (Yahweh shortened—or the "LORD" in all caps).

In some Bible translations, Psalm 147 is titled. *He Heals the Brokenhearted* (ESV); *Praise for Jerusalem's Restoration and Prosperity* (NASB); *Praise to God for His Word and Providence* (NKJV); and *Praise God Who Helps His People* (ICB), among others.

Some scholars see the author as David's hand, maybe after bringing the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). Others see a later date, possibly when Cyrus the king of Persia helped the Israelites return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (Ezra). But, again, God did not record an author or period of time. So, all there is to do is praise the Lord.

Psalm 147 begins and ends with *Hallelu Yah*.

Psalm 147:1—Compare in the NLT and the CJB (Complete Jewish Bible)

The psalmist begins with praising God for the provision of His people—the Israelites, and their home- Zion or Jerusalem.

Psalm 147:2-6 NLT

In the psalmist's day, God is gathering His children and bringing them home to the tabernacle or temple to fellowship and worship together once again. At this time, the people see His hand in the re-building of their home physically as well as spiritually. They feel His presence and His strength.

God rebuilds walls and heals at the same time. As He brings His children home, He heals their hurts. God teaches us that there is peace and healing within a community of believers gathered together in worship of Him.

What a beautiful picture this psalm paints for us today. Today, God builds His church, and He calls His children home, into the church where He still heals their broken hearts and bandages their wounds. Do you have pain in your life right now? God is with you now, but amongst a community of believers fellowshiping together in a church, something amazing happens. Have you experienced this? This is what God wants for you.

the Lord is not only a Builder, but a Healer; he restores broken hearts as well as broken walls.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

The God of the universe cares about your broken heart. He cares about the things that hurt you. Let me say this again: the God of the universe—who has names for all the stars—cares when you are hurting!

Our Lord is great and very powerful. There is no limit to what he knows (ICB).

Psalm 147:7-10 NLT

Why should we praise the Lord? Because He's the One who waters the earth. He makes the grass grow. He feeds the animals. He holds all of creation in the palm of His hand. Some might believe that everything around us works so efficiently by mere chance. But this is the Truth,

Psalm 24:1

Isaiah 49:16 NLT

Do you ever worry about the future? Do not. God has written your name on His hands. He cannot forget you. He knows when the ravens need food; He has a name for all the stars. He remembered when the people were far from home and the walls of His great city were in ruins. He has your name on His hands!

He never forgets you. He never stops thinking about you. You are *that* important to Him.

And this is why we sing God's praise. *Hallelu Yah.*

Psalm 147:10-12 NLT

God does not need your strength or might. Instead, He wants your devotion—He wants you to *fear Him* and *hope in His unfailing love*. These are two attributes of the Lord that are hard for us to understand. *Fear of the Lord* and *His unfailing love*.

To fear the Lord is equal parts actual fear of the God who created the universe and awe of Him as our loving Father. The Being who created all and holds all in His mighty hands now sits next to you and knows you.

His unfailing love (*hesed/chesed* in Hebrew) translated as grace, steadfast love, mercy, constant love, lovingkindness, faithfulness, or faithful love. *Hesed* (God's love) is as hard to understand as it is to translate.

Sometimes these things about God are easier to believe than they are to explain in words.

Psalm 147:12-18 NLT

The people are returning home, and God is protecting the city. There are bars and gates, but the Lord fortifies them. No longer will He allow evil inside. He sends peace, He satisfies all their needs.

The psalmist lists four things here that God does for His people, and four reasons to praise. *Hallelu Yah*.

- He provides protection
- He blesses the children
- He brings peace
- He provides sustenance

Zechariah 2:3-5

God is a wall of fire around His people and the city's glory within.

And God does all these things with just a Word. Just a Word from God flies across the earth, swiftly moves across the land. He sends snow and frost. Hurls hail. Then just a Word from His mouth and a wind melts the cold and new life begins. Fear the Lord—equal parts complete terror at His mighty power . . . and awe at how He loves us. His great power creates a storm and then calms it, but He deeply loves His children. He knows each of them by name.

Your name is written on His hand.

Do you know God in this way?

You *can* know God in this way. He wants to know you and you know Him. It's not hard, just like building a friendship. Spend time reading His Word and telling Him what's on your heart.

Psalms 147:19-20—Compare the NLT and CJB again.

God chose His people, Israel, to bring His love and Word to *all* people. He chose Israel to be the guardians and protectors of His revealed Word, and the line of Abraham to lead eventually to Jesus.

Romans 3:2b

My friend, never doubt that God chose *you* to know Him. He chose you before you were even born to be His child, to receive His mercy and love. He will not force you. You must choose for yourself. He is not a Creator programmer God who forces His creation to love Him. He gave us free will. He gave us a choice. But He chose *you*.

Choose today to sing *Hallelu Yah* for that very thing, that God chose you.

He who causes summer to come in the place of winter has also removed the coldness of death from our hearts by the power of his word, and this is abundant cause for singing unto his name.
-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

We end where we began, Praise the LORD. *Hallelu Yah.*

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 148

July 26, 2023

Read Psalm 148

Favorite verse or thoughts:

It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this psalm light up all the universe and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

To Praise: to adore, to revere, to honor and admire profoundly and respectfully (Mirriam-Webster Dictionary)

Bible commentators point out—there is no reference to sin or evil in this psalm, there is only a call to praise by all of creation. And it begins in the heavens—praise the Lord. Sweeps down throughout creation—a call to *Hallelu Yah*. And covers all people, throughout time, great and small.

All that the Lord has created *will* praise Him.

Revelation 5:11-13

Psalm 148 is titled, *Praise to the LORD from Creation* (NKJV); *Praise the Name of the LORD* (ESV); *The Whole Creation Invoked to Praise the LORD* (NASB); and simply, *The World Should Praise the Lord* (ICB).

Psalm 148 is the third of five psalms commonly referred to as the "Hallelujah Psalms." *Hallelu* ("Praise" in Hebrew) and *Yah* (a shortened version of *YHWH*- *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*). *YHWH* (called the tetragrammaton) noted in all caps as "LORD" in the Old Testament is the most sacred name of God. The Jewish people refused to say this name and wouldn't even write it. The Complete Jewish Bible (below) replaced *Yahweh* with *Adonai* ("My Lord" in English) in verse one.

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens! Praise him from the skies! Psalm 148:1 NLT

Halleluyah! Praise Adonai from the heavens! Praise him in the heights!
Tehillim (Psalm) 148:1 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

Here the psalmist begins his great song of praise . . . in the heavens.

The author declares that all praise the Lord. Why? Solely because He created them.

Why should *we* praise the Lord? Because we had a Creator. And not just someone who zapped us all into existence. God, the Creator, took His time making you uniquely you. You are like no one else ever created. He made you special. He chose you and He made you the way He wanted to make you. You are His child, and He loves you.

If you ever wonder at your worth, remember that God created you exactly as He would have you. God said these words to the prophet Jeremiah, and He would say them to you,
Jeremiah 1:5

Because of this great, mighty, and loving act, *Hallelu Yah*. Praise the LORD.

Psalm 148:2-6 NLT

The prophet Isaiah probably lived during the 8th century BC in the kingdom of Judah, during the time when the Israelite people were split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Isaiah prophesied about the birth and life of Jesus, but God also gave him a glimpse of what it *is like* and *will be like* in the next life to witness the angels praising the Lord,

Isaiah 6:1-4

The disciple, John, had a similar vision recorded in his book, Revelation, at the end of the Bible,

Revelation 5:11-12

The angels and the heavenly beings, whatever they are or look like, they are out there praising the Lord. Some day we, too, will witness this. We will join our voices in praise with all of God's heavenly beings.

As the sun rises and sets, as the earth spins on its axis and gives us the seasons, and if you're lucky enough to see the beauty of the night sky where you live, know that all of this is praising the Lord. As the sun rises for a new day—it praises the Lord. The night sky with its vastness and incomprehensible beauty—praises the Lord. His beings of great strength and power that we cannot see but that swiftly protect or destroy by the word of His mouth—praise Him.

Why? Because He is the Creator. He is the One who made it all, and all of it He controls in the palm of His hand. Awesome . . . and terrifying, right?

During ancient times, and even still today, people looked to the stars to find meaning. There is beauty in the heavens, there is order, and there is meaning. Not because of the stars themselves, but because of Who made them. They all point to the divine Creator.

Have books or Hollywood or other forms of man's extensive imagination ever caused you to worry about the end of days? Will the sky really fall? Take heart with verse 6,

by his command they were fixed in their places forever, and they cannot disobey (GNSDC).

The psalmist then calls all of creation on earth to praise the Lord,

Psalm 148:7-12 NLT—in one whopping sentence!

One sentence calling all on earth, all of creation, to praise the Lord. From the bottom of the ocean to the sky and the weather. From the highest mountains to the trees that bear fruit. All animals, wild or domesticated, from rodents to the birds of the sky. Kings and regular people. Young and old. Men, women, and children. *Hallelu Yah*. Praise the LORD. Praise *Yahweh*.

Throughout time people have instead worshipped parts of creation. Whether the stars or the sun and moon, the sea or storms or animals, or even other people, this is a mistake. Why worship something that was created and not the One who created it?

Here, the author of this psalm reminds all that these things that man has worshipped today and throughout time as worthy itself worships its Creator. Man may worship the stars, but the stars themselves twinkle for the Lord, their Creator. Just beautiful.

Psalm 148:13-14 NLT

Let them praise the name of the LORD. All that is contained in the name or character of Jehovah is worthy of praise, and all the objects of his creating care will be too few to set it forth in its completeness. For his name alone is excellent. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

From the beginning, the people of Israel were chosen by God as His people.

Deuteronomy 4:7

In Paul's book to the church in Rome, he discusses the Gentile and Jew. Both are blessed by God, but His Word and His promises began with Israel,

Romans 9:23-26

Romans 1:16

God called Israel to Himself long ago, and make no mistake, there is a special place in His heart for the Jewish people. But this is God we're talking about, and there is a special place in His heart for you and for me. Believe that my friend.

And praise the LORD for it. *Hallelu Yah*.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 149

August 7, 2023

Read Psalm 149

Favorite verse or thoughts:

This is a *new song!*

Psalm 149 is number four of five psalms referred to as the "Hallelujah Psalms." But the author is calling us to sing *a new song!*

The phrase "Praise the LORD" is translated from the Hebrew word *Halleluyah* (Hallelujah/Halleluiah). *Hallelu-* means praise and *Yah-* is a shortened form of Yahweh (YHWH). Yahweh translated as "LORD" in all caps in the Old Testament is the most sacred name of God and so revered that Jews didn't (and many still don't) say it out loud. In the Complete Jewish Bible (see below), Yahweh is replaced with Adonai (My Lord),

Halleluyah! Sing to Adonai a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Tehillim (Psalm) 149:1 CJB

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song. Sing his praises in the assembly of the faithful.
Psalm 149:1 NLT

These "Hallelujah Psalms" begin and end with *Hallelu Yah* or Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149 is titled in some translations- *Sing to the LORD a New Song* (ESV); *Praise the God of Israel* (ICB); *Praise to God for His Salvation and Judgment* (NKJV); *Israel Invoked to Praise the LORD* (NASB); among others.

But in this song, there is praise and there is violence, there is thanksgiving and there is vengeance.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator; this is a hymn of praise to the Redeemer. It is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel.

-Matthew Henry, English minister, 1662-1714

First: the praise.

What does it mean to praise the Lord? Is praise the same thing as worship? Does it just mean lifting hands and singing? Praise is worship, raising hands and singing. But it is also so much more.

Praise does not just happen on Sundays. It is not solely available in church, and it is not always outward and loud. Sometimes praise is quiet and introspective. Sometimes praise is reflecting and listening.

Lamentations 3:21-25

Is waiting quietly for the Lord also a form of praise? To listen for His voice? To stop and feel His presence? To sit in awe of His love and mercy? Praise is the release of love and joy and honor from the heart of the created to the Creator in whatever form that may take.

Psalm 149:2-5 NLT

Why is there always so much talk about worship and praise, and why do churches spend the first half hour of service every week doing it? For one, the world will seek to distract us, to knock us down, make us feel unworthy and unloved. But praise focuses the heart back onto what is important and all that we need.

And secondly, we praise the Lord because He is our Creator. Our Maker. The Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in the earth. Yahweh is, was, and always will be. He holds all of creation in the palm of His hand.

Isaiah 40:12

All of creation worships its Creator. We can look around and see the beauty in the universe, the sun and the moon, rejoice in new life, but all of it already sings praise to God, the Creator. And so should we.

Not only did God create all, but He has measured the heavens with His fingers, and He knows the weight of the mountains.

Yet, hear this Truth from Jesus as recorded in John's gospel,
John 10:28-20

God has measured the heavens, but He holds *you* in His hand. And no one can snatch you away. Praise the Lord. *Hallelu Yah.*

Sing praise. Exult/rejoice/be glad in your Maker, Creator, and King. Dance and make music. Sing His praise because of who He is. Quietly listen for His voice in your life and reflect upon His great love and mercy poured out for you every day.

Psalm 149:4-5 ICB

It pleases the Lord for His children to praise Him, even from bed! Sometimes the nights are times when we feel far away from God, when nightmares or worries creep in. Let Psalm 149 be a reminder that God understands this and has a solution . . . continue to sing His praises even in bed.

Psalm 149:6-9 NLT

Secondly: vengeance.

The people of Israel were called to praise the Lord with their mouths and to keep a sharpened sword in hand to do God's will. We are not called to hold a real sword, but when we praise the Lord are we also ready to do whatever He asks? Or is it easier to praise and thank the Lord, then ignore His command of faithfulness or to run from sin or to love a neighbor?

The Israelites were ready to do God's will with their sharpened swords. We are not called this way, but God's word has also been called "the sword of the Spirit." Do you know and wield the sword of the Spirit? The word of God is Truth—love, healing, redemption, strength, joy, peace . . . what would you add to my list?

Ephesians 6:17

Hebrews 4:12

Jesus is called the *Word of God* (John 1:1) and when He speaks, that Word comes from His mouth like a sharp double-edged sword which He will someday wield as word and as weapon.

Revelation 19:11-15

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people. This was once literally the duty of Israel: when they came into Canaan they fulfilled the righteous sentence of the Lord upon guilty nations. At this house, under the gentler dispensation of grace, we wrestle not with flesh and blood; yet is our warfare none the less stern, and our victory none the less sure. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Praise from the saints and the sharp, double-edged sword of the Word of God will change the world. If this is how you live, others will come to know Him. Even today, if we praise the Lord with our lips and stand sure upon the Truth of God's Word, the nations will come to know Him. Another reason to praise.

Some commentators point out that these verses have been and can be misused by those whose hearts are already led astray. The call to violence was Israel's and Israel's alone. Our call is this,

Ephesians 6:12-13

We praise our God after another fashion; we are not executioners of justice, but heralds of mercy. -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Hallelu Yah. Praise the LORD.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

Psalm 150

August 15, 2023

Read Psalm 150

Favorite verse or thoughts:

Psalm 150 closes the entire Psalter in a sort of doxology. There is no teaching, no explaining, just *Hallelu Yah*.

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of the Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship, it is a rapture.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Titled, *Let Everything Praise the LORD* (ESV); *Praise the LORD with Music* (ICB); *A Psalm of Praise* (NASB); and simply, *Praise the LORD* (HCSB).

There is no doubt about the meaning behind this beautiful little poem—it closes the entire book of Psalms with a call for all to continue, now and forever, singing of the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 150 is also the last of what scholars call the "Hallelujah Psalms." The Hebrew word *Halleluyah* is translated as: praise (*Hallelu*) and the LORD (*Yah*- a shortened form of Yahweh). The Hebrew word translated in English as the "LORD" (in all caps) throughout the Old Testament is known as the Tetragrammaton or YHWH, Yahweh or Jehovah. The name is the most sacred name of God and so revered that the Jewish people wouldn't say it out loud and some still don't.

The psalms themselves were meant be sung in the tabernacle, the temple, the synagogue, and the sanctuary, anywhere people gather to worship God. As we will see later in Psalm 150, the LORD (YHWH) is replaced with another name for God, Adonai, so that the Jewish people could sing this song without saying the Name they held so dear to their hearts. In the Orthodox Jewish Bible (below), even *Hallelu Yah* is changed as to not use this most revered name of God,

Hallelu El (Praise G-d) in His Kodesh; Hallelu Him in the raki'a of His might.
Tehillim (Psalm) 150:1 TOJB2011

Halleluyah! Praise God in his holy place! Praise him in the heavenly dome of his power!
Tehillim (Psalm) 150:1 CJB

Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament!
Psalm 150:1 NKJV

The final call of the Psalter is that God is praised, now and forever. In His sanctuary. In His home even. Make no doubt about it, the place where God resides now is filled with beings singing these praises. In the heavens, where God sits on His throne, the heavenly beings sing praise to Him, *Hallelu Yah*, even now.

In His sanctuary, praise God.

Sanctuary—the "holiest of holy places" can refer to a temple or church, but also includes anywhere people go for peaceful tranquility and introspection, where people feel safe and secure (vocabulary.com).

From His sanctuary—the place where we can find peace and tranquility—let praise begin and end. When we stand in the sanctuary of our church, we are in His presence, and we *are* called there to praise Him.

Why should we praise the Lord from these places? The psalm answers this question.

Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Psalm 150:2 NKJV
 Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness! Psalm 150:2 NLT
 Praise him for his strength. Praise him for his greatness. Psalm 150:2 ICB

Two reasons.

One, praise the Lord for the things He has done for you, for us. The psalms are filled with reasons to praise the Lord. For example, Psalm 105 is a prayer of remembrance for all the things that God did for Israel in Egypt. Likewise, Psalm 106 is a song remembering God saving the people in the Red Sea from the Egyptian army and in the wanderings of the wilderness after, and God's faithfulness through it all.

The psalms are a gigantic book of songs and prayers reminding us today of God's faithfulness throughout the generations. So . . . "praise Him for His mighty works."

Secondly, because He is great. It is right to praise God for what He's done for you, but it's an even greater thing to praise Him for Who He is.

Who is God to you? A Father. A Savior. A friend. A provider. A protector. Is He hard to understand and even harder to explain?

Even though we may only understand a tiny bit of who God is, it right to praise Him.

There is nothing little about our God, and there is nothing great apart from him.
 -Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

How should we praise the Lord? Psalm 150 answers this as well, and lists all the things that the temple or tabernacle at that time used for worship,

Psalm 150:3-4 NLT

The point? It doesn't matter how it sounds or what method is used, all that matters is that praise comes from the heart. Praise the Lord with whatever you have. Whatever you have right now, praise Him. Words, song, dance, instruments—all of it should be used to praise God.

Whatever your gift, use it to praise the Lord. Is it music? Is it art? Is it poetry? Is it dance?

Psalm 150:6 NLT

The Psalter—the entirety of the Book of Psalms—begins with the word "Blessed" and ends with the word "Halleluyah."

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law, day and night. Psalm 1:1-2 NIV

Let everything that has breath praise Adonai! Halleluyah!
Tehillim (Psalm) 150:6 Complete Jewish Bible

Praise the Lord because you are blessed and chosen. Not because of anything that you have done, but simply because of Who He is. If it is hard to begin this, simply close your eyes right now and tell Him, Thank you, Father.

The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting upon its contents, I have seemed to eat angels' food.

-Charles Spurgeon, English preacher, 1834-1892

Thank you, Father. You are good and faithful. Thank you for your Word, thank you for Jesus, thank you for your love. Amen.

Questions, thoughts, prayers:

4 Things King David's Psalms Taught Me

Who was David?

David lived around 1000 BC. He reigned for forty years as king over the tribes of Israel, building the Jewish city of Jerusalem, and settling the ark of the covenant into the tabernacle there.

David was also . . .

a boy who was the least of his brothers, so small and insignificant that he didn't even get invited to a family feast when the prophet Samuel came to visit (1 Samuel 16)

a shepherd- the lowliest of jobs- often given to the baby brother (1 Samuel 16:11)

a young man who ran for his life for ten years despite being God's chosen king (1 Samuel 18-31)

a musician (1 Samuel 16:18)

a leader of men (1 Samuel 18:5)

a warrior so revered that songs were sung about him (1 Samuel 18:7)

a father betrayed by his grown son (2 Samuel 15)

a man grieving the loss of two children (2 Samuel 12:15-20; 2 Samuel 18:33)

an adulterer and murderer (2 Samuel 11)

a man after God's own heart.

Read 1 Samuel 13:14

Acts 13:22

David loved the Lord. He spent his life trying to please God. Yet, he was just a man, and his sins are big and plastered on the pages of the Old Testament. Why? What can his life- his joy, his pain, his mistakes, his triumphs- teach you and me?

Over the next few days, I will share four things that David's relationship with God, as recorded in the psalms, taught me.

1: Keep a prayer journal. David did.

The psalms are like David's journal of prayers. His worries, his fears, his complaints, and his joys cover the pages of well over seventy songs, and many of the unnamed psalms are attributed to him as well. While the events of David's life are recorded in the books of Samuel and Chronicles, the joys and pains of his heart are preserved in the psalms. David loved the Lord. He needed the Lord. He longed for the Lord.

And he wrote about it! Or possibly he dictated the words to a scribe who wrote it down for him. But either way, when we read David's psalms today, we can feel his praise and thanksgiving,

Psalm 9:1-2

We can feel his pain, worry, and fear,

Psalm 13:1

He expressed his anger at those around him, those who turned their backs on the Lord, and those who persecuted him. These psalms can be hard for New Testament believers to read. But David is journaling his prayers to God, his frustrations, his anger, his complaints. None of those feelings are wrong, and who better to go to with them than the Creator of heaven and earth.

Psalm 40:14

David writes of his sin and shame,

Psalm 38:1-2

May we be like David. Rather than fearing and worrying alone . . . rather than gossiping about our neighbor or coworker . . . rather than exploding with anger upon someone who has hurt us, may we *FIRST* turn to the Lord. All feelings are okay. We know this. God understands them; He sent Jesus who experienced the same feelings. But how we choose to handle our feelings is what we *will* be held accountable for.

So, go to the One who understands first and allow His love and mercy to calm your heart and mind to think clearly and to respond in the way He calls you to.

God wants to hear it. All of it. David's prayer journals are proof of that fact.

Are you lonely? Afraid? Angry? Filled with shame? Are you hurting?

Tell God about it. Write it down in a journal, so that someday you can look back and see how God brought you through to the other side.

He will. He is faithful.

Psalm 143:8-10 (one of my favorites!)

2: David did not trust in his own strength

Despite being a great leader of renowned warriors, David did not trust in his own strength.

Do you know about David's Mighty Men? There were 30 and there were 3.

1 Chronicles 11:10-47

2 Samuel 23:8-39

The Bible calls them "the 3" and "the 30" although there are 37 men listed and even more in the Chronicles. But whatever the meaning of the title, these were David's special forces. They were with him when he ran from Saul, when he fought in battles, and as king over Israel.

The Old Testament has stories of what these men would do for David at the risk of their own lives. They loved him. They protected him. They fought beside him. They believed in him.

And yet, in studying the psalms, I came to realize that David knew his own strength was not enough. The strength of his mighty men was not enough. What David needed *always* was the strength and provision of the Lord. He **could not** make it through the day without the Lord.

Psalms 3:3-5

Not Adino the Etzni who killed 800 men in one battle! Not Eleazar the Ahohite who fought alone against the Philistines until his hand froze to his sword!

The *Lord* was David's shield and strength.

Does that mean that David never protected himself? Or made sure there were protections around those he loved? Nope. He had the best of the best around him. Obviously.

But David knew that without God, he was nothing.

Psalms 4:8

Psalms 16:1

Psalms 18 is a beautiful description of David's faith in the Lord.

Psalms 18:1-2

Psalm 18 was possibly written between Saul's death and David's coronation as king over Israel. But there is no doubt, that David sings of God's faithfulness. That God saw him through his exile, his running in fear, the many years of struggling to survive. God saw him through to the other side.

Was it by his own strength? No, although God used David's strength, endurance, and leadership skills.

Was it because of his "3" and "30" fighting men, his special forces? No, but they were a gift from God and used by God to bring David through.

Psalm 18:16-17

So, my friends, know that you do not need to be strong enough. You do not need to have it all figured out. You do not need to fear.

Because God has got you covered.

Psalm 18:28

3: David was not perfect.

David made BIG mistakes. But God still called him “a man after His own heart.”

Have you heard of Uriah and his wife, Bathsheba? Of course you have.

When you read about David's special forces in my last post, his famous "30" mighty men, did you see Uriah's name? (2 Samuel 3:39)

Uriah was faithful to David, one of his closest warriors. And yet, 2 Samuel 11-12 records the time when King David was lazy and chose to stay home. It was "the season when men go off to battle," yet David was hanging out at home instead. He saw Uriah's wife and took her. Did he rape her? Possibly. Probably. What we know of history (and still in some cultures today), a woman had no voice. Bathsheba had no choice if the king desired her.

Before we jump at David to strangle him, how many kings or powerful men throughout history have done this? All of them? How many of them felt bad about it or even admitted a wrongdoing?

Maybe only David.

The quick summary- there was to be a child out of this betrayal. David called Uriah home so that he would "be" with his wife and the baby coming could be covered up. But Uriah was a warrior and refused to have any of the comforts of home while his brothers in arms were in battle far away. Unknowingly, Uriah carried his own note of execution back to commander Joab on the front lines. Uriah returned to the battle, the line moved back without telling him, he died on the battlefield. Bathsheba became one of David's wives. The prophet Nathan called David on his sin. David repented. Sadly, God took David and Bathsheba's baby to heaven because of David's sin.

Is this not the most terrible thing a "man of God" could do? Why is it in the Bible?

Two things to learn from this heartbreaking story.

One- how quickly sin gets away from us. David's eyes wandered because he was bored and not where he was supposed to be. He claimed a woman that was not his from a man who had dedicated a life of service to him. The result was a dead warrior, a woman abused, and the loss of a child. Sin spreads. Quickly.

Two- Yet God saw David's heart. We can judge people all day long. We can judge David's actions. But God sees the heart. God sees your heart. He sees my heart. He saw David's heart. If you need some comfort after reading this sad story again- God also saw Bathsheba's heart, and He loved her.

And God saw Uriah's heart and loved him.

David wrote Psalm 51 after God used the prophet Nathan to rebuke him,

Psalm 51:10-12

Check your heart. Be on the constant look out for temptation and sin. But know this . . . God loves you and will see you through whatever comes.

Psalm 30:4-5

4: David *knew* God.

David lived some 800 years before Jesus was born. If you're unfamiliar with Bible history, that is *solid* Old Testament times. In fact, David was Jesus's great-great-great-something grandfather. David did not know Jesus. He knew *of* the coming Messiah. He knew some of the prophesies, and God told him that the Messiah would come through his family line. But David did not *know* Jesus, not in the way that we can, that is.

Yet, David knew the LORD (YHWH- Yahweh, Jehovah, the great I AM). He saw God as Father, Protector, and Friend.

In those days of temple/tabernacle worship, the people went to the LORD through the Levitical priests. They brought their sacrifices and trusted in the process of this type of worship and in the priests of Aaron's line. But David is proof that- even then, so long ago- God was *real*. He was present in everyday life. He wasn't only available on the Sabbath or only when He was pleased with the "aroma of the offerings." He walked beside His people every day, even as He does today. David prayed to God in the morning, outside of the daily sacrifices and temple worship. He talked to God in the middle of the night when he was afraid. He cried to God for help from a cave when he hid from King Saul. He danced and sang praises to God whenever and wherever he could.

Do you struggle to understand God? Is He Father and Friend to you or is He too big to understand? Too complicated? Too "out there?" Do you feel like He is only accessible to people more "holy" than you? Is your "awe" of God drowned out by your fear of Him? My friend, you would not be the only one.

Over two thousand years ago, Jesus came to earth. His life, death, and resurrection are the complete gift of God's grace and love to His children. God wants us to see Him as a loving Father AND a mighty Creator. As Savior, Friend, Protector, Fortress, Rock, Strength . . .

A healthy dose of "fearing" God is good. But what He really wants is your heart, and your heart isn't given over in fear.

Do you struggle to understand Him? Here are some beautiful golden nuggets from David's psalms- a gift from God, through the heart of David, to you and me only a few thousand years later . . .

Psalm 8:3-4

Psalm 13:5-6

Psalm 8:1a

Psalm 27:1

Psalm 27:4

Psalm 27:13-14

Psalm 34:8

Psalms 63:1

Psalm 139:1-5

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