ROADMAP FOR LIFE

Scott Pauley

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A resource from...



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A faithful minister of the Word and man of prayer.
Thank you for taking me with you to the throne of grace and showing me the joy of time spent in the secret place with God.


ROADMAP
FOR LIFE



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FOREWORD - PASTOR KEVIN CORMICAN

The Psalms are truly beloved by believers in all walks of life. They record the depth of human emotions and reveal to us the great power and faithfulness of Almighty God. So many of the Psalms start with lament and end with praise, start with fear and end with faith, start with frustration and end with the psalmist experiencing the peace of God.

I am so thankful that God has led Scott Pauley to publish the Roadmap for Life, a study of the Exodus Psalms. I have known Scott Pauley for over two decades. For many years and in different seasons of ministry, God allowed Scott and I to cross paths; every single time, I came away encouraged and helped. Now I have the privilege of being Scott's pastor, and when we have the chance to fellowship, I still find myself encouraged.

Brother Pauley is a gifted evangelist, a faithful expositor of God's Word, and a great encourager. I count him as my friend and my brother in Christ. He has a love for God, a passion to unashamedly proclaim the gospel, and a strong desire to help strengthen believers.

The book you hold in your hands was born out of a heart to exalt the Lord and encourage the brethren. I believe that this book will be a help and encouragement to all who read it. God's people often turn to the Psalms for comfort, encouragement, hope and

strength. The Psalms are powerful and practical, and while we cannot improve upon God's Word, I know that this book will help us to understand and apply biblical principles in our daily lives. Whether you intend to use this volume as a commentary on the Psalms or as a daily devotional, I know that the thoughts and explanations contained in it will be invaluable to you. You will find the truths in these pages to be not only helpful but truly life changing. May God bless and enrich you as you read this book and apply these scriptural principles to your life.

Pastor Kevin Cormican
Cranberry Baptist Church
Beckley, WV



PREFACE

The first 41 psalms, the Genesis Psalms, remind us that every good thing comes from God. Psalm 42 opens the second section of Psalms, known as the Exodus Psalms, and they lead us to remember our Redeemer. Just as the Genesis Psalms help us to begin with God, the Exodus Psalms call us to continue with Him.

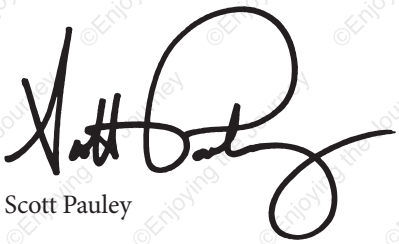
Exodus records the miraculous power of God revealed as He brought His people out of Egypt. In these psalms, God reminded His chosen people of all that He had done for them. In all those years, at every place, through every hardship, He never failed them. Along the journey of life all of us encounter detours, difficulties and dilemmas. At these critical moments, it is vital that we go back to who God is. He has never failed us and He is not going to start now!

The God who had power to redeem Israel from Egypt, and has redeemed us from our sin, is able to redeem the worst things in our lives for our good and His glory. In the final redemption, Christ is going to redeem even our broken, sin tainted bodies (Romans 8:23). He is the Redeemer!

The Apostle Paul said it this way in Romans 8:31-32, *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*

In the following pages we return to the divinely inspired devotional book of the Psalms. Wherever you are on your journey with Jesus, the Exodus Psalms will help you to remember your Redeemer and trust His power each day. May God bless you as you continue to study the Scriptures and walk with Christ.

Your fellow traveler,



Scott Pauley



PSALM 42: TWO THINGS YOU CAN DO WHEN YOU ARE HURTING

Psalm 42:1 | *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."*

Are you thirsty for God today? The picture that opens Psalm 42 is of a deer or mountain goat desperately panting for water. If you have ever been truly thirsty, you know the feeling! But the physical illustration points to a greater spiritual thirst. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:6, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*

David was a man who desired God. He longed for the Lord and wanted to see what He alone could do. I fear that too many believers thirst more for the things of this world than for spiritual realities. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:23, *"...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."* How easily satisfied we become with earthly things that will not last, instead of what is truly eternal.

Ask yourself again, "Am I thirsty for the things of God?"

The psalmist answered that question for himself in verses 2-3:

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night,

while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?"

We cannot be certain who wrote Psalm 42. Most Bible teachers believe it was David. What is certain is that whoever wrote it, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did so in a time of great distress. The context and tone indicate that the writer could not get to the Temple to worship . He was separated from God's people and the things for which he so longed.

Think about those today who, for whatever reason, cannot worship with God's people. Often we do not appreciate the ability to gather until we cannot be together. The psalmist was saying, "I miss those moments. I long for those times in God's presence."

It is times like this that the enemy comes along and suggests that God has forsaken us (verse 10). But perhaps the most devastating voice comes from our own doubts. He says in verse 3 that his own tears mocked him, *"Where is thy God?"* At low moments we must be careful about listening to ourselves. The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"*

Maybe your emotions are causing you to doubt God or your future. You have to bring your emotions and your burden into the presence of the Almighty God.

Psalm 42:4 | "*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for **I had gone** with the multitude, **I went** with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*" He was thinking of the past and happier days.

Psalm 42:5 | "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for **I shall yet praise him** for the help of his countenance.*"

Mark the shift as the psalmist moved from the past to the future. So many people are trapped in the past and talk only about good days gone by. We ought to be thankful for those days! However,

we must keep looking forward to the days ahead of us. God is not past-tense; He is active now, and will continue His eternal work.

The emotion surged again at the start of verse 6: *"O my God,* ***my soul is cast down*** *within me."* And again in verse 11: *"Why art thou* ***cast down, O my soul?*** *and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."*

Sometimes feelings of despair roll in like waves — overwhelming us with discouragement. You get a little relief, and suddenly another wave crashes over you, pressing your spirit down. How should we respond in moments when we thirst for God but it seems the only water available is a flood of trouble?

We can do the same two things the psalmist did.

1. TALK TO YOURSELF.

Observe how the author repeatedly asked and answered his own questions. Sometimes it is easier to preach truth to others, than to preach it to ourselves. It is alright to talk to yourself as long as you are speaking the truth! Good people, even God's people, can find themselves like Peter in Matthew 16:23 as spokesmen for the Devil. He is the accuser and, if we are not on guard, we can begin to repeat his lies to ourselves. Instead, we must rehearse what we know to be true about God. When your emotion and Satan's suggestion floods your mind, choose to think on God's Word and talk of God's promises.

If David did write Psalm 42, it is a classic example of how he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, as he did at Ziklag in I Samuel 30:6. Do not wait for others to encourage you. If you do that, you may stay discouraged! But if you speak truth to yourself with reminders of the goodness of God and remember your Redeemer, you find renewed strength.

The inscription of Psalm 42 records that it was given *"to the sons*

of Korah." Korah and his family were the ones who stood against Moses and were swallowed up by the ground in Numbers 16. But several generations later, his descendants were leading worship among God's people. Even the title of the psalm is a reminder of the mercy and grace of God. Failure is not final. An ugly chapter is not the end of the story. There is hope. As bad as your situation could be, you are alive and there is a future.

2. TALK TO GOD.

All of the Psalms are meant to bring us to worship and communion with God. Ephesians 5:19 says, *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to* ***the LORD.****"* Once the writer spoke truth to himself, he began to lay out his petition to God.

Verse 3 begins with *"my tears."* But the psalm closes in verse 11 with *"my God."* The only way to move from your tears is to move toward God. Take your eyes off yourself and fix them on Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2).

One of my Bible teachers used to warn us of the danger of becoming "morbidly introspective." Examine your heart to be sure there is no sin between you and God, but then concentrate on Him. Beware of fixating on yourself. Charles Spurgeon said, "Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace." Do not just talk to God about you; praise Him for who He is.

Twice we are commanded to *"Hope thou in God"* (verse 5, 11). How can we hope when overcome with heartache? The secret is in the *"yet"* of the song. In verse 5, *"...I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."* And in verse 11, *"...For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."* There is help in His countenance and health for your countenance! Seek His face. Find strength in His presence—He has His eye on you. This will give renewed courage to keep moving forward.

His countenance will help your countenance. You do not have to put on a fake smile today. Just get a glimpse of His face and you will have reason to rejoice. Living near to Christ will help you see everything in a different light, because now you are living in the presence of our great God.

Beware of what you say to others in your discouragement and guard who you listen to at such times. Talk to yourself and talk to God. And be sure every conversation is rooted in truth.

When you do this, God will speak to you as He did to the psalmist. God will give you grace to press through and strength to pass along to others.

One footnote to the Psalm. Remember that this is the first of the Exodus Psalms. What an appropriate reminder to pause and remember our Redeemer! Stop and consider what He *has* done, what He *is* doing, and what He *will* do. The Exodus from Egypt was not the end of the story; it was the beginning of God's leading and blessing on His people. God is not finished and neither are we.



PSALM 43: STILL STRUGGLING

There are seasons in life when you do everything you know to do, everything you have been told to do, and yet, you are still struggling — maybe you are there now.

Let me encourage you: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful…"* (I Corinthians 10:13).

In Psalm 43, we find a psalmist who is still struggling. The writer of Psalm 42 was having a hard time — thirsty for God, troubled by his own emotions — and eventually found some victory. Many scholars believe that Psalm 43 is a postscript to the previous psalm, a continuation of the same story. It is only five verses long but it carries on the same theme, the same tone and even some of the same words.

Hear the heart of the psalmist:

"Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my

exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

The question persists. In fact, four times in five verses the psalmist asks: why? Twice he asks God and twice he asks himself.

Perhaps you have been walking through a difficulty you expected to be over by now, but you are wondering, "Why am I going through this? What is wrong with me? When will this be done?" Consider that it may not be self imposed or caused by others. God may be working in your life through this circumstance for your good and the good of someone else. We are gaining wisdom from the crisis in the psalmist's life.

The greatest life grows out of death, and the greatest hope comes in the midst of despair.

As the penman pours out his soul to God, we find a pattern for our own prayers. When you are still struggling, talk to God. Here is how…

- **Make sure you are thoroughly right with God** (verse 1). The psalmist began by asking God to judge him. He could only do that if he knew he was right with the Lord. You do not want God to judge you unless your sin has been confessed and forsaken – when there is nothing between you and the Lord. If you want to pray, begin by being thoroughly right with the Lord.

- **Rehearse who God is** (verse 2). He is *"the God of my strength."* There is a tendency to get our eyes on ourselves and other people, but they should be focused solely on Him. At your weakest moment, meditate on His unfailing strength.

- **Give your questions to Him** (verse 2). If you are a parent, you know all too well that your children love to ask "why?" God's children do the same. It is alright to ask, as long as you

are asking the One who always has the answers and who loves you unconditionally. Take your confusion and uncertainty to the Lord, and pour out your questions before Him.

- **Ask God to lead you** (verse 3). If you do this, you had better be prepared to follow Him. Do not pray unless you are willing to obey. The psalmist was ready to trust God with his next step.

- **Seek to enter His presence** (verse 4). Notice that he did not want God just to bring him out of his circumstances. Sometimes we are looking only for escape. God's goal is not to remove us from our trouble, but to usher us into His presence. Everything looks different from the throne room. When you are seated in heavenly places, with your affections set on things above, all of earth looks different (Colossians 3:1-4). Seek to commune with God. *"Draw nigh to God"* (James 4:8).

- **Continue into praise** (verse 4). We see a divine cycle here. Prayer should always lead to praise, which ultimately leads to more prayer. We rejoice in what God has done and is doing, and our faith grows to ask Him for more.

- **Get your eyes on God** (verse 5). As in the previous psalm, the human author ends by looking first at himself. In your own soul you have emotion, intellect, and will. Sometimes, our intellect grows cloudy and our reasoning is confused. Our emotions become overwhelmed. Then our will leads us to a place of stubbornness. It is then that we must take our eyes off our own soul and put them back on the Redeemer of our soul. Only He never changes.

Take Psalm 43 as your prayer template. Just talk to God. By the time you get to the end, you will be thinking less about you and more about Him. Then you will be able to say, "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

One of my favorite hymns is *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*. Struggles

are very often the story behind the greatest songs. I hope her story and her song will be as great a help to you in your struggle as they have been to me.

Born in 1864, Helen Lemmel moved to the United States at about the age of twelve. From a young age, her musical ability was noticed by all those around her.

In 1907, she moved to Germany for four years to undergo intensive music training. It was here that she would meet her husband. Together, they returned to the United States in 1911.

While in America, she served faithfully in the Lord's work. She dedicated herself to writing, arranging, and teaching songs and hymns of the faith.

A few years after her marriage, a tragic illness caused her to lose her vision. Her husband, refusing to attend to a blind wife, left her. This time of hurt and loss weighed heavily upon Helen.

Then, in 1918, Lemmel was introduced to a pamphlet written by Algerian missionary Lilias Trotter. Trotter was a well-known artist who gave up a lucrative career to serve the Lord on the mission field.
Her words stirred the heart of Lemmel. She writes, "Suddenly, as if commanded to stop and listen, I stood still, and, singing in my soul and spirit was the chorus, with not one conscious moment of putting word to word to make rhyme, or note to note to make melody... These verses were written...the same week..."

The words that so captivated Helen were these:
"How do we bring things to a focus in the world of optics? Not by looking at the things to be dropped, but by looking at the one point that is to be brought out. Turn full your soul's vision to Jesus, and look...look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him, and the Divine "attrait" by which God's saints are made...will lay hold of you. For "He is worthy" to have all there is to be had in the heart that He has died to win."

> Helen kept her eyes on the Lord Jesus and continued to serve Him faithfully. She led a women's choral group for many of the Billy Sunday outreach efforts, taught music at the Moody Bible Institute, and penned over 400 hymns! Her life is a stirring challenge to us all. Although blind, her spiritual sight has challenged those who can see to keep their eyes fixed on Christ.

My friend, turn your eyes upon our dear Savior today, and the things of earth will grow "strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

> O soul, are you weary and troubled?
> No light in the darkness you see?
> There's light for a look at the Savior,
> And life more abundant and free!
>
> Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
> Look full in His wonderful face,
> And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
> In the light of His glory and grace.
>
> Thro' death into life everlasting,
> He passed, and we follow Him there;
> O'er us sin no more hath dominion—
> For more than conqu'rors we are!
>
> His Word shall not fail you—He promised;
> Believe Him, and all will be well:
> Then go to a world that is dying,
> His perfect salvation to tell!

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PSALM 44: THE GOOD OLD DAYS

All my life, I have heard people talk about "the good old days." I do not know exactly what that means or if the old days were as good as they are remembered. Nostalgia is not always reality, but there is something wonderful about looking back on fond memories and special moments.

Psalm 44 begins this way: "*We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*" In every generation, older people tend to reminisce about good days gone by. Israel had a wonderful heritage and amazing history. But it is important to note that these fathers were not just talking about past events, they were talking about the eternal God. **He is not just history; He is here.**

We do not know who penned the words of Psalm 44, but it references the divine deliverance recorded in II Kings 19:7. King Hezekiah was gripped by fear as the king of Assyria came against Jerusalem. A wicked Assyrian general named Rabshakeh mockingly declared that Hezekiah would be killed and his nation brought into bondage.

But at that time of despair, the Lord sent a preacher named Isaiah. The Bible says in II Kings 19:6-7:

"And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

If you read the remainder of the chapter, you will see that it happened exactly that way. Our God is always greater than our enemy. He who is with you is greater than whoever might be against you (Romans 8:31; 1 John 4:4). That is the truth the psalmist emphasized in Psalm 44.

VERSES 2-6

"How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me."

If you want one verse to meditate on, take hold of verse 6. It is not our strength, resources, or ingenuity. Power and victory is from God. Regardless of what battle you are facing or what emotions you are feeling, God has always been faithful and will be faithful today!

The God of the good old days is still God. He is on the throne. His ears are open to your prayer and His eyes are on you. He holds you in the palm of His hand. He has every hair on your head numbered. He knows you by name. God still has everything under control.

Consider two responses by the psalmist in Psalm 44.

1. He remembers God's protection in the past.

Memory is a gift from God, but we so frequently forget God's goodness. It is good for us to exercise our spiritual memory. Sit down and read through an old journal, or meditate on a season of life when you were having a hard time and the Lord came through. Talk with your family about answers to prayer from days gone by. Read a biography of one who lived a life of faith and notice how God worked in their life.

This second book of the Psalms, like the second book of the Bible, is a memory aid, remembering our Redeemer. Go back and think about the One who saved you and answered your prayers. Consider early victories the Lord gave. Doing so will put present circumstances in perspective and increase your faith for the days ahead.

2. He requests God's power for the present.

The remainder of the psalm consists of the writer pouring out his complaints before the Lord.

Psalm 44:11 | *"Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen."*

The often used comparison of God's people to sheep is also a reminder that he believed God to be the Shepherd. He understood that the Lord knew exactly what needed to be done and would do it. Later in the psalm he references the weakness of the sheep again.

VERSES 21-26

"Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest

our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake."

He said, "Lord, you saved us in the past. Save us now."

God's salvation is always a present-tense salvation. When you come to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, He saves you once and for all from the penalty of sin. But He is saving us day by day from the power of sin. This is the ongoing mercy of the Lord in our lives.

The closing words of the psalm are: "for thy mercies' sake." Every good thing that comes into our lives and every evil that is withheld from us is for His mercies' sake! We do not deserve any blessing; we deserve every judgment.

Forty-one times in God's Word we read, "*His mercy endureth for ever.*" Lamentations 3:22-23 that *"the LORD's mercies … are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."* His mercy endures forever, but it never gets old! Every day we live in His fresh mercies.

Rehearse God's goodness in the past, and rest in His power for today. We need a present-tense faith in a present-tense God if we want to see present-tense victories. Talking about the good old days is a fine starting point, but we must trust our good God every day.

He has never forsaken us, and He never will.

PSALM 45: WEDDING DAY

Tammy and I were married on Friday the 13th. It was not an unlucky day for me! In fact, next to my salvation it was the greatest day of my life. The wedding day is a day of joyful celebration and, for a Christian couple, a day of holy consecration before God.

But there is a wedding day to come that will outshine them all. It is the day when the King of kings and His bride come together in eternal union. I am referring to the Lord Jesus Christ (the bridegroom) and His church (the bride). The New Testament develops this picture of our union and communion with Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32), but it is woven into the fabric of Psalm 45.

This wedding psalm bears the title: "A Song of loves." This is not just any kind of love; this is divine love, divine marriage, a divine union. It is a beautiful love song similar to the Song of Solomon that details the intimacy between the king and the king's bride.

Psalm 45:1 | *"My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer."*

We receive wedding announcements and invitations, and they are thrilling and exciting. But the psalmist has a wedding announcement that he is ready to share so those who read about

it can rejoice with him. The rest of the psalm is divided into two parts. First we must see the King, and then we can see our relationship to Him.

MEET THE BRIDEGROOM

Psalm 45:2 | *"Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the fairest of ten thousand (Song of Solomon 5:10) and "the *"altogether lovely"* one" (Song of Solomon 5:16). There is no beauty like the beauty of Jesus! The writer speaks of his grace and this was prophetic of the words of Christ. Our Lord Jesus came to us full of grace and truth (John 1:14). In fact, every word He spoke in preaching, teaching or private conversation was marked by graciousness (Luke 4:22).

VERSES 3-4

"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

Here is the character of the bridegroom. He who is gracious is also great. He is perfectly gentle, yet perfectly strong. What a description—Christ is mighty, full of glory and majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness—truly there is no groom like Him!

Psalm 45:5 | *"Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."* Here is His power on display. The King is greater than all of His enemies.

Psalm 45:6 | *"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."* Can you see Christ sitting upon His throne with the scepter in His hand? That is His rightful place. He is seated there now and will be there forever. The Heavenly Father has exalted Him to that place.

Psalm 45:7 | *"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."* Here is His beautiful nature. He hates wickedness and loves righteousness.

The followers of the King should be the same way. If you are a follower of Jesus, you should hate wickedness. The only way to do that is to love righteousness. If you love the Lord, you will love what He loves and hate what He hates.

I love how the psalmist shows the connection between moral uprightness and joy. Some people think holiness and happiness are mutually exclusive and you cannot have both, but I would believe the happiest people are the holiest. Real joy is always connected to a right relationship with God.

The most joyful person to ever live was Jesus. The "*man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53:3) has greater joy than anyone. The fact that Jesus loves righteousness and hates iniquity is repeated in Hebrews 1:9 about Him, and we are told that "*God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*" If you are going to be joyful, you must follow His holy steps.

Psalm 45:8 | "*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*"

There is that gladness again! When He comes again from Heaven the fragrance of God will be on Him. The aroma of Heaven is beautiful in every way.

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

Psalm 45:9-10 | "*Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*"

In the marriage relationship, the man is to leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife (Genesis 2:24). In our union with the Lord, those who would be part of Christ's bride must leave all others and come to Christ alone for forgiveness of sin and salvation. He comes to us, but now we must come to Him.

Psalm 45:11 | *"So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."*

The only beauty we have is what God gives us. He is the One who clothes us in wedding garments and prepares us to enter His presence. According to Ephesians 5, He is purifying His bride now. All worship, glory and honor go to Him.

In most modern weddings, there is less emphasis on the groom. He comes out of a side door in a rented tuxedo and steps quietly to the altar—all eyes are on the bride! That is true in our current culture, but one day when Jesus comes, all eyes will be on the Groom. He alone is perfect and worthy of worship.

Psalm 45:12 | *"And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour."*

Soon the entire world will acknowledge who Christ is and who His children are. The nations will rejoice that day in His presence. They will give Him glory and seek the true riches of His presence.

VERSES 13-17

"The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

This is a picture of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9) followed by the eternal union of Christ and His people. We will be brought into His palace. This is our forwarding address!

Our bodies and our houses are just temporary, earthly homes. As believers, Heaven is our eternal home. In the words of another king, man leaves this world to go *"to his long home"* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). We will be with the Lord forever, praising Him as the final verse of this psalm states.

How can we prepare for that wedding day?

> **Make sure you know the King. If you have never been saved, call on Him right now. He will then make you part of His bride. (If you want to know more, go to "The Gospel" section at the end of this book.)**

If you are a believer, begin to **rejoice and praise Him**. Get your eyes on His beauty and wonder. Prepare now for the day when you will be with Him forever. Then, begin to **tell others about Him**.

Psalm 45 is a reminder to us of the great Bridegroom we have, and the amazing future we have with Him. We must be ready. Any day we could see Jesus face to face.



PSALM 46: OUR VERY PRESENT GOD

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

And so begins a trilogy of psalms on the greatness of God. Psalm 46 is a powerful introduction to this emphasis because it reveals God, not as a distant deity, but as our very present God.

People most often quote verse 1, but the entire psalm elaborates on the truth that God is near. **God has always desired to be with man and to have man with Him—that is the story of the Bible.**

- In Eden, He came and talked with Adam in the cool of the day.
- In the wilderness, He journeyed with His people in the Tabernacle.
- When they settled in Jerusalem, He met with them in the Temple.
- When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, His name was Emmanuel—"God with us."
- Now, all who are born again have the Holy Spirit of God living within them.

God has always wanted to be close to His people and to have them consciously aware of His presence. Scripture teaches that God is all-present and always present. But He is not only *everywhere* present, He is *very* present!

There are three ways in which God is present in Psalm 46. Each of them is set apart by "Selah" – a reminder for us to stop and ponder what we just read.

1. He is very present in trouble.

That is stated plainly in verse 1, but the truth continues in verses 2-3. *"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah."*

No matter what changes in this world, God is with us. He uses the **mountains**, the most stationary thing you can imagine, to illustrate that even if they are shaken, He will still stand strong.

Water is another object lesson. Water symbolizes people and nations throughout God's Word. A great tide of humanity may rise against us, but He is for us regardless of who is against us.

Note the use of the words *"refuge"* and *"strength"* in verse 1. He provides **a place** to hide us and **the grace** we need to fight the enemy. He works internally and externally, helping us in every way. Whatever the trouble, you can rest in this truth: He is very present.

Selah.

2. He is very present in eternity.

Not only is God present in time, He will be present when we step into eternity. We see the end of the age represented in verses 4-7.

VERSES 4-7

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

Ancient Jerusalem was a rare capital city because it was not built on a river or major waterway. God provided all they needed from above. These verses picture New Jerusalem, God's city, with the river of life flowing from the throne. You can read how it is described in Revelation 21. Follow the river upstream and you will come right back to the Source of all life—our faithful God!

What makes Heaven? It is not the place; it is the presence of God. The final revelation of that place promises, *"...he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (Revelation 21:3). The thing that will make Heaven for us is being very present with God, just as He is very present with us now. He lives with us all of our days on earth and then we get to live with Him for all eternity. *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever"* (Psalm 23:6). Here and there He is very present.

Selah.

3. He is very present in this wicked world.

What about our present situation? It may look like everything is out of control in our world, but I can assure you that God is still in charge. In the midst of the noise, we must be quiet and recognize that He is very present.

VERSES 8-11

"Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

Deists believe that God set our world in motion and then left us to ourselves. However, the Word of God teaches us that He is present in Heaven and on earth. The phrase *"in the earth"* is used twice in verses 8 and 10.

The word *"refuge"* is also used several times. We have seen it in verses 1, 7, and 11. *"Refuge"* means "a high place, beyond reach." God is a refuge where the world and the Devil cannot overcome you and sin cannot pull you back into its grasp.

God is right where He has always been. If you will hide in Him, you can rest exactly where you are, because He has you there. This is not just a statement about His omnipresence.

- It is about His personal presence. He is **my** refuge and strength.

- It is about His powerful and all-sufficient presence. He is **greater** than this world, **greater** than death, **greater** than Hell, **greater** than the Devil. Our great God is greater than all! *"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

The word used for God in this psalm is *Yahweh*, the God of promise — the One who always keeps His Word and does exactly what He said He would do.

He is also referred to as *"the God of Jacob."* Why not use the new name Israel instead of that old name which reminds us of the trickster and deceiver? It is for us to remember that our God is the God of the weak ones. We may sometimes limp through

life, halting and hesitating under a measure of strain, but God is strong and able to hold us up.

You do not have to find a refuge; He journeys with you. Martin Luther penned the truth in his famous hymn, *"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."* You can hide in Him wherever you may be.

Another song writer expressed it this way:

> **Hiding in thee, hiding in thee;**
> **Thou blest Rock of ages, I am hiding in thee.**

Remember that Psalm 46 is not just Scripture; it is a song. Our God will not only see you through the trial, He will enable you to sing through your trouble. You can sing your way through this wicked world and into eternity.

I want to encourage you; wherever you are and whatever you may be dealing with, God is very present. He is not bound by geography, time, or circumstances. God is right where you are.

There is a *historical* context to Psalm 46. Many believe it was written just after the invasion of Sennacherib during the reign of Hezekiah, and the miraculous deliverance of God's people. Others attribute it to the time of Jehoshaphat. Whatever the exact battle, the victorious truth comes to us through the noise of war. God is very present. *"Be still, and know that I am God."*

There is a *prophetical* aspect to Psalm 46. Christ, the King, will return in power and will conquer every enemy. He has promised to carry us into eternity with certain victory. God is very present.

But Psalm 46 has a deeply *personal* meaning. His name is not "I was" or "I will be." His name is "I AM" because He is a very present God. God is a present tense Savior, and we can rest in Him.



PSALM 47: LET GOD CHOOSE FOR YOU

There are some things you cannot choose for yourself. You were not given the opportunity to select your parents, the era of history in which you were born, what your name would be, your gender, or your country of origin. All of that was in the hands of a sovereign God.

On the other hand, there are some things you must choose for yourself. For example, no one can choose Christ for you. The Bible says in Joshua 24:15, "*...Choose you this day whom ye will serve…*" There are many other areas in which you can exercise your free will. Life is full of choices.

There is a third category, however. These are some things you can choose for yourself, but you would be much wiser to let the Lord choose for you. The late missionary Jim Elliot said: "God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him." The all-wise God never makes a bad choice!

Psalm 47, the second in the trio of psalms about God's greatness, is a jubilant song. Many people believe it was written when the Ark of the Covenant was taken back to the Temple after being taken away. There was quite a great celebration at its return, and that note of joy is heard in the tone of this beautiful psalm.

There are nine verses in all, but one verse in particular has captured my attention. Look at verse 4.

Psalm 47:4 | *"He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah."*

The psalmist says that God has chosen some things that we may not understand, but His choices are always right, always good. He chooses things for each of us which we would not have chosen for ourselves. Yet, as we mature, we come to realize that He was right all along.

It is curious that as we get older and have the liberty to make more of our own choices, wise believers lean more upon the Lord. Mature Christians determine not to make decisions based on their own understanding; instead, they choose to let God choose.

The Lord always makes the right choice…

1. His perspective is perfect.

Psalm 47:1-2 | *"O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth."*

The Lord sees every detail from a different perspective. He is the King. He has power you do not have. He sits on His throne above the earth and has an eternal point of view.

You might make a different choice today if you could see how everything will end. Well, God sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-10). This revelation is reiterated at the end of the psalm, in verses 8-9:

Psalm 47:8-9 | *"God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted."*

You can trust Him because He sees it all perfectly. God is not bound by time and circumstances like we are. He sees the past, the present, and the future simultaneously, and He sees you. Let God choose for you.

2. His love is everlasting.

Did you hear the words in verse 4 regarding Jacob "*whom he loved"?*

There was never a day when God started loving you, and there will never be a day when He stops loving you because His love is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3). Meditate on that incredible thought for a moment. He could never love you any more or any less. If God loves you perfectly, you can trust Him.

You can trust a father who wants the best for his children, and your Heavenly Father wants the best for you. Not only that, but your Father is the King.

He declared in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."*

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."*

The Bible says in Jeremiah 33:3, *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

Ephesians 3:20 reminds us: "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."*

Do you see a pattern? The Lord has promised that He loves us and wants what is best for our lives. Not only does His love seek our

best, His power can accomplish it. Let God choose for you.

3. His choice is always best.

Notice the reference to *"excellency"* in verse 4. He excels above all. No one could choose better for us than what God chooses for us.

Interestingly, the phrase *"excellency of Jacob"* is used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to pride and what the people thought they could do on their own (Amos 6:8, 8:7). It is as if the Lord used a play on words here to say, "Stop thinking that you know best. Let me decide. Then you can rejoice and boast in Me because My choice will be the best."

The use of Jacob's name here is also an interesting reminder. Jacob tried to choose for himself throughout his life, scheming for the birthright and stealing the blessing, but only God could make him into Israel. There was nothing he could do on his own. He had to learn that lesson, and so do we.

God does not just want you at your best; He wants you in His best. As I look back on my own life and the choices I could have made regarding where I went to school or who I married, I can testify that God chose perfectly for me. There was a path of life and ministry I could have tried to forge on my own, but God always chose better.

Esther abandoned herself to the will of God and simply followed His plan. She said in Esther 4:16, *"If I perish, I perish."* This was not fatalism; it was faith. She left the choice up to God.

The three Hebrew children were confident that the Lord would deliver them from the fiery furnace. Yet, they made it clear that they would trust Him even if He did not (Daniel 3:16-18). They left the choice up to God.

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:20, *"...Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death."* He left the choice up to God.

Our greatest example, the Lord Jesus Christ, prayed to the Father in Gethsemane, *"Thy will be done."* He left the choice up to God.

Each of these is a picture of complete surrender to the Lord. Place yourself in His hands and believe that letting Him choose will always result in God's best. There is a wonderful liberty found when we simply agree with His choice.

The great evangelist D.L. Moody once wrote,

> One of the sweetest lessons we can learn in the school of Christ is the surrender of our wills to God — letting Him plan for us and rule our lives. I cannot look a day into the future; I do not even know what will happen before night. So that I cannot choose for myself as well as God can choose for me. It is much better to surrender my will to God's will.

As surely as God chose the inheritance of Israel perfectly — their land, their future, their king, always the right choice — God will choose perfectly for you if you let Him. The only blots in Israel's history came when they made the decisions for themselves. The only blessings came when they let God choose.

The challenge today is simple. At whatever crossroads you find yourself, let God choose for you.



PSALM 48: ALL HAIL, KING JESUS!

Psalm 48:1 | *"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness."*

This is the opening verse of Psalm 48 and it begins the third installment in this trilogy of Psalms. It is wonderful to see how they are connected, all espousing the greatness of our God.

J. Vernon McGee said that to consider these psalms apart from each other is like the little boy who was asked to explain what a lie is from the Bible. So he put together two unrelated Bible verses to say, "A lie is an abomination to the Lord but a very present help in times of trouble." That child connected two verses in a way that they should not be connected! We must never connect what God divides and we must never divide what God connects.

Psalms 46-48 together make up the song of the Millennium. Their theme is one: The King is coming! He will set up His throne on this earth to reign for a thousand years, and we will rule with Him. At the center of God's government over the earth will stand the holy city, New Jerusalem. While many Old Testament prophets give insight into the nature of the millennium, you should take the time to read Revelation 20 and reflect on the final promise of the "thousand years" reign of Christ.

Psalm 45 showed us the **establishment of His kingdom** on the earth. It is followed by these three psalms of praise and **worship for the King**. That is the essence of these psalms—God's people giving Him glory in the millennial kingdom. Psalms 46-48 must not only be connected to one another but we must discover their inspired connection to the Messiah. Christ is the coming King.

We do not know exactly when Psalm 48 was written. Some people believe that it was given upon completion of the second Temple. This is reasonable because there the writer provides a description of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of the Lord. In the millennial kingdom, there will be worship like you have never seen before, because we will all have direct access to the King. I am looking forward to it!

VERSES 2-8

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah."

Some day, all of the kings of the earth will have to acknowledge the King of kings and Lord of lords. Eventually, every throne will fall except for the throne of our God. Every kingdom will crumble except the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If this is true, what difference should it make in our lives? Some practical applications can be made regarding this psalm. Several applications are suggested for today, in light of what is coming in the future.

VERSES 9-14

"We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

There is no doubt that he was speaking about the literal city of Jerusalem and the Temple that was then standing. But this truth is not just for Israel; it is for us. We are brought beyond the place to the God of that place.

The one thing that made Jerusalem special was the presence of God. The only thing that made the Temple holy is God's presence. The psalm does not end at Jerusalem; it leads us to God. Through Psalm 48 we learn to know God in a deeper way.

1. We can think of Him.

Verse 9 says, *"We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God."* How often will you think about Him today? One of the marks of the wicked man is that "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psalm 10:4). To be ungodly is simply to live with no regard for God!

And this is not only the failure of disobedient minds; it is also the failure of distracted minds. Busy and hurried people can have their minds full of everything but the Lord. It is so easy to get our thoughts on other things, not necessarily bad things, but good things that become a substitute for God Himself. Make a conscious effort today to think about the goodness of God.

We are instructed in Philippians 4:8 to *"think on these things."* You choose what you think about. Concentrate your attention on the lovingkindness of God towards you — His grace, mercy,

and faithfulness. Think of the Lord. If you are a godly person, He should permeate your thoughts.

2. We can thank Him.

Thoughtfulness should lead to thankfulness. When we think about the goodness of God, it is only natural to stop and say, "Thank you, Lord." Praise fills every heart that meditates on the goodness of God. That is why verse 10 says, *"so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth."*

All people should be giving God thanks, praise, and glory. Stop for just a moment and thank Him for not letting you go to Hell and for every good gift that He gives you. Be thankful for the Holy Spirit who lives in you and guides you. *"Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments"* (Psalm 119:164).

3. We can talk about Him.

Verse 13 says that we can *"tell it to the generation following."* As you think of the Lord, you should talk about Him. Jesus said in Mathew 12:34, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."*

When you are thankful to God, you should tell others about your gratitude. Direct your praise to Him, then praise Him to other people. That is the most effective witness you can give. The happiest Christian testimony is when one joyful saint says to someone else, "Let me tell you how good God has been to me."

Your testimony should be more than a mere statement of the experience of your salvation. It should be a present-tense testimony about what God is doing in your life now. Verse 14 reminds us, *"For this God is our God for ever and ever."*

The psalm concludes, *"He will be our guide even unto death."* Let that be your prayer today. When I breathe my last breath here, may it be in the will of God. Jim Elliot said, "Walk as if the next

step will carry you across the threshold of heaven." When I take my last step on this planet, may it be a step in the will of God as I step into His presence forever.

Until then, these are the three things we can do. We can **think of Him**, we can **thank Him**, and we can **tell others about Him**. Do not wait until the millennial kingdom—begin today! You can worship God and talk about Him where you are. Let the King rule and reign in your heart. I believe in a literal kingdom that will be established, but I want to live under the rule of King Jesus today. All hail, King Jesus!



PSALM 49: THREE THINGS YOU CANNOT DO WITH MONEY

All of the Psalms point us in one direction – toward the Lord. It fascinates me how God uses the Psalms to contrast His greatness with the littleness of this world.

For example, the previous psalm we studied began with the words, *"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised."* We are given a glimpse of how big our God is. Then, in Psalm 49, we are shown how small this life is and how insignificant our material treasures are. It is a great contrast between the temporal and the eternal, the material and the spiritual.

Psalm 49:1-2 | *"Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: Both low and high, rich and poor, together."*

As a child I heard a preacher say, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross." Whether you are low or high in society's estimation, we are all equally sinners in need of a Savior. Whether you are rich or poor is irrelevant. The question is whether you have the eternal riches that come from knowing the Lord Jesus.

Adrian Rogers used to say: "If you want to know how rich you are, add up everything money cannot buy and death cannot take away." Those are true riches! Sadly, our world is filled with spiritual paupers. Though people are more materially wealthy

than they have ever been, there is such poverty of the soul that often goes unrecognized.

Psalm 49 goes on to describe the wealthy in light of eternity, and it teaches us three things you cannot do with your money.

1. You cannot trust it.

VERSES 3-7

"My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

This passage reminds us that those who put their confidence in their wealth are building on shifting sand. It is a foundation that will not last. Someday all of the money in the world will burn up. Even if it does last a while longer, you are not going to live on this earth forever.

I think most of us have lived long enough now to know that money comes and goes. Proverbs 23:5 says, "*Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*" As quickly as you receive something, it can be taken away. It may be some emergency, a poor business decision, a health crisis — there are many ways material assets can be depleted.

After explaining the difference between the life of contentment and the life of covetousness in 1 Timothy 6, Paul wrote in verse 17, "*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*" You can enjoy things and use money, but you must trust solely in the Lord. He alone is eternal.

2. You cannot trade it.

Psalm 49:7-9 | "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.*"

It is impossible to exchange material wealth for spiritual riches. You cannot purchase salvation or God's favor. Do you really think the Lord needs our money? Absolutely not. He owns *"the cattle upon a thousand hills"* (Psalm 50:10). The only reason we give our substance to Him is to honor and obey Him. God is the owner of it all; we are merely the stewards of what He has entrusted to us while on earth.

We work hard to make money and buy things, then trade them for nicer and better things. But you cannot trade your "stuff" for spiritual realities. The Bible says in James 1:17, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

The things that endure cannot be purchased; they are gifts. According to Romans 6:23, *"...The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Many men have chosen wealth over eternal riches. The Lord Jesus grieved over a young man who turned away from truth because of his love for his riches (Luke 18:22-27).

Even believers can be deceived into living for worldly priorities instead of what truly matters. Gaius was a New Testament man who had it right. John wrote to him and prayed that he would prosper materially *"even as thy soul prospereth"* (3 John 2). How wealthy would you be if the health of your bank account was the same as the health of your soul?

Beware of trading the eternal for the temporal. That is always a bad trade.

3. You cannot take it with you.

VERSES 10-20

"For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

When prominent people die, invariably someone asks, "How much did they leave?" The correct answer is always the same: "All of it."

According to one legend, Alexander the Great instructed his advisors to place his open hands outside his casket while parading it through the streets after his death. He wanted everyone to know that, although he conquered the known world, he took none of it with him when he left.

When my Grandpa Pauley died he had three pennies in his pocket. It was the sum total of his financial resources at the time, the total monetary "inheritance." But he left behind a good name and a godly heritage. My dad has those three cents taped into the old family Bible with the words of Luke 12:15, *"...a man's life consisteth*

not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

You will not take any material possessions into the next life. The only thing that matters is what you have sent on ahead—what you have wisely invested in eternity. **All true riches are in Jesus Christ.**

A Christian can have money and material prosperity, but it must never have them. To have these things without spiritual understanding is to live like an animal—pursuing, consuming, and dying.

Ask the Lord to give you the kind of spiritual discernment to know what matters and what does not. Allow God to show you what is eternal and what will pass away. Invest in eternity and build your life on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ.



PSALM 50: GETTING READY TO MEET THE JUDGE

Standing before a judge is sobering. (At least, that is what others have told me!) But to stand before the Judge over all the earth and eternity is infinitely more sobering.

Whether you are frightened or joyful when you stand before this Judge is determined by your relationship to Him. In Psalm 50, we are introduced to the true Judge.

Psalm 50:1 | *"The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."*

Every day belongs to the LORD, from beginning to end. Everything you have this day was given to you by God — life, health, strength, and breath. But Psalm 50 reminds us of the ultimate day, the day we stand before Almighty God.

Psalm 50:2 | *"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."*

I John 1:5 tells us that *"...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* We live in a dark world, but the Light is coming!

Psalm 50:3-4 | *"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people."*

This is a psalm of judgment, not just present judgment but also future judgment. It refers to the day when we will give an account of ourselves to God.

Consider the many powerful truths from these verses:

- *"Our God shall come"*: His appearance is definite.
- *"Shall not keep silence"*: His word is final. He has been silent in the minds of many for so long, but one day, He will speak. The Judge has much to say.
- *"A fire shall devour before him"*: His presence is inescapable. According to I Corinthians 3:13, "...The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Some things will be reduced to ash, with nothing to show. All that lasts will be whatever can "abide the fire" (Numbers 31:23).
- *"It shall be very tempestuous round about him"*: His fear is real. Those who do not fear God now will fear Him one day. On the day that men stand before God, there will be countless anxious hearts.

GOD WILL JUDGE HIS SAINTS.

The remainder of the psalm describes the people who will stand before Him, beginning with the saints in verses 5-15. You may think, "I am no saint." But that is a word God uses to refer to those who have a relationship with Him. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you are seen by God as one of the saints, even if you are not living that way.

2 Corinthians 5:10 | *"For we must all appear before the judgment*

seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

All of God's children will stand before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where they will give an account of what they have done in their bodies. We will receive rewards for our works on this earth as believers. Praise God, our sin has already been cared for. We will not stand before the Lord for our sins, but for our service.

If you are not yet one of these saints, trust Christ today! If you are a believer, live and labor like it. Sometimes, we live so flippantly and carelessly. We must be reminded that this world is not all there is—it is temporal. Eternity awaits us.

The Bible says in Romans 14:12, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* Psalm 50 describes the things the Lord will judge. He knows the reality of each person's heart and the sincerity of our worship. He will judge what was given to Him and even why it was given.

GOD WILL JUDGE ALL SINNERS.

In verses 16-22, we read about His judgment of the wicked. Not only will believers give an account to the Lord for their service, but the wicked will stand before God to answer for their sins.

Those who have rejected the Lord Jesus as Savior and decided to deal with their own sin will one day have to face a holy and righteous God. You can push that to the back of your mind if you wish, ignore it, or say it is not true, but let me remind you: *"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence."*

Psalm 50:22 | *"Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."*

We are living in a world that has forgotten God, crowding Him out with a thousand other things. Soon all of that will come to a screeching halt, and men will bow before a holy God.

During the pandemic of 2020, I was reminded how quickly everything can cease. It was interesting to witness that happen all over the world. But that is nothing compared to how everything will stop when we stand before God.

We must all be ready for His appearing. The psalm ends on a jubilant note in verse 23: "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.*"

If you know the Judge and trust in Him, live for Him, and obey Him, you have nothing to fear. God's people are to be hopeful and not fearful. We look forward to our God coming and what He has to say! If you will get ready to meet the Lord you will be happy to see Him when he comes. Like Paul, you will be one of those rewarded for loving the appearing of Christ (2 Timothy 4:8).

In the final verse he suggests two things we should do if we want to get ready to meet the Judge.

Offer praise. Give Him praise today. Someday, in His presence, that is what we will do perfectly. But you do not have to wait until then. If you live in an attitude of praise now, it will help you keep an eternal perspective.

Order your conversation. Literally, put things in their proper place—straighten up! Order your life, your decisions, and your priorities in light of eternity. As you do so, He will meet your needs now, and you will also have much to look forward to on the day you stand before Him.

What a day it will be when we kneel at the nail-pierced feet of Jesus around the throne of the eternal God! We know God will speak…but what will He say? What would you like Him to say?

Let us start today to live in such a way that we will be ready to meet the Judge.



PSALM 51: IT GETS REAL

The historical setting of every psalm is not known, but we certainly know the context for Psalm 51. In fact, the inscription tells us that it is *"A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba."*

We know exactly where it fits in David's life – after he had committed adultery, then lied and murdered to cover it up (II Samuel 11). The preacher came and said, *"Thou art the man"* (II Samuel 12:7). Now, David pours out his confession to the Lord.

This is David's setting, but where does it fit in your life? Let us get down to where we live. Is there anything between you and God today? Is the Holy Spirit pointing at you as Nathan did to David? If there is, then Psalm 51 is a beautiful psalm of confession and cleansing.

This psalm is not divided into parts as much as it has repeated refrains. The words are not some formulaic outline David rehearsed to God. **The Lord is not interested in polished prayers and how well we can recite our religious cliches.** Psalm 51 is the groan of a broken man, the outpouring of a heart longing to be right with God again.

There are 19 verses and whole chapters could be written on each

one of them. God's Word is rich and inexhaustible because it is full of infinite truth. Read this prayer slowly, and begin to make it your own.

Psalm 51:1-2 | *"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."*

The word *"throughly"* means "again and again." This is not something we just do one time.

VERSES 3-6

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

1. David got personal with God.

Nothing is real until it is personal. Notice how many times *"me"* and *"my"* are mentioned in these verses. He was not offering a general prayer or talking about the sins of others. This was specifically about his own sins.

David finally acknowledged that his sin was against one person only: God. Did he sin against Bathsheba, their baby, Uriah, and even his own family? He certainly did. He also sinned against the entire nation of Israel.

Yet, in verse 4 he said, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."* You cannot be right with God until you realize that you are wrong with Him. You cannot come clean with God until you realize how defiled you are in His holy presence.

You have transgressed God's law and fallen short of His holiness. You have been crooked in your own heart instead of straight as you ought to be.

David began by recognizing who and what he was before God. He understood that God wants truth. When you give Him the truth, He gives you wisdom. Confession is agreeing with God about your sin. You must see your sin as He sees your sin and say about your sin what God says about your sin.

2. David made his plea to God.

VERSES 7-12

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

David's prayer was ultimately about one specific thing, even though he made several requests. He wanted to be clean. There are numerous references in verses 7-12 to cleanliness.

Do you realize how dirty we really are? We defile our consciences and fill our minds with filth. Our hearts get dirty. The only thing that can cleanse us is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Biblical confession deals with the heart, not merely the consequences of sin.

Sometimes we just want things to be better. We want to escape the situation our sin has caused. But David did not begin with the request to regain his joy. He asked first to be right; then he knew the joy would return. Do not just deal with the effect. Deal with the cause. Confess the root, not just the fruit.

Notice the obvious shift in verses 13-19:

VERSES 13-19

"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

This passage shows what is produced when a person gets right with God.

We are given a new testimony. Testimony is often the best teacher, and we are able to help others out of the experience of grace in our own lives.

We gain a new song. Sin closes you up and steals your joy away. When you get right with the Lord, He opens you up.

We develop a new prayer. This psalm ends with David praying not for himself, but for others. When you are right with God, you will start to pray for others and desire them to be right with Him.

Get on your knees with Psalm 51. Do not simply read it—pray it. Forget where it fits in *David's life* and concentrate on where it fits in *your life*. May the Lord help every one of us to come clean with God and allow Him to make us clean.

If you want to be right with God you have to begin by being real with Him.



PSALM 52: TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

There are two kinds of people in this world — those who think they are strong, and those who realize they are weak but have found their strength in God. Which one of those describes the life you are living today?

We find both of these individuals in Psalm 52. There is a marked distinction on display between Doeg, the proud Edomite, and David, God's humble servant.

Doeg was a fleshly man who lived by force, scheming and conniving. He thought he was great, but in the end, the Lord always brings those who are high-minded down (Proverbs 16:18-20). He has a way of humbling us if we will not humble ourselves!

David, the man after God's own heart, seemed at times so very weak and near defeat. Yet, he emerges victorious because he learned that he was nothing and God is everything.

Carefully read the nine verses of Psalm 52:

"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. The tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints."

This was written at a very unique season in David's life as he was running from King Saul. Doeg the Edomite found out where he was hiding. This wicked man betrayed David and those who were kind to David. As a result, a large number of innocent people were put to death (1 Samuel 21-22).

It was at this time when David cried out to God, saying in essence, "Lord, this man thinks he is strong. But I know that you are the strong one."

One of the names of God is *El Elyon*, which means "the strongest strong one" or "the Most High God." You might see someone you think is strong physically, financially, politically, or in some other way. But there is always Someone stronger than the strongest person you know—God is the Almighty One.

This is why Psalm 52 begins not by contrasting Doeg with David but by contrasting Doeg with God. Read verse 1 again. "*Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.*"

Notice the skeptical, almost sarcastic reference to Doeg's perceived strength. That is followed immediately by an acknowledgment of God's goodness.

Doeg was full of himself, which is actually not strength at all but rather weakness. God alone is good. Doeg's strength was

temporary, but God's goodness endures forever.

A life of strength is not about mustering up something from within yourself. Rather, it comes from finding your strength in God alone. The sooner we realize this truth the better off we will be in every aspect of life.

In verses 2-5, David described this man who thought he was mighty and strong. That passage ends with an account of how God would ultimately root him out. What a stark contrast with David's description of himself in verse 8, *"like a green olive tree in the house of God."*

It matters what you are rooted in. If you are rooted in your own intelligence or business acumen, your ideas or resources, those roots do not go very deep. The average storm can blow through town and pull up that tree by its roots. But if you are rooted in the presence and resources of God, you are anchored in something much stronger than you!

I have marked in my Bible two phrases from this chapter: *"O mighty man"* in verse 1 and *"the man that made not God his strength"* in verse 7. His might was in the eyes of men, but from God's perspective, he was nothing. He strengthened himself in his riches and wickedness, but his true need was the strength that God alone gives.

While this psalm has a tragic story behind it, it provides tremendously helpful lessons. In verses 8-9, David gave us three things we all can do to find our strength in God.

TRUST.

If you need strength, that divine resource is only accessed by faith. I must confess that there are many times when my faith is weak, but I am glad to report to you that the object of my faith is not weak. When your faith is in God, He will never fail!

PRAISE.

David understood the power of praise. You may not feel like praising God in your circumstances or when you see your Doeg, but choose at that moment to rehearse the goodness of God. Remember His faithfulness, and you will discover Him strengthening you in your inner man.

WAIT.

Why did David say he would wait on God? Verse 9: *"I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints."* This psalm begins and ends with the goodness of God! His name is good because His very nature is good, and we can wait on One who is always, only good.

There was a period in David's life between anointings. Yes, Samuel has anointed him as the next King of Israel, but that is not yet fully realized or publicly recognized. David had to wait for God to deal with Doeg, to remove Saul, and to promote him. Perhaps you are living between the promise and the fulfillment. Wait on God. In the waiting, God is always working.

You may feel weak today, and it may appear that others who are not doing right are strong. But there is only One who is truly strong, and that is our God. If you will trust Him, praise Him, and wait on Him, you will find in Him the strength you need for every day.

I do not want to be a man like Doeg. I want to be like David, a man who realized his weakness and experienced God's strength. If you will root yourself in that strength, the Lord will conquer every weakness in your life and overcome every strong enemy who comes against you.

The world is full of people like Doeg, and desperately needs more like David. Which kind of person will you be?



PSALM 53: TRUTH NEVER CHANGES

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Do those words sound familiar to you? That is exactly the way a previous psalm, Psalm 14, began. That psalm goes on to describe the foolish way of thinking and living that accompanies such a willful ignorance of God and rebellious spirit.

Psalm 53, also a psalm of David, begins the very same way. Here is a truth God repeated, David rehearsed, and we must remember. It is not stated twice because God forgot that He said it the first time; it is there because He does not want us to forget that He said it!

In the title of Psalm 53, we find the word "Maschil" which means "instruction." This is a psalm intended to teach us something. This passage is not given for us to use as a microscope on foolish people around us, but as a mirror to reveal our own need.

Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are nearly identical, moving like parallel tracks toward the truth God wants to teach us. Read them side by side and compare scripture with scripture. Psalm 53 in particular describes the world in which we live, filled with sinners who give no thought to God. After the opening declaration about the folly of denying God, David went on to describe the foolish person in greater detail.

Psalm 53:1 | "*Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.*"

How many good people are there? Not one. Paul will repeat this spiritual reality in Romans 3:10-12. No one is good apart from God.

Psalm 53:2 | "*God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.*"

He looked for just one and could not find him. Remember that God looks beneath the surface to the heart.

Psalm 53:3 | "*Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*"

God describes the foolish plight of the sinner by using these all-encompassing words and phrases such as *"none," "all," "every one," "altogether,"* and *"no, not one."*

As we study both of these psalms, our minds tend to drift towards people who are openly atheistic. However, Psalm 53 describes people who live as if there is no God. **You can be a practicing atheist without being a professing one.**

You may give mental or even verbal assent to the fact that there is a God, but if you are living your life without thinking of Him and making decisions without considering Him, you are living a foolish life. Closing your eyes, blocking your ears, and putting the Lord to the back of your mind does not make Him go away.

VERSES 4-5

"Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them."

Do you see the *digression* of those who reject the truth of God and the *progression* of how God deals with them?

They refused to think about God.

First of all, they would not think of God. They refused to do so. They had *"no knowledge."* We live in a world of people who think they are smart, but just because we have so much knowledge at our fingertips does not mean we have divine knowledge in our souls. Information and wisdom are not the same.

As Proverbs 9:10 says, *"...The knowledge of the holy is understanding."* You can be an educated fool. You can have a brilliant mind but a depraved heart if you do not know God. In Jeremiah 9:24 God said, *"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."* The knowledge of God is the greatest knowledge of all.

They were afraid.

We see in verse 5 how these people who were so sure of themselves were suddenly in great fear. Where did that fear come from? They realized that judgment was coming. They were full of pride, but God would bring them to shame. As surely as faith leads to courage, unbelief brings fear in the end.

This is what ultimately comes to a sinful world. People will come to the end of themselves, and they will have to acknowledge not only that there is a God, but that He was right and they were not.

God provided salvation.

Thankfully, Psalm 53 does not end in despair. God reveals who sinners are but He does not leave them there. There is a divine movement from sin to salvation.

Psalm 53:6 | *"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."*

That is quite a shift in theme and tone. Now the concentration is not on men, but on God.

Sin always leads to destruction, bitterness, sorrow, and emptiness. Salvation leads to joy, fullness, abundance, and peace. Which do you want?

Lest you think this is merely an Old Testament principle meant solely for Israel, let me challenge you to do something. Read Psalm 53, and then read the first three chapters of Romans.

The book of Romans, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Apostle Paul, uses several direct quotes from Psalm 53. We noticed this in the words of Psalm 53:3, *"there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

It seems to me that if God said it in Psalm 14, then again in Psalm 53 and Romans 3, this is a truth for every nation and every generation. We are all sinners, and without God we live foolish lives that end in destruction.

But when His salvation becomes a living reality in your life, when the Lord releases you from the captivity of your ignorance and foolishness, there is great freedom, joy, and gladness.

If you are not certain that your sins are forgiven, that Christ is your Savior, and that Heaven is your destination, call on Him now and be saved. Just agree with God that He is right and you are wrong. Agree with what He said about you and about His Son, the righteous One who died for your sins and rose from the dead. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

If you take Jesus, He will take you. If you come to Him in faith, He will come to you in mercy (Ephesians 2:8-9). The end of your

story does not have to be sin; it can be salvation.

If you are saved, share this truth with others today. There is nothing good about any of us, but we have a good Savior who is ready to forgive. Truth never changes.

**(For more on the matter of salvation, flip to "The Gospel" section at the back of this book).*



PSALM 54: HOW TO KEEP FROM GETTING BITTER

"Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah. Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

Have you ever trusted someone only to be sorely disappointed? If you live long enough, you will experience this disappointment.

Before you are tempted to think you are the only person going through hurt, read Psalm 54. It is one of the psalms David wrote in a season in which he was betrayed. He was a loyal man, yet it seems that he was betrayed repeatedly by friend and foe. The setting for his psalm is described in 1 Samuel 23 as he hid in a cave from Saul. The very group of people who were there with him told Saul where he was hiding. Can you imagine such betrayal?

The great danger when something like this happens is bitterness can so easily creep into our hearts. If David had permitted a root of bitterness to grow in his soul, we would not have these sweet

psalms of Israel. The beautiful words would not have flowed from his pen if his spirit had become sour. How did he keep that from happening?

If you want to guard your heart, do what David did:

HE RETURNED TO PRAYER.

Such a simple and yet profound truth! The entire psalm is a prayer, but he began by crying out to the Lord to save him. Instead of lashing out at people and seeking vengeance – which we are all prone to do – David used his tongue to talk to God, the only One who could do something about it.

Instead of grumbling, griping, or seeking pity, he took it to the Lord. He searched his own heart to make sure he was right with God. Then, David committed himself to God.

Prayer is the one thing we are told to do without ceasing, and the first thing we cease to do! If you are dealing with betrayal or disappointment, talk to Jesus. He can do something about it.

HE RETURNED TO GOD'S PROMISES.

Psalm 54:4-5 | *"Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth."*

In verses four and five, David went back and rehearsed what God had said He would do. When life is full of uncertainty, go back to what you know for certain. The whole world may be shaking around you, and everyone else may have turned on you, but **God has not changed.**

Meditate on the unchanging Word of God and think on the unchanging character of God.

Psalm 119:89 | *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."*

Matthew 5:18 | "*...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*"

> **God will always keep His promises. Do not dwell on the bad news and the circumstances you might be in. Do not let yourself be consumed by other people and let their actions dictate your reactions. Go back to the promises of God.**

Search the Scriptures and find a Bible promise to root your faith in today. Make it your own; lay hold of it by faith. When you go to God, claim that promise. Your faith will grow and your hope will well up inside. It will help you get your eyes back on the Lord.

The Bible says in II Corinthians 1:20, *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."*

In negative situations, we still have God's promises. Find one of those promises and make it your own. There are plenty to choose from…

Hebrews 13:5 | *"...For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"*

Philippians 1:6 | *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"*

Philippians 4:19 | *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"*

Romans 8:28 | *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"*

Read your Bible and find one of God's promises. Let the Holy Spirit make it alive in your soul, and claim it as your own.

HE RETURNED TO PRAISE.

Psalm 54:6-7 | *"I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."*

Verses six and seven challenge us to begin to praise God for what He has already done. Remember that God worked in your life in the past, and He will do the same today.

This is one of the reasons I write in a journal every day. When I am low, I will grab an old journal at random and start reading. My soul is refreshed as I rehearse in my mind what I am so prone to forget—**God has not failed me one time**. There has never been a situation in which He was not true to His Word. What a wonderful God we serve!

Charles Spurgeon quipped: "Our memory is perverse. By some strange perversity, we tend to remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember."

Recount often the goodness of God. Notice the emphasis in verse 6 on His name and the fact that it is good. Sometimes we focus on bad things done to us or troubling circumstances we are facing. We tend to be guided by our emotions, and allow our eyes to drift away from God. Thank the Lord for what He has done, and by faith for what He is doing and will do in the days ahead.

Do not wait until the prayer is answered to praise Him. **Praise as you pray**. Make your *"supplication **with** thanksgiving"* (Philippians 4:6).

If you want to keep a sweet spirit in the midst of difficult situations and avoid getting bitter amid betrayal, there is a simple solution: return to prayer, the promises of God, and praise. It will anchor you to Christ and keep you from drifting. It was good for David and it is good for us.

Keep your eyes on the God who never changes.



PSALM 55: DEALING WITH BETRAYAL

Psalm 55 picks up where the previous psalm left off. It has a similar theme regarding how to avoid bitterness in difficult situations.

We believe this psalm was written during the rebellion of Absalom and the betrayal of Ahithophel (David's dear friend and counselor). The king placed tremendous confidence in him, and in the end, Ahithophel turned on him. In 2 Samuel 15 and 16 David faced the double blow of betrayal from a family member

VERSES 1-3

"Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me."

These are the words of a hurting man. There are hurting people everywhere. Perhaps you are one of them. If so, you are not alone. The God who knows everything knows your hurts, and He hurts with you.

The Bible says in Hebrews 4:15, "*For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was*

in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He feels your pain.

David's deep pain turned to fear in verse 4: *"My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me."* Sometimes disappointment turns into outright anxiety, and fear grips you. That is always a mark of the Devil. According to II Timothy 1:7, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* If fear has gripped your heart today, understand that your enemy is the one instilling it.

Job 18:14 identifies Satan as the *"the king of terrors."* He works to strike fear into all human hearts, especially those who have been given to God. While there are many phobias today, the greatest fear in humanity is the fear of death.

This is where the good news of Christ changes everything. Notice what is written of our Lord Jesus in Hebrews 2:14-15: *"… that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* Satan is the king of terrors, but Christ is the King of peace. He is the King of all! He conquered fear when He conquered death, Hell, and the grave. There is no reason to fear the Devil because Christ is greater. If He conquered the last enemy and the greatest fear, do you not think He is able to help you with what is facing you right now?

David expressed what so many of us have felt in verses 6-8. *"And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."*

We have all thought, "If I could just get away." A change of geography or circumstances seems like the answer. Modern society suggests a myriad of so-called escapes from reality. But lasting victory is not found in getting out of the situation; it is

found by realizing Christ is with you in whatever you are going through.

Go deeper into the psalm!

Psalm 55:18 | *"He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me."*

It was not getting out of the battle that made everything right. It was God's deliverance in the middle of the battle. Remember that Jesus stood up in the midst of the storm and said, *"Peace, be still."* Not after. In the midst.

Peace is not found in the absence of trouble but in the presence of God. The answer is not in getting rid of whoever caused the turmoil in your life but in allowing the Lord to step into your life.

You might think, "If I could just straighten out this one person or thing." If you did that, something else would come along. You just need to discover the God who is able, loving, and kind — no matter what or who you are dealing with.

I want to challenge you to read all 23 verses of Psalm 55. But there is one basic application throughout, and it is encapsulated in verse 17. *"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."*

David brought everything to God in prayer and made every part of the day a time to seek the Lord. What would happen to us if, instead of fussing or dwelling on the troubles we face, we set aside time to pray?

The bad circumstances of life are, in the words of Matthew Henry, "not there to bind, but to remind." Their purpose is not to restrict your life or suffocate you, but to remind you of your need for God. You cannot make it without Him. **No man can fix your problems or change your circumstances, but God is able.**

Psalm 55:22 | *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."*

That sounds like the familiar words of I Peter 5:7 – *"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."*

Is your burden too heavy today? Is your grief too much to bear? Is the sadness consuming you? Turn it all over to Jesus. Casting it onto your family or your pastor is not going to make you feel better, and carrying it by yourself is not possible. But God is strong enough to take it.

Psalm 55:23 | *"But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."*

At some point, you have to give it to the Lord and let Him take care of it. Moses and the children of Israel had to learn the secret weapon of His presence over every enemy: *"...Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD…The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"* (Exodus 14:13-14). Paul did this when he was attacked. In his closing letter he wrote, *"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works"* (II Timothy 4:14). David had to do it. We all must.

Give your Absalom, Ahithophel, or Alexander to God and let Him take care of them. While you are at it, commit yourself to Him afresh and anew. Let God have all of you, and you will find that the Lord is able not only to sustain you but to bring you through in great victory.



PSALM 56: DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Every day has both its blessings and its burdens. God promised in Deuteronomy 33:25, *"...As thy days, so shall thy strength be."* And Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, *"...Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."*

As you face daily trials and struggles, God intends to give fresh strength and wisdom for that day. That is why Christ taught us to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread"* (Matthew 6:11). We have to live one day at a time and God provides what we need day by day.

Psalm 56 is a psalm about daily Christian living. As you travel through the Psalms you will discover many repeated refrains. Do not miss the divine emphasis. Every day we need certain reminders and we must constantly return to the same truths and disciplines.

In the title of Psalm 56, we find the word "Michtam," which means "instruction." This is a psalm (as with Psalms 57-60) that teaches us something. Michtam implies "*a composition so precious as to be worthy to be engraven on a durable tablet for preservation; or, as others render, 'a psalm precious as stamped gold'*" (Easton's Bible Dictionary). Psalm 56 was written during a time when David was taken by the Philistines at Gath. You can read the full account in I Samuel 21. It was an intensely difficult season in David's life; it is

important to know the context in which he penned these words:

Psalm 56:1-2 | *"Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High."*

Verse 3 is one of the most famous passages in the entire Bible: *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."*

What a beautiful verse. Yet, we find it in the context of daily struggles and stress. Every day, David had to watch his back and look over his shoulder for those who sought to destroy him. His enemies wanted to devour him. This sounds like our enemy. Immediately after Peter wrote, "*Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you,*" he wrote, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:7-8). God's care and Satan's snare are both a reality every day.

I have marked in Psalm 56 the word *"daily"* which appears in verses 1 and 2. The thought continues in verses 5-7:

"Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul. Shall they escape by iniquity? In thine anger cast down the people, O God."

He was fighting these battles daily. Every day he got up thinking that might be the day it got better, but the struggle just continued.

That is life. In a sin-cursed world filled with sinners, there will be battles regularly. But that does not mean we must live depressed, discouraged, or defeated. This psalm gives a prescription for your daily fight and daily fears.

First of all, you need **daily faith**. Your faith must be active, not passive. There is a command to rest in the Lord, but you must choose every day to do that. Faith must be exercised. You must

decide each day whether you will believe God. *"I will **trust** in thee"* (verse 3). Trust Him in the moment of the battle.

You also need a **daily word**. Verse 10: *"In God will I praise **his word:** in the LORD will I praise **his word.**"* Faith is always connected to the Word of God, so if you are going to have daily faith, there must be something upon which to build it. Romans 10:17 says, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by **the word** of God."*

Every day you need a word from the Lord, and you get that from the Scriptures. Remember what David wrote in verse 4: *"...I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."* What brought about that kind of confidence in the face of fear? David fixed his eyes on Someone greater than his enemy. There was something in his soul greater than his fear – his faith. The Word of God alone brings faith.

This is not the time to lay your Bible aside. Dust it off, read it, and meditate upon it. God will speak to you.

Psalm 56:8 | "*Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*"

As he meditated on Scripture, he was reminded of certain things about God. The Bible reminds us of God — that He knows our fears and records our prayers.

Psalm 56:9 | "*When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.*"

This sounds like the psalmist's faith is growing bolder. A clear view of God will give you a divine perspective on everything else. Romans 8:31: *"...If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

Psalm 56:10-11 | "*In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.*"

Notice the continued emphasis on the Word of God. We must

spend time in the Word each day!

Then there is a natural progression to **daily praise.** Verses 12-13: *"Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render **praises** unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"*

Praise looks back to what God has done in the past but it also looks ahead to what He will do. Looking back with gratitude and looking ahead in faith will enable you to look differently at the present. Praise should always be in the present tense because we have a present-tense God.

Sometimes we reserve our praise for when a situation has passed, but God wants us to praise Him in the middle of the situation. That is where the strength comes from. We are to praise God not just on Sunday but every day; not just on the easy days but also on the tough days. Paul and Silas did this in prison (Acts 16:25-34), and you can do it wherever you are. For every daily fight and fear, there is power to praise His holy name and give Him glory.

If we did these three things daily, we would find that God would give us strength for the battle at hand. Study all of the times in Scripture that God uses the word *"daily"* and remember that the Christian life must be lived one day at a time. There is no formula for easy days, but there are ingredients for blessed days. Try these three — faith, the Word, and praise. You will find that God's resources will be enough today and every day.

PSALM 57: THE LION AND THE LORD

As we come to Psalm 57, David is being chased like an animal, hiding from Saul under rocks in the mountains and in caves. But the picture we get from these verses is not an animal being chased but rather his enemy as the animal in pursuit. He used the imagery of a lion to portray his adversary.

VERSES 1-4

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."

David was being chased by someone who wanted to consume him. Throughout Scripture, lions are used to depict the enemy, and many biblical characters faced them. Samson squared off against a lion and God gave him victory (Judges 14:5-6). David faced a lion and a bear, defeating both (I Samuel 17:34-36). Daniel was placed in a den of lions and came out unscathed, proving that God will protect His own even under the most dire circumstances (Daniel 6).

The Lord Jesus faced His own lions. In Psalm 22, one of the Messianic psalms, we read: "*They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion*" (verse 13). It is a vivid picture of what Christ faced at Calvary.

All of us will face our lions. The Bible says in I Peter 5:8, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*

Satan is portrayed as a lion who wants to consume and destroy. There are times when all of us feel as though we will be his prey, casualties in this spiritual war.

Let me encourage you to read verse 1 again: *"… in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."* This is a picture of God as a mother hen or a great eagle bringing us under the protection of His wings. When the lion prowls, the Lord covers! It is also a reminder that every calamity has a time limit ordained by God. The battle you are facing is not permanent; it will pass.

Verse 2 refers to *"God that performeth all things for me."* When you are weak and weary, or wounded, you can rejoice; it is not about your performance, but God's! He is the One who brings it to pass. It is not about how good you feel today or what you think you can accomplish; it is about who God is and what God can do.

The description in verse 4 is of a lion *"whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."* The enemy lashes out with words of criticism, gossip and false accusations. Whatever is being used as a weapon against you, God will deal with it. He will take care of the lions.

In verses 5-11, David shifted his attention from the lion to the LORD.

"Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed

down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth."

If you live your whole life looking at earth, you will be a very defeated person. But if you can get your eyes above what is going on down here and see the God of Heaven, you will be helped. I love that the opening verse shows God with wings and the closing verse reveals Him in the heavens. Look up!

David learned that the victory did not come from concentrating on the lions; it came from concentrating on the Lord.

There is another Lion in Scripture. The Bible says in Revelation 5:5, "*And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*"

In the Bible we have the lion that is the enemy, and the Lion who is the Victor. That is the Lord Jesus Christ. You may have enemies, but *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (I John 4:4).

David does three things in this psalm that we can apply to our own lives every day.

1. Set your heart and devotion upon God every day. This is evident in verse 7: *"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."* If you want to avoid a life of fear and despair, set aside some time every day to fix your heart and emotions on the Lord.

2. Work on your daily discipline of praise every day. Verse 8: *"Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake*

early." Get up a little bit earlier and spend time in private worship and praise. It will do your heart good all through the day.

3. Give attention to your witness every day. Verse 9: "*I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*" David remembered that this was bigger than the current battle. A greater spiritual conflict was going on, and he wanted all the people to know that his God is a God of mercy and truth. First, we give our praise to God and then we share our praise with others. When the enemy threatens, it is imperative that we live and speak in faith.

Regardless of what battle you may be engaged in today, remember that you are on the winning side. Your Lion is the Victor, and He is greater than all other lions who come against you. "*...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*" (1 John 5:4).



PSALM 58: WHEN LIFE IS A ZOO

Life is a zoo at times, and it feels as though the animals are running wild. I have been truly amazed at the number of psalms in which David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, used animals as a picture of what was going on in the world around him and of what God was doing. We saw this in our previous psalm which pictured his enemy as a lion.

We come now to verses 1-2 of Psalm 58. *"Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth."*

This passage describes people who are going through religious motions but whose hearts are full of sin. It sounds a great deal like what passes for Christianity in our world today. **Many people say all the right things with their mouths while harboring wickedness in their hearts.**

Psalm 58:3 | *"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."*

This is a reference to man's sin nature which is within him from birth. We saw it in Psalm 51:5 as well: *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."*

We are all born sinners, but the wicked **start** on that course and **stay** on it.

Verse 4 begins, "*Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.*" There is the first animal reference in this psalm, and it is a reptile; a snake in the grass.

We know that the first time Satan took the form of a living creature in Scripture, it was the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). He is referred to in Revelation 12:9 as *"that old serpent, called the Devil."* As sinners, when we follow Satan's path, we spew the same poison that he does. We become his mouthpiece. This is why Jesus rebuked Peter and called him *"Satan"*, because he was voicing things that were against God's plan (Matthew 16:23). The whisperer and accuser will use any voice he can to promote his error!

Verse 4 concludes, *"they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."* Here is another snake. Not only is poison coming out of the mouth, but truth is not allowed to come in through the ears. A mark of wicked hearts is that they do not want to hear the truth or speak the truth.

Psalm 58:5 | *"Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."*

Have you ever seen a video of a snake charmer using music to control a serpent? In this instance it does not work, for nothing can control the sin nature. Only God can tame the poison of a wicked heart.

Psalm 58:6 | *"Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD."*

We saw lions portrayed in Psalm 57, but what is the significance here of the "***young** lions*"? It is a reference to the lion that simply will not give up, having enough energy and ferocity to keep pursuing and attacking.

Psalm 58:7 | *"Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces."*

Satan is unrelenting. The wicked persist in their wickedness. Be encouraged by remembering that God can take care of them. Martin Luther said, "Even the devil is God's devil."

Psalm 58:8 | *"As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun."*

Here is the third animal depicted in this chapter, the snail.

Do you see the digression? A serpent is considered intelligent and sly, capable of doing whatever needs to be done. The lion projects an image of strength. But God shows us here that in the end, they are like snails which melt away.

- The serpent reminds us of the enemies' ***poison.***
- The lion reminds us of their ***fierceness.***
- The snail is a reminder that they are only ***temporary.***

Psalm 58:9 | *"Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath."*

This is the end of the wicked.

Psalm 58 is known as an imprecatory prayer—a prayer against one's enemies. It is a prayer of judgment.

Keep in mind, this is not praying for bad things to happen to someone you do not like! David knew that they were his enemies because they were God's enemies — enemies of truth and right. Imprecatory prayers are to be used against Satan and those who serve him.

If you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, it does not matter what it looks like to you right now or what others think and say. All that matters is the truth revealed in God's Word. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are on the winning side!

Psalm 58 does not end with the wicked. It ends with the righteous.

Psalm 58:10-11 | *"The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."*

You may be wondering if all you are enduring is worth it—it certainly is. It pays to serve God. It pays both now, and for all eternity. The Bible speaks of eternal dividends when we see Jesus face to face.

If you feel defeated, meditate on the truth that we are *"more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37). At the end of this psalm, at the end of your story and at the end of time, the righteous will have victory. Our Captain, the One who leads us, has already overcome.

Psalm 58 should bring you up, not down. The Christian life is to be an ever-ascending life. There are down moments, discouraging things and difficult people with which to deal. But if you can keep your mind on the Lord, you will find the courage and strength to keep moving forward by His grace.

Forget the serpent, the lion and the snail. Get your eyes on the God who is greater than all of them. May the Lord help us, when life is a zoo, to put ourselves in His powerful hands.



PSALM 59: WILD DOGS

If there is any place where a man should feel safe, it is in the privacy of his own home. Yet, in Psalm 59, David is in his home with his family but his enemies seek to catch him and kill him even there.

Home is meant to be a place of peace, quiet and stillness — a little taste of Heaven on earth. Yet, Satan often brings his greatest attacks right where you live, in familiar surroundings with people you love. Perhaps you are experiencing such an attack today. I want to remind you that God will give you the victory there just as He will anywhere else.

Be on guard; the enemy can show up any day, anywhere. Psalm 59 was written when Saul sent people to watch David's house to catch him and kill him (I Samuel 19), and it was written by a man who discovered that oftentimes the battle comes home.

Interestingly, the previous psalms used animals as pictures of the enemy. There were lions in Psalm 57, followed by snakes, lions and snails in Psalm 58. Now in Psalm 59 he employs the analogy of wild dogs. These are not pleasant pets! We think of dogs today as "man's best friend" but in that culture they were considered unclean scavengers.

Notice verses 6-7: *"They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?"*

Who hears? God hears and He knows.

Again this image is seen in verses 14-15. *"And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied."*

This is a picture of sinners who are never satisfied, always wanting more, lashing out and trying to consume others. Yes, we are in a spiritual warfare and there are a few things from Psalm 59 that must be remembered.

THE DOGS

David's reference is not to domesticated animals, but wild dogs, roaming and scavenging. In Eastern culture dogs were considered filthy and defiled, and people avoided them. They are used throughout Scripture as a picture of sinners who are both defiled and destructive.

Our ultimate enemy is Satan, but he has many helpers — the "hounds of hell."

Psalm 22:16, one of the Messianic psalms says, *"For **dogs** have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."* They railed against Jesus at Calvary and pierced His hands and feet at Calvary (John 20:25-27). The dogs attacked Christ.

The dogs came after David, they came after our Savior, and they will come after us. Paul even warned in Philippians 3:2, *"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."* Sometimes the greatest enemies are the religious enemies, who dot all of their "i's" and cross all of their "t's" but are void of the love of God.

THE DEFENSE

Imagine in your mind that a dog is coming at you but there is a fence between you. That is what the Lord has done. Observe the repeated references in the psalm to defence.

Psalm 59:1 | *"Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:* ***defend*** *me from them that rise up against me."*

Psalm 59:9 | *"...Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my* ***defence.****"*

Psalm 59:16-17 | *"But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my* ***defence*** *and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my* ***defence****, and the God of my mercy."*

Four times David referred to God as his defense. In the midst of the attack, when the wild dogs come against you, the Lord will be your strength and your song. These two things are always connected. *"...the joy of the LORD is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10). If you will keep your heart happy in the Lord, you can get through the hardships of life.

One danger when we are engaged in spiritual warfare, is to think much about the enemy and little about the Lord. Consider what David did. He saw the enemy and himself, but he looked beyond both to the Lord who was his defense. When God is big, everything and everyone else is small.

THE DELIVERANCE

Defense helps us during the attack; deliverance brings us out of it. No attack lasts forever.

Each of the first two verses of Psalm 59 include a plea for deliverance. God will defend you, but at some point He will also say, "Enough." Only He knows when that is, and maybe you are waiting for that moment today. One way or another, God will ultimately deliver you.

You can do more than merely survive the attack; you can sing through it! David suggested in verses 16 and 17 that you can sing above the barking dogs. There may be a lot of noise in your life right now, but God's Word reminds us to sing!

Did you notice when the dogs came? In verses 6 and 14 it is revealed that it was "at evening," in the shadows. Satan loves the nighttime, both physically and figuratively. He loves the darkness.

But in verse 16 we see David's pledge to sing *"in the morning."* My friend, morning is coming. We are promised in Psalm 30:5, "*... Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the* ***morning****."*

The night will pass, the dogs will be gone, and the attack will subside. God will bring you through. You will come out on the other side stronger in the Lord.

It is a significant footnote to point out that the story in I Samuel 19 was not the end of David's story! He did not die in that attack; he was not even captured. He became king of Israel, and he reigned just as God intended. The Lord's plan and purpose will be fulfilled. Trust the Lord to rule your spirit through the attacks, and let God take care of the wild dogs.



PSALM 60: THIS IS WAR!

Have you noticed that sometimes, while you fight the battle on one front, the enemy sneaks around the other side? He is a strategic attacker!

You may be engaged in one battle, and suddenly another battle comes. While you are winning a victory in one area of life, a new struggle emerges.

That is the context of Psalm 60. You find that in the title. Joab had led his armies against one set of enemies, and while he was gone, different enemies of Israel took advantage of his absence and launched an assault.

I am reminded of the adage, "When it rains, it pours." You are fighting on the right hand and another foe shows up on the left.

That is a reality of life. But there is an important truth here: **God is able to take care of every enemy and every battle.** That is the emphasis of Psalm 60.

It begins with the words, *"O God."* Have you ever been at the point where all you could do was cry out to Him? God hears every groan of your heart.

VERSES 1-4

"O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh. Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah."

HARDNESS

I marked in my Bible the phrase *"hard things"* in verse 3. Sometimes hardness is the first thing God allows us to see in a given situation. In II Timothy 2:3, we are encouraged to "*endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" You cannot remove all of the difficulties from life.

Heaven will be wonderful in part because we will not have to live with the harsh realities of a sin-cursed world. But until then, we must travel through life's obstacle course. Sometimes it seems like a minefield, and you are just trying to survive. But, keep reading...

VERSES 5-9

"That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?"

The city referenced here is Petra, the strong capital of the Edomites. It seemed to be impenetrable. But God is able.

Psalm 60:10 | *"Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?"*

This is the cry of one who feels that God has forsaken him. My friend, God will never forsake you. He is always with you, always at work and warring for you. He speaks to us through this psalm, assuring us that He is in control and nothing takes Him by surprise.

Perhaps you are living in shock right now, dealing with something you never saw coming and simply trying to cope. Nothing catches God off guard. No one is too strong for Him.

HELP

Psalm 60:11 | *"Give us help from trouble: for vain is the **help** of man."*

God will bring you to the place where you realize that you have nothing, you are nothing, and no one else can help you. He does that to show you that your only help is in Him.

There are several keywords scattered throughout this psalm, sprinkled among the various descriptions of difficulty. Those words include *"heal"* in verse 2, *"hear"* in verse 5, and *"holiness"* in verse 6. These words describe who God is and what He does.

The broken circumstances in your life do not detract from the goodness of God. His nature is fixed for time and eternity. He is unchanging in a changing world. He is always good.

HIM

Psalm 60:12 | *"Through **God** we shall do valiantly: for **he** it is that shall tread down our enemies."*

This entire psalm is for one purpose – as is whatever you are battling today. God is always bringing us to Himself, making us realize that we are nothing and He is everything. There are terrible and difficult things in this world with which we must deal; but He is enough. Verse 12 reminds us of His sufficiency.

Oftentimes we are praying for short-term relief when God wants us to have long-term growth. We may be trying just to get out of something while He is trying to put something in us — a greater faith and a greater understanding of who He is.

This war song does not end with survival. It ends with victory in God, doing *"valiantly."*

It might look like the enemy is carrying the banners and marching against you right now, but I want to remind you that we are marching under the banner of the One who has already conquered all of the enemies. They are under His feet. Through God, you will do valiantly today. Not because you try harder or get stronger through your own means, but because you learn to rely on His strength alone.

The battle is always hottest just before it is over. Paul wrote in Romans 16:20, *"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."* Shortly we will see the enemy under our feet. Until then, there is grace. When you are on the frontlines, remember that God is there, *"for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."*



PSALM 61: WILL THIS EVER GET EASIER?

I used to think, at some point in my Christian experience, I would get to where I could relax. I would not have to fight and struggle with sin and the Devil. I believed I would grow to the point of smooth sailing in the Christian life.

That day never came, and it never will.

Most of us think from time to time that it will get easier, but as you enter the later seasons of life, the battle seems to intensify. If that is your experience, rest assured that you are not alone.

Paul said in I Corinthians 10:13, *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

Peter wrote in I Peter 4:12-13, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

David teaches us the same truth in Psalm 61. It is relatively short,

only eight verses. Spurgeon called it "a pearl of the Psalms" because it is so beautiful. It seems to have been written after David became king. He was not being hunted or running for his life, dealing with betrayal. He sat on the throne, wearing the crown and holding the scepter. Yet the words of this psalm sound as if they were written by a man who was still struggling.

VERSES 1-8

"Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows."

This does not sound like a king who has it all together! We all hope there will come a time when we will have "arrived," and there will be little more to worry about. But with more blessings come more battles. As you enjoy God's goodness, the enemy is constantly attacking.

Some people believe Psalm 61 was written when Absalom betrayed the king because of his reference to *"the end of the earth,"* which suggested his desire to be back in Jerusalem. Perhaps. Either way, it is the cry of desperation. If David's battles did not go away, neither will ours. Do not be shocked or surprised when temptations and trials come, because such is the nature of life.

So what is the answer? As you study the psalms you will often discover a key found near the door; in this case, it is the back door. At the end of the passage, there is a phrase that unlocks the entire psalm: *"… that I may daily perform my vows."*

The Christian life is a daily experience. It has to be lived one day at a time, and it has to be lived every single day. That means there are daily battles, daily burdens, and daily struggles. There are things God calls on His children to do every day. We must all accept that fact.

In Psalm 61, the word *"forever"* is repeated — in verses 4, 7, and 8. We want to be in the Lord's presence and have His protection forever. But the secret to *"forever"* is *"daily."*

Many things in life will change. Think of how often the settings changed for David. His cry from *"the end of the earth"* reminds me of the words of Christ in Matthew 28:20. *"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* When you get to the end of yourself, He is always there.

David also referred in verse 2 to *"when my heart is overwhelmed."* We have all been there, overwhelmed with the realities of life. But he concluded that thought with these words: *"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."* When the flood waters rise and you think you are going to drown, there is a rock, a high place of shelter and protection in the Lord.

We read in verse 4 of the safety that is found under His wings. So many times in the Old Testament, this image portrays faith. We hide in Him, trusting in the covering of His wings and believing that He is enough.

Wherever you are today and whatever you are dealing with, God will give you grace and strength. The secret to forever being able to stay in His presence and praise Him is to do it today.

The secret to the *forever* Christian life is the *daily* Christian life.

Psalm 61:4 | *"I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."*

Abiding forever requires **daily trust.**

Psalm 61:7 | *"He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him."*

Abiding forever requires **daily seeking** of His mercy and truth.

Psalm 61:8 | *"So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows."*

Praising Him forever means that you must pursue **daily obedience.**

If you sit around and wait for things to improve, hoping tomorrow will be better than today, you will be a very disillusioned person. Draw a line in the sand and say, "By the grace of God, today will be a day of new beginnings." This day is the first day of the rest of your Christian life.

Determine to trust Him, to seek His mercy and truth, and to obey Him every day. Everything in life may change, but God never changes. Our responsibility is simply to stay close to Him.

Wherever you are, God is there. He is listening to your prayer, and you can trust Him today.



PSALM 62: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The famous novelist Charles Dickens wrote a classic work about a young orphan named Pip called *Great Expectations*. The storyline addresses the dangers of human ambition. Indeed, we live in a world of ambitious people who start out with great expectations. But when those expectations are based on men and material things, they ultimately lead only to disappointment. How easily the human heart becomes disillusioned and the idealism of youth quickly turns into the cynicism of old age!

Even expectations among many of the Lord's people are low because they are based on the wrong things. They are rooted in this world and in failing men. But as you lift your heart and eyes to the greatness of God, expectations are elevated. The truly great expectations in life can only be fulfilled in God — they must be expectations rooted in faith.

Psalm 62 teaches us the secret of great expectations: *"my expectation is from him."*

Psalm 62:1-2 | *"Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved."*

In verses 3 and 4 he confesses that men are a great disappointment! Then he returns again to God…

Psalm 62:5-6 | *"My soul, wait thou **only** upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved."*

Notice the word "only" in each of these passages. This psalm was written during Absalom's rebellion, and I can only imagine the hurt in David's heart at that season. His son tore the kingdom from him and ran him out of town. Amid that conflict, King David wrote that his only hope was in the Lord.

The great Bible commentator Alexander McLaren claimed Psalm 62 as his favorite. He said that Psalm 62 is "too high for most Christians." Most of us live our lives with expectations on people, circumstances, and ourselves—the lowlands of life. We only reach a higher level of living by fixing our expectations on God.

This psalm has been referred to as "the God-only psalm," and some have called it "the Reformation psalm" because the guiding principle during that critical time in history was Scripture as the sole authority – not church tradition or man's dogma. We must all come to a God-only and Christ-only point in our lives.

There are other notable uses of *"only"* in this passage that are noteworthy. Verse 4 says, *"They **only** consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah."*

The wicked have only one goal – tear down and destroy. Do not expect lost men in a wicked, depraved society to produce good things. The Bible says in James 1:20, *"...For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."* You cannot begin with flesh and end with spirit. Sinners sin because they are sinners.

It gets personal in verse 5, showing us the only person we should trust and wait on is the Lord. We put expectations on people,

forgetting that even the best of people are still sinners. No person on this planet can fulfill the deepest needs in your life. Only God can do that. Stop waiting on something or someone else, and place your expectations on the Lord.

Great expectations are always **based on His Person.** This psalm is just a description of the greatness of our God. We must return again and again to who He is.

Great expectations must be **bathed in prayer.** This entire psalm is a prayer. It is a powerful prayer. When you feel disappointed, bring that into the presence of God and pray some big prayers. It is an expectation rooted in faith.

Great expectations are **built on His promises.** Psalm 62 is filled with the promises of God. Interestingly, it is almost identical to Psalm 39. Why would David do this? Because we need to go back to the same principles and promises over and over again.

In verse 6 the word "*my*" is used three times—Spurgeon said this word "put the honey in the honeycomb" in this psalm. God is not just *a* rock; he is *my* rock! God is not just *a* salvation; he is *my* salvation! God is not just *a* defence; he is *my* defence! Read it aloud in this personal way. This is what puts the sweetness in life.

David has his troubles, and so will you. He had his enemies, and so will you. But David discovered that if he put his expectations in the Lord, he would never be disappointed.

The Bible says in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."* I have learned over the years if my expectation is from the Lord and it is what He desires, it will always be right – even if it was not what I expected.

The question should not be, "What do I expect?" It should be, "What does God expect?" He is the One with the expected end; all I have to do is trust Him for it. The expectation of the wicked will

be cut off someday, but those who put their faith and trust in God will never be disappointed. God always exceeds expectations!

The psalm concludes with a great contrast:

Psalm 62:9-10 | *"Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them."*

In short, do not trust people (verse 9) and do not trust things (verse 10). Place your confidence in the Almighty God.

Psalm 62:11-12 | *"God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work."*

David declared it in Psalm 39 and repeated it again in Psalm 62. He meditated in it regularly and we need to hear it often. Put your expectations in God alone. Only He has power and mercy. Only He will meet the deepest need of your life.

Charles Spurgeon said, "Expectation is the child of prayer and faith." Live a life of prayer and faith today, and you will learn the secret of a life of great expectations.



PSALM 63: THE PURSUIT OF A LIFETIME

There are times I wonder whether in our prayers, we are more interested in getting out of our circumstances or coming into God's presence. It is easy to pray more for *our relief* than for *His presence.*

David was running for his life in Judah, hunted like an animal or a common criminal. You would think the great cry of his heart might be, "Get me out of this mess and out of this wilderness!" Instead, he had a very different cry.

VERSES 1-4

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

I love this. He was doing the same thing in the wilderness that he would have done in the city; he was worshipping God. He could not be in the Temple because he was hiding in a cave. Thankfully God is not bound by our geography or circumstance and we can worship Him wherever we are. Whatever you are dealing with at

this moment, you can lift up holy hands and give God praise and glory.

VERSES 5-8

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me."

I have marked in my Bible three phrases from these verses: *"my soul thirsteth"* in verse 1; *"my soul shall be satisfied"* in verse 5; and *"my soul followeth hard after thee"* in verse 8.

What is your soul after today? What would satisfy your soul at this moment? Only as our soul pursues God do we find real satisfaction.

VERSES 9-11

"But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped."

Enemies were pursuing David, but David was pursuing God. They would not find satisfaction, but David would! If you pursue anything less than God, you will always be disappointed. But if your life's pursuit is the Lord's presence, that is a pursuit worth continuing. All along that journey, you will grow to know Him in a greater way — more intimately, more personally, and more wonderfully every day until Heaven opens and you enter into His presence for all eternity.

This psalm is a reflection of David's heart expressed in the final verse of Psalm 23. *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all*

the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

David's goal was not Jerusalem. It was God. David's greatest desire was not to get out of the wilderness; it was to come into God's presence.

If we have a goal of anything less than God, our goal is unfit. It may be humanly realistic. But if it is anything less than God's glory and presence, it is an unworthy goal.

Here are a few practical thoughts to help us apply Psalm 63 in our pursuit of the Lord.

1. Pursue Him early.

The Lord deserves our undivided attention and affection in the first part of every day. It is unclear whether the phrase *"early will I seek thee"* in verse 1 is a reference to early in life or early in the day. Both are good! Whether early in life or in the morning, the earlier we focus on God, the better. He is worthy of the first and the best.

In recent years I have tried to make a habit of speaking to the Lord each morning when I first awake. Before you reach for your phone, before your feet hit the floor, and before you begin to engage with others, take a few moments to commune with God. Tell Him you love Him and thank Him for life and grace.

We worship God on Sunday—the first day of the week. We are called on to bring Him our tithes—the first ten percent of our increase. Surely we should give the first moments of each day to Him! God deserves the first fruits of our lives, not our leftovers.

2. Pursue Him fully.

Seeking the Lord is not simply giving God a few minutes in the morning. It reaches to every moment of our lives. Notice the shift in verse 6. *"When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."*

It is interesting that David moved from the morning to evening, from the first light to the darkness of night. He was living in a dark time in his life, perhaps even writing these words as the shadows had fallen and darkness encompassed his hiding place. We do not know for certain, but we can be sure that his circumstances were dark.

How do you stay right in the night? You have to meditate on the Lord and turn your thoughts to Him. And there is a divine order. **If we begin our day meditating on Him and seeking Him early, it will help us at the end of the day to continue doing the same.**

The Lord deserves the early hour of the day. He deserves the end of the day and everything in between. Every waking moment of our lives should belong to God. Psalm 63 is a reminder that if we continue to seek the Lord in the most difficult hours of life, we will find all we need.

This psalm opens much the same as Psalm 42, which begins, *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"*

Both of these passages reflect a hunger and thirst for God. Are you hungry and thirsty after Him? The Bible says in Matthew 5:6, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*

As you start your day, enter into the Lord's presence so you can live there all day. Then, when you come to the end of your day, remember Him by meditating on His goodness and faithfulness.

Keep pursuing the Lord all the days of your life.

Soon the pursuit will end at the nail-pierced feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, where we will bow in His presence and see Him face to face. We will worship Him, praise Him, and give Him glory. What a glorious day that will be—it could be today!

Until then, we should keep pursuing, praising, worshipping, and blessing Him every day of our lives. **Start early, and then keep pursuing God all through the day and into the night.**



PSALM 64: ENEMIES, FEARS AND FAITH

Certain psalms are known as imprecatory psalms. These are psalms in which David talked to God about his enemies. The ancient king of Israel certainly had his share of those — Saul, Absalom, and the Philistines, just to name a few. He also had his flesh to deal with, which is the worst enemy any of us fight.

We all have our enemies. All Christians fight the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Some believers are called on to face tremendous persecution and even martyrdom. Yes, the enemies are real.

David was afraid – the warrior king of Israel was afraid. We all have fears. People who say they are not afraid of anything are simply lying. Everyone is afraid of something. What we do with those fears is what matters most.

Psalm 64:1 | *"Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy."*

Remember, the Psalms help us to bring every event, emotion, and experience of life into the presence of God. That is what David did.

When you bring your fear into the presence of a big God, suddenly, it looks very different. David's perspective in the opening verse is

remarkably different from what we read near the end of the psalm in verse 9: *"And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing."* Now he speaks of those he feared, fearing the Lord!

The fear of God casts out all other fears. When you bring your fears to Him and have the right kind of fear of Him — a sense of awe and worship — the largeness of God makes your fears smaller and smaller. **In fact, everything is small when compared to our great God – even your enemies!**

Psalm 64 is divided into two parts. Verses 1-6 talk about the enemy.

Psalm 64:2 | *"Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity."*

This shows us something about their attitude. The enemy always wants to stir up division, strife, and problems.

Psalm 64:3 | *"Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words."*

Here is the wickedness of their words. You may be dealing with someone now who is shooting bitter words at you. They are painful, but God can protect you.

Psalm 64:4 | *"That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not."*

David was afraid of them, but they had no fear of God.

Psalm 64:5 | *"They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?"*

Here is evidence of the attitude of wicked people—they think they will get away with their evil. Ungodly people imagine that no one sees and no one cares. But there is One who sees everything and

understands exactly what is going on.

Psalm 64:6 | *"They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep."*

David connected their words with the condition of their heart. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, *"...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."*

A person's mouth eventually tells on his heart. The real problem with the wicked is not what they do or say but what they are. The heart is vile. The fountain inside is spewing out evil things, which is why it comes out in their words. Do not be surprised when wicked men do wicked things and those who do not know God act like lost people.

Even a Christian can be guilty of this because believers still battle the sin nature. **It all begins in the heart.**

If Psalm 64 ended with verse 6, it would be depressing. Everything to this point has been all about the enemy. But the second half of the psalm lifts us to the Lord.

Psalm 64:7 | *"But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded."*

Those two words, *"But God,"* change everything. Notice that in verse 4, the enemy was shooting arrows, but in this verse, God is the one shooting arrows.

Psalm 64:8 | *"So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away."*

The boomerang of sin always comes back. It is the principle of sowing and reaping. Wicked men may say and do terrible things, but God will judge them. The Lord is the One who keeps the enemies in check and will take care of them in the end.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15:18, *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."* Why does the Devil hate believers and the church? Because he hates our God. It is not that we are important to the Devil, but rather that we are important to God. Satan hates us because he hates the One who loves us and he wants to hurt God by striking at us.

Why does the world hate a righteous man who tries to speak the truth? Because he represents the God of truth and righteousness that the world does not know. Remember this: none of the enemies will last forever.

Psalm 64:9 | *"And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing."*

This is another way of saying, *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:10-11).

Psalm 64 concludes with verse 10: *"The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory."*

What a shift in tone. It ends not with fear but with gladness, trust, and glory.

No matter what you are facing right now, regardless of your adversary and how wounded you may feel, this is not the end. Do what David did. Bring your enemies into the presence of a holy God and commit them to Him. Keep your eyes on the Lord. Trust Him.

Live by faith and not in fear. God always takes care of the enemies and He always takes care of His children.



PSALM 65: PRAISE GOD!

The God of Heaven is concerned about what is happening on earth.

We are earthbound creatures and our eternal home is yet to come. Albert Brumley was right when he penned, "This world is not my home; I'm just a-passing through." But while we are passing through, it is good to know that God is interested and cares for us!

A later psalm, Psalm 113, declares that God is *"high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens,"* (verse 4), but then tells us that He *"humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!"* (verse 6).

Think about this. God is so great and so high that He dwells in Heaven, yet so merciful and so loving that He would come to us, consider us, and care what happens on Earth. That is the message of Psalm 65.

Psalm 65:1 | *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed."*

We know that this is a psalm of praise. In fact, its inscription is unique in that it reads, "A Psalm and Song of David." This is because it was written in such a way that it could either be spoken

or sung.

All great songs should be that way. If a song is filled with truth and doctrine, it is about much more than how it sounds; it is about what it says. The most important part of a song is the lyrics because we are told to *"worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). That is where the substance is. Psalm 65 was not just beautiful to hear; it was full of truth that could be spoken.

While it is clear that David wrote it, we do not know exactly when. It follows a series of psalms that are concentrated on prayer for strength, grace, and protection. So it is fitting that the petitions bring us to praise.

A growing prayer life will inevitably lead you to greater praise. As you ask the Lord for specific things, you should do so with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6). Then, as He answers your prayer, you should return and give Him glory and praise.

Psalm 65 begins with praise for what God has done for us personally — internally — and then moves to what God has done naturally or externally in the world around us. David speaks of God's goodness on the earth, evident in nature and the created world. And in the midst of it all, His goodness to us.

Psalm 65:2 | *"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."*

Praise, like prayer, is a statement of faith. We believe that God hears us.

Psalm 65:3 | *"Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."*

This is always a good place to begin: praise God for forgiveness of sin. We all can thank Him that our sin is not held against us, but is forgiven and cleansed the moment we confess it to Him.

Psalm 65:4 | *"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."*

The psalmist praised God for the opportunity to come into His holy presence. This is the required order. **Your sins must be purged before you can come into the holy place and commune with God.**

Psalm 65:5 | *"By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea."* We praise God for being our confidence in a world of confusion and days of uncertainty.

Notice the beautiful progression in the opening verses that reflects what God has done in us. He has heard our prayer, forgiven our sins, brought us into His presence, and given us confidence that, to the ends of the earth, He is with us and for us.

Keep in mind that this psalm has not yet mentioned any physical blessing. So often, when we thank God, it is for food and material possessions around us, and we should. **But the greatest things you and I have to praise God for are spiritual realities because those are what last.**

Remember the words of Job 1:21. "*…the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* Physical things can be removed at any time, but you can continue to praise God when you concentrate on the spiritual blessings that will always be yours. What God gives you in Christ, He does not take back.

After praising the Lord for personal blessings, the psalmist moved to address the natural things around him.

Psalm 65:6 | *"Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power."*

When I look at the mountains near where we live in West Virginia, I think about how God planted them there. The mountains do not sit there by their own power; they are a testimony to us of the power of God.

Psalm 65:7 | *"Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people."*

Many times in Scripture, the ocean's tumult is a picture of nations and people groups moving and changing constantly. God can speak His command and make it stop. The Christ who said *"Peace, be still"* is able to do so in the midst of our storms.

Psalm 65:8 | *"They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice."*

Here is a great practical application for us. We should begin every morning by rejoicing in God and end every evening the same way.

VERSES 9-10

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof."

Rejoice when the rain starts to fall. God sent it. He is the Father of the rain (Job 38:28).

Psalm 65:11 | *"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness."*

Every year is God's gift to us. Some people believe this psalm was written for the Day of Atonement, that day every year when the people rejoiced in the goodness of God and His mercy to them. The day that Christ died on the cross was the final Day of Atonement and now we can rejoice in the atonement He has given

us every day!

Psalm 65:12-13 | *"They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."*

Notice that Psalm 65 ends with a shout and a song. I hope your day begins and ends that way, my friend. Do not lose your shout. Do not forget your song. Look at your life and look around you, and praise God!



PSALM 66: HOW JOYFUL PRAISE BECOMES A POWERFUL WITNESS

There is nothing more beautiful than a joyful spirit, and there is no greater testimony for God than a changed heart full of praise for Him.

Psalm 66 is evidence of that. It is a psalm of praise.

Psalm 66:1-2 | *"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious."*

You cannot make God glorious because He already is. But we are to make His praise glorious. In how we praise Him, we should reflect His beauty so that everyone around us who hears it and sees it says, "We do not know your God, but we would like to know Him."

The New Testament parallel to this says that we are to *"...adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"* (Titus 2:10). That means literally to beautify it, to dress it up so that when people see the truth, it is the most attractive thing to them. Truly, there is nothing more attractive than a joyful spirit. When you are around someone who has the joy of the Lord, you want that for yourself!

Psalm 66 is not only a psalm of praise, it is a testimony psalm. It begins with the psalmist speaking to God.

Psalm 66:3-4 | *"Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah."*

But after the divinely inspired pause, there is a shift. Instead of speaking to God, he begins speaking to men.

VERSES 5-9

"Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him. He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."

Praise always begins in worship to God and then becomes a witness to men.

In praise we say, "Thank you. Lord, we love you, and we bless you." We give Him glory. As praise is given to God, if done in the right way, it then becomes a testimony to others.

We talk about seeking to win souls for Christ by "witnessing" or giving a "testimony" to lost people. But true witnessing is not giving a presentation of facts, it is having a conversation about a Person. Witnessing is simply praising God to someone else! Sometimes, we get an idea that we are to give a religious speech and merely recite facts about God. That is not what witnessing is. A "witness" shares what he has seen or experienced.

Effective witnessing is talking about the goodness of God in our lives and then pointing others to the God of goodness. Our thanks should be a testimony. In verses 10-15, the psalmist returned to speaking to God.

VERSES 10-15

"For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah."

Here, he praised what God did for him when he was in trouble. The first part of the psalm was praise for bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, coming through the sea on dry land (a picture of salvation). These latter verses address what God has done along the journey. It is a beautiful indicator of how we should praise God for both His past and His present work.

Begin by praising God for your salvation. Talk about how the Lord saved you, but do not let that be the end of it. Beyond the day you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, speak of the grace, mercy, and strength you receive every day as you walk through life.

Perhaps the strongest praise ever given is the praise given by the person who has gone through trouble and has seen God's might and strength in the midst of it. The psalmist was such a man, and he gave God glory for divine help.

Psalm 66:16 | *"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."*

This may be one of the most beautiful expressions I have ever read. Notice how he shifted back to directing his praise of God to others. **Praise is the act of telling others what God has done for your soul.**

Has the Lord done anything for your soul lately? A good testimony

should not just be past tense; it should be present tense, because God is always present.

Psalm 66:17-19 | *"I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer."*

Now the praise comes full circle back to prayer. Throughout Scripture, prayer leads to praise, and praise leads to prayer. When you begin blessing God, it brings you to a place where you want to pray more. As you pray more, you have more cause to praise God. It is a beautiful cycle of communion with Him.

Verse 18 contains one of the great prayer principles of the Bible. **If you want to hold on to your sin, you cannot get hold of God.** But by his words in verse 19, the psalmist acknowledged that he confessed his sin, keeping that channel clear so that God heard his prayer. A former generation used to refer to this as "staying on praying ground." Live in such a way that you can stay in touch with God every moment.

Psalm 66:20 | *"Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."*

The ultimate praise is to say that God has heard my prayer and showed me mercy.

Let me leave you with a simple application. In this psalm, there was an expression used twice with a slight variation that captured my attention.

Verse 5 begins, *"Come and see the works of God."* Verse 16 begins, *"Come and hear, all ye that fear God."*

Remember, praise is a testimony and a witness. These verses invite the reader to see and hear what the psalmist has seen and heard. It reminds me of what the disciples were doing in the New

Testament when trying to bring people to see Jesus. They said, *"we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts 4:20).

God does not want you to share what you do not know—He asks you to share what you do know! The Lord Jesus told a demon-possessed man when He was delivered, *"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee"* (Mark 5:19), and "*Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee*" (Luke 8:39). Your friends and your family need you to tell and show the greatness of your Christ.

The best witness you can give today is this: "I have seen and heard the goodness of God in my own life. Now you come and see it and hear it for yourself."

"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious."



PSALM 67: WHY GOD BLESSES US AND WHY WE PRAISE

Why does God bless us? We certainly do not deserve it. The blessing of God is not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

Psalm 67 is a psalm of blessing, only seven verses long. Read it and discover the Blesser.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

The blessing is at the beginning as well as the end. And while we enjoy God's blessings from beginning to end, it is easy to get so enamored with the gifts that we miss the Giver.

I marked in my Bible the phrase in verse 6, "God, even our own God." Can you say that? It is not enough to say that God blesses us. It is **my** God who blesses **me.**

Psalm 67 is connected to the High Priest's blessing recorded in Numbers 6. These were expressions used by Aaron as he blessed God's people. Read verses 24-27 of that chapter and you will see divine parallels:

"The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

God wants to bless His people, but the reason is so that He can bless others through His people. I remember hearing Dr. Frank Sells years ago ask the question, "Have you ever prayed that God would make you a worldwide blessing?" When I first heard that, I knew I had never done what he asked, and I wondered if it was even possible. I have since found that it is more than possible; it is God's plan.

God does not bless us just to bless us. He does it so we can bless Him and also be a means of blessing to other people. The ultimate goal is for many others to know the God of blessing.

The first verse of Psalm 67 introduces us to the triune God. Notice the three parts of **verse 1:**

"God be merciful unto us,

and bless us;

and cause his face to shine upon us."

There is a progression here. The blessing does not come first; the mercy comes first. You must know the God of mercy to know the God of blessing. We live in a world where everyone wants His blessing without His mercy. They want good from God's hand without being in tune with God's heart.

Some Bible teachers have said that this order represents the work of the Godhead — the mercy of a Father, the blessing that comes through the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit to cause His face to shine upon us. We have the blessing of all three in one verse.

Psalm 67:2 | *"That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."*

Immediately, God turns the blessing into a testimony and a ministry to others. We learned from our study of Psalm 66 that when we truly praise the Lord, it leads to a gospel witness by showing others what God has done in our lives. Psalm 67 continues that same theme that our praise is a powerful confession to others of the goodness and greatness of God.

Psalm 67:3 | *"Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee."*

The response moves from merely personal praise to corporate praise. The great aim and desire of all our lives should be that everyone around us comes to know God and praise Him forever. When the Lord rules and reigns on this earth, everyone will praise Him, but we do not have to wait—we can begin now!

Psalm 67:4 | *"O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah."*

My friend, that day is coming. Psalm 67 has been called the millennial psalm of Israel because it tells us something about Messiah's promised dominion. There is coming a day when He will judge and govern the nations of the earth, and everyone will praise Him.

It is also a great missionary psalm of Israel. Can you hear the heartbeat of God for the nations? This is not just about the future but about His present desire to be known and worshipped. God is worthy of all glory, and when we praise Him — when we bless the

One who has so blessed us — it says to everyone around us that the Lord is worthy of being sought and known.

Psalm 67 was penned to Israel, but it was preserved for us. What is God's purpose in your prayer life? It should be so that answers will come not for your sake but for God's name. The goal should be that the Lord is glorified.

What is God's purpose in your praise? Do you praise Him simply out of duty because you think you have to? Is there some kind of private, selfish motivation by which you think more of your prayers will be answered if you praise Him? You cannot manipulate God. Praise is for only one reason: that God would be exalted.

God blesses us so that we would know how good He is and make His goodness known to others. We pray to Him, praise Him, and bear witness about Him so the world will know that He is merciful, He blesses us, and He causes His face to shine upon us.

The divine motive is revealed in the bottom line of Psalm 67, *"God, even our own God, shall bless us…and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."* Beware of viewing even your blessings selfishly. There is a bigger purpose. Ask God to use you to bring other souls to Christ.



PSALM 68: THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Praise ushers you into the conscious presence of God by acknowledging the presence of God.

The previous psalms formed a series of short praise psalms. Now, we come to a longer psalm, Psalm 68.

VERSES 1-3

"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."

The second verse contains the key phrase, *"the presence of God."* That is really what the entire psalm is about. Let me go a step further; that is what life is about. It is what we have to look forward to in eternity. **There is nothing in this world like the presence of God.**

There is a historical context to Psalm 68 that will give you a greater understanding of this. Most Bible teachers believe that it would be inserted just after II Samuel 6:11. The Ark of the Covenant had been brought back to the house of Obed-edom, where it stayed for some time. That family was blessed because of God's presence

in their house. If you want God's blessing in your home, get the presence of God there.

David then brought the ark back to Jerusalem, and he celebrated by singing and dancing with joy to the extent that some, including his wife, mocked him because they could not understand. **He knew that there was nothing more important than the presence of God, regardless of who he was, what his people thought of him, or how much material wealth he had.** If he had God's presence, he had everything he needed. If he missed God's presence, he was in trouble. All provision and protection comes from God's presence.

David wrote Psalm 68 while conscious that the one thing he needed was God's presence, and these 35 verses can be approached from several different directions.

You can read them historically and you will see a synopsis of Israel's history, from wilderness wanderings to divine encounters at Mount Sinai. History reminds us that men come and go, but the presence of God continues.

You can also study Psalm 68 and see Jesus Christ. This is one of the psalms identified as Messianic and prophetic in nature. For example, verse 18 says: *"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them."*

That verse was quoted in the New Testament in reference to Christ's ascension. Ephesians 4:8 says, *"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."* Psalm 68:18 mentions *"the rebellious also."* We should all be very thankful that the Lord gives good gifts to those who have often been rebellious. We all have a rebel heart and none of us deserve God's blessings.

Again in verse 24: *"They have seen thy goings, O God; even the*

goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." This is a direct reference to the King, Jesus Christ. David was certainly not writing about himself, but about a coming King and kingdom.

As we read Psalm 68, we must think about the nation of Israel. What has made that tiny spot on the world map famous? Only the presence of God. Places are only significant because of what the Lord has done there. But then, think specifically about Jesus. You cannot come near to the presence of God apart from His Son. We come to the Holy God exclusively through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Psalm 68 is not only about David, Israel, and Christ; it is also about you. The passage must become personal so that we see ourselves. Look at the presence of God in your own life!

Psalm 68:5-6 | *"A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land."*

God has set you free and put you in a family. You see, family was His idea. Your biological or physical family can be viewed as a gift from God, but there is something grander here. You and I have been brought into the greatest family in the world, the family of God. The day you were born again, you were adopted into that family. It is so good to be a family member!

There are so many other reminders throughout Psalm 68 of the goodness of God, and we have all of it because of His presence.

There are two different perspectives on the presence of God. On one side are the wicked who are fleeing from Him in fear, and on the other side are the righteous who are drawing near in gladness.

Your attitude toward the presence of God is directly connected to your relationship with God. If you know the Lord and love Him, if you are right with Him, you can draw near and enjoy living in His presence. If you do not know Him or have allowed something to

come between you, His presence can be a frightful thing.

This is a time to be certain that you are right with God. If you are, then you can enjoy His presence in your life.

Mark how Psalm 68 ends, *"Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God"* (vs. 34-35).

Psalm 68 begins by bringing us into the presence of God, and it ends by showing us what comes out of the presence of God. Out of His presence, He gives us strength and power. If that is what you need today, you know where to find it.

If you need strength for whatever you must do and power for whatever you may face in the coming days, you need to get as close to God as possible.

We learn much about praise through the psalms, and it is fitting that this psalm ends with three wonderful words: *"Blessed be God."* Bless the Lord today for His holy presence and the strength and power that only comes from Him. Bless the Blesser! His presence is with you.



PSALM 69: IN DEEP WATER

The Psalms, in so many ways, mirror the changeable nature of the seasons of life. There is an ebb and flow to our days. We move from psalms of prayer from desperate hearts to praising God, then back to dealing with enemies and to thanksgiving again. Isn't that like life? It is not always the same.

This fluctuation is especially illustrated in Psalm 69.

Psalm 69:1-2 | *"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me."*

The verses that follow teach us what to do in deep water. We all get into deep water at times!. Moses and the Israelites certainly did; so did Noah. **And they all saw the power of the Lord in special ways during those times.**

Jonah's disobedience took him to the depths of the sea, but he learned something there about the love and pity of God. The disciples found themselves in deep water in the middle of the night, but that is exactly where the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated His power over the storm.

The testimony of the Apostle Paul in Acts 27 shows that he was

in deep water more than once. In II Corinthians 11:26, he wrote about the *"perils of waters."*

At some point, all of God's people find themselves in deep water. But I am glad to tell you today that God does His deepest work in the deep waters.

Christ once said to the disciples in Luke 5:4, *"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."* God provides great blessings and lessons in the depths, which you cannot find in the shallow waters, because you have to operate there by faith and not by sight.

As a boy, I desperately wanted to learn to swim. I tried. I took lessons. But I learned to swim when someone gave me a gentle nudge into the deep end of the pool. You never learn sitting on the edge, watching others and listening to lectures.

Sometimes, you get to a point in life when your feet cannot touch the bottom, or in the words of the psalmist, *"the waters are come in unto my soul."* You cannot stand, and you start to sink. That is the moment when you learn what to do in deep water.

We do not know what David was dealing with when he wrote Psalm 69. It could have been any number of many things. However, the real issue is what we will do when we find ourselves in deep water.

MAKE SURE YOUR OWN HEART IS RIGHT WITH GOD.

Psalm 69:5 | *"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."*

The first thing to do is confess any known sin, and ask the Lord to show you any sin you do not know about.

When you are in deep water, it is so easy to blame everyone else

for your circumstances, but you must look at yourself first. Are you there because of something you have done? That is not always the case. Sometimes, it is because you are a Jonah; other times, you are a Job and cannot explain why things are happening to you. But always begin with the question, *"Lord, is it I?"*

REMEMBER THAT OTHERS ARE WATCHING.

Psalm 69:6-7 | *"Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face."*

Once he was sure there was nothing between him and God, David turned his attention to others around him. Instead of getting fixated on his problems, he began thinking about how others would view his God while he was in deep water.

We can get so consumed with the storms of life that our trouble is all we talk about. If we are not careful, we rob glory from God and give others the idea that He is not enough.

Notice the change from *"my sake"* in verse 6 to *"thy sake"* in verse 7. God brought you into the deep waters to do something in your life, but be more concerned with His glory than your relief. Remember that others are watching.

OFFER YOUR PRAYER TO GOD.

VERSES 13-14

"But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters."

He turned his complaint into communion. It is alright to bring your trouble to the One who can do something about it.

Observe well the progression of a spiritual man in deep waters. He looked to himself to make sure he was right with God; he looked to others to make sure he was not leading someone else astray; and he ultimately looked to the Lord.

A careful look at his prayer reveals that David was more consumed with God's mercy than with the deep mire. Talk to God and you will find that it lifts you into spiritual realities. Prayer will enable you to find Heaven's perspective on your problem.

I have marked in my Bible the phrase in verse 2, *"I sink **in** deep mire."* He was literally in over his head, and it consumed him. But by verse 14, he said, *"Deliver me **out** of the mire."* Only God can do that, and He only does it when we truly learn to pray.

Psalm 69:15 | *"Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."*

Here is a picture of death. He said, "Lord, I do not think I will make it unless You do something." That was when God began to work.

Psalm 69:16 | *"Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies."*

My friend, God's mercy is *greater* than your trouble. God's love is *deeper* than the deep water you may find yourself in today. There is *more grace* in Him than sin in us or trouble in our world.

Psalm 69 is another of the Messianic psalms. This psalm of suffering and rejection gives us some idea of the agony our Lord experienced as He prayed in the deep water of Gethsemane. Some Bible teachers believe Jesus may have even quoted portions of it during His humiliation.

Yet the same God who brought Christ through His depths will carry you through yours. Beyond the deep water, there is a destination.

We have been concentrating on the first half of Psalm 69. But if you begin in verse 18 you will go beyond the deep water.

Psalm 69:29 | *"…let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high."*

Psalm 69:35 | *"For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession."*

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and Hopeful had to cross some deep water, but on the other side was a destination. The celestial city was waiting! There was a moment in the allegory when Christian cried out to Hopeful, "I am sinking in deep waters! The billows are rolling over my head — all His waves are washing over me!" Then Hopeful replied, "Take courage, my brother — I feel the bottom, and it is firm!"

I want you to know that when you are in deep water, it is not the end. God will set you on the other shore soon, and when you get there and look back, you will give Him all the glory.

Make sure you are right with God, remember others are watching the grace of God in your life, and make your prayer to God of all power. In the ebb and flow of life, God can deliver you, even out of deep water.



PSALM 70: THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER TODAY

Many years ago, I started writing notes to myself so I would not forget important things that needed to be done. Now, I keep these notes on my phone, but occasionally, I still do it the old-fashioned way and make a "to-do" list on paper. It helps me to post them somewhere I will see them. We *all* need reminders.

Psalm 70 is only five verses long, but it is a little note of remembrance. Its title even says that its purpose is "to bring remembrance." David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "I am going to write a little note to myself and others so we will remember this."

We know that it is a reminder because, in many ways, it mirrors Psalm 40. Charles Spurgeon observed that Psalm 70 is almost like an excerpt from Psalm 40, with David returning to truth previously learned and rehearsing it to himself and the Lord:

VERSES 1-5

"Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and

let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying."

All of us need to remember the same things David remembered.

REMEMBER TO PRAY.

Whatever you do, do not forget to pray! We are instructed in I Thessalonians 5:17, *"Pray without ceasing."* Yet that is the first thing we often forget to do. Psalm 70 begins and ends with prayer —two very similar petitions. But it is not just the content of his prayer that stands out; it is the intensity of it. David prayed urgently. You can be ready to pray in an emergency if you stay in touch with God every day. Some people only call on Him when things get really bad, as if He is our last resort. David lived consciously in His presence every day. **When you walk with God, you can talk to Him at any moment.**

These verses emphasize a dual request—to be helped and delivered. **God's deliverance comes as He brings us out of our circumstances, and His help comes when He goes with us through those circumstances.** The same God who can deliver you in the end can help you right where you are.

God is present, and He has a future for you. He can give you strength today to keep moving forward, and at some point, He will deliver you entirely.

REMEMBER THAT GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR ENEMIES.

This is a repeated refrain throughout the Psalms. In verse 2, David asked for shame and confusion among those who wanted to hurt him. This will happen to all enemies of the Lord eventually.

In verses 2 and 3, there are references to the enemies being turned back. Those who walk with God are moving forward, always advancing.

Verse 3 quotes the critics who *"say, Aha, aha."* There will always be cynics. (Sarcasm and criticism are not spiritual gifts!) Be careful who you listen to. *David was determined to trust what God promised instead of what the critics said.*

Our enemies will not last, but our God will. They are going backward while you go forward.

REMEMBER TO CONTINUE TO PRAISE.

This is the message of verse 4. Sometimes, we remember to pray in our desperation, to cry out to God in the middle of our trouble, but we forget to praise Him. Are you a joyful Christian?

The command to *"pray without ceasing"* in I Thessalonians 5 is bookended by two verses that tell us, *"Rejoice evermore,"* and *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (vs. 16-18). Praise twice as much as you pray! Do not be guilty of asking God for help while neglecting to give Him praise.

Verse 4 ends with, *"Let God be magnified."* Sometimes, God magnifies you, and it is easy to praise Him in those high moments. But there are other times when, as the psalmist, you are brought low. No matter where you find yourself, God is always on His throne, and we should continually lift Him up.

Could God be most magnified when the enemies are coming against us? Spiritual battles are the very places where God is most glorified.

Make your own note of remembrance today. Write down divine remembrances and post them where you will see them often. Remember the goodness of God and your responsibility to

Him — to pray, to trust Him with your enemies, and to keep on praising Him.

If you remember to do those things, I guarantee you will see God work. God needs no reminders because He never forgets anything except our sins, and He chooses to do that. But we are so forgetful.

May God help us all to **remember.**



PSALM 71: A LESSON FOR YOUTH AND OLD AGE

Life is a funny thing — and a fleeting thing.

One day, you are young, and then suddenly, you are old. Getting old is strange because you do not know you are doing it until it is done. As you age, you begin to think more about your youth. Frequently I have heard it said that life is a blur, but James 4:14 says it best, *"It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."*

Psalm 71 is the psalm of both youth and old age. The psalmist wrote it while reflecting on his whole life.

TRUTH FOR YOUTH

Psalm 71:5-6 | *"For thou art my hope, O LORD God: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee."*

Psalm 71:17 | *"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."*

Here are some great truths every young person needs to know:

God created you. He is the One who took you out of your *"mother's bowels."*

God is your hope. That does not happen when you get old. It starts when you are young. The psalmist testified that God was *"my trust from my youth."* Do not wait until you are old to begin living a life of faith. Do it now.

God wants to teach you. The psalmist noted that this began for him in youth as well. Young person, God wants to work in your life right now. If you let Him work in your youth, you can give Him the rest of your life so that one day you can say, *"…hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."* You can declare to others what God taught you at this stage of life.

You will not be young forever, but you will forever be able to draw from what God has taught you in your youth.

OBSERVATIONS FOR OLD AGE

Psalm 71:9 | *"Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."*

Psalm 71:18 | *"Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."*

It seems evident that the psalmist was living at the latter end of life, having seen both sides. At the least, he was closer to the end than the beginning. The nearer you get to eternity, the more clarity you get on life. It is sad that some people wait until they are about to die to learn to live!

Even when the psalmist was old and grey-headed, he was not finished. More importantly, he knew that God was not finished with him. If you are still breathing, the Lord is not done with you.

To those closer to the finish line than the starting blocks, I want

you to know that if you are still in the race, God has more for you. He is with you and He has not forsaken you.

My pastor used to say that the prime of life is any time in life when you are in the center of God's will. You never know exactly when the Lord will do His greatest work in your life. Think about the great men of the Bible and how many of them were greatly used by God near the end of their lives. Could it be that your greatest work is still ahead of you?

The psalmist did not lose purpose, and I want to encourage you not to lose purpose either. Do not quit until God is finished with you. Do not die before you die!

What is our greatest purpose? According to verse 18, the writer says his primary responsibility is to pass on to the generation behind him the truth he has learned about God. It is not just about your life; it is about what you leave behind.

Take the time to read all 24 verses of this psalm, but allow me to leave you with one application that is good for every season of life.

Psalm 71:15 | *"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day;* ***for I know not the numbers thereof.****"*

No matter your age, there is one thing you do not know: how many days you have left to live.

We measure life in years, but God measures it in days. You can count how many days you have been alive; I did that one time with the help of a good calendar and calculator. After reading an article about how many days the average American male lives, I started figuring out how many I had already used up. It was a little discouraging!

But there is one problem with that exercise. You can count how many days you have lived but can never determine how many days you have left. Your life is in God's hands; the issues of life and

death belong to Him (Psalm 31:15; 68:20). Even if a doctor tells you that you have two weeks to live, that is not 100 percent sure. Only God knows that number.

In verse 4 of Psalm 39, we read this plea: "*LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.*" Notice that he asked not for a specific number of days but the measure of them. The measure of your life is not in its length but in what you do with the time you have.

Enoch is more blessed in memory than Methuselah, who lived longer than anyone in history at 969 years. Enoch stands out, not for his longevity, but because he *"walked with God: and he was not; for God took him*" (Genesis 5:24).

What is your goal? Do you just want to live a long life, or do you want your life to be everything God wants it to be?

There is both a certainty and an uncertainty about life both in youth and old age. But we can be sure that the Lord is good and if we will give each day to Him He will do more with them than we can.

Whether you are young or old, or somewhere in between, the Lord wants you to live a life overflowing with His praise. Regardless of how many days you have, the psalmist tells us repeatedly what we should do with every one of those days:

Psalm 71:8 | *"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour* ***all the day."***

Psalm 71:15 | *"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation* ***all the day……"***

Psalm 71:24 | *"My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness* ***all the day long……"***

To the very last verse of the psalm we are reminded that every

single day should be lived for God's praise and glory! Do you want to make every day count for eternity? Then do not waste another day—do not waste another minute of this day!



PSALM 72: DAVID'S FINAL PRAYER

Today, we come to the last Exodus Psalm (the second section of the Book of Psalms). It is fitting because Psalm 72 is the final prayer of David.

Psalm 72 should be studied alongside I Chronicles 29, in which David prayed for his son Solomon and passed the crown to the next king of Israel. Psalm 72 is the recorded prayer of David. Its title is "a Psalm for Solomon."

A great bridge was being crossed from one king to the next, yet David was so concerned for Solomon and the people to continue to understand that there is only one King: God.

Verse 20, the last verse of this psalm, says, *"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."* The closer we get to the end, the clearer things become.

If you have ever heard a deathbed prayer, the cry of a soul preparing to leave this world, you know how intense it is. It is a fervent prayer that truly reveals the heart of a man.

If you had one final prayer, what and for whom would it be? We will see what David focused on in his final prayer.

HE PRAYED FOR HIS SON.

Psalm 72:1 | *"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son."*

How beautiful. We think of Solomon as the wise ruler of a nation, but David thought of him as his boy. He prayed with a parent's heart and a father's love.

One of our last prayers, right up to the final breath we take, should be for the next generation. Pray for your children and grandchildren, for the young people that God has placed in your life. Pray for a hedge of protection around them and the blessings of God on them. Your *prayers* will do much more than your *lectures* will. Your *intercession* will accomplish more than your *instruction* will.

We know Solomon prayed to the Lord for wisdom soon after David's prayer. God told him he could have anything he desired; wisdom is what Solomon chose. I wonder if that was not an answer to David's prayer here, in which he asked that his son might have the judgments and righteousness of God.

Undoubtedly, an application here shows us we should pray for our leaders. Pray today for your president, your governor, and your mayor. We are told in I Timothy 2:2 to pray *"for kings, and for all that are in authority."* It does not matter if we agree with them.

HE PRAYED FOR THE COMING OF GOD'S SON.

Verses 2-18 discuss the King of Kings and His future rule.

In verse 3, He brings peace and righteousness. There is an emphasis in verses 2, 4, 12, and 13 on Him judging the poor and doing right by them.

We find a beautiful picture of the coming Messiah. Remember that Israel was always awaiting its deliverer since that first promise in Genesis 3. Then, again when Abraham arrived and the nation

was established. David did not know exactly how that would come to pass, so while he prayed for his son Solomon, whom he could see, he also prayed for the Son of God to come as the true King.

This is an excellent lesson for us. Do not simply pray for your immediate needs that you can see. Pray also for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done. That is precisely how Jesus taught us to pray. *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9-10).

Having your eyes fixed on God's Son will purify your prayers. It will help you pray correctly for your children, family, country, and needs because you will ask for the Lord to be glorified in all things.

VERSES 17-19

"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."

God is the only One who does wondrous things; those are the only things He does. I love how David ends with a double "Amen." Amen is one of the names for Christ. These are words of assurance and certainty, the divine exclamation point on this prayer of faith.

HE PRAYED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

That is the greatest aim of all our prayers and even our lives.

We are taught in James 4:3, *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."* We are a nation of consumers, and often, our churches are simply consumers as well. It is all about what we can gain. But true prayer always seeks primarily for God to be glorified.

As you pray for your children, your nation, and the coming of Christ, pray for God to be glorified. As you pray for the deep needs in your life and the salvation of the ones you love, let your motive be the glory of God alone.

As we conclude this final prayer of David – the great capstone of a life filled with prayer—let us not wait until the end of our lives to make it our own. Begin today.

Pray for your children and the next generation. Pray for the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Pray for the glory of Almighty God.

As David wrote in his final words: *"And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory."*

May all of God's people say, "Amen, and Amen."

And so ends the Exodus Psalms. The last verse of Exodus leaves the story of Israel with these words: *"For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys"* (Exodus 40:38). As we come to the close of these parallel Psalms we must remember that our Lord is still with us. In the light and in the night, all along the journey, He is with us.

Use the roadmap of God's Word, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledge the companionship of Christ. As you do, you will continue to enjoy the journey.

A Ready Reference *of the* Psalms

The psalms are full of promises, principles, prayers, and praises. There is a psalm for every emotion and experience; they cover the realm of human life. They are written by David, the Sons of Korah, Asaph, Solomon, Ethan, Heman, and Moses. 51 are anonymous. God has made it so that they are the expression of every man—every heart that truly cries out for God.

PSALM 1-41

The Genesis Psalms

God's Counsel to Men

1 An opening blessing
2 A psalm when you are dealing with wicked people*
3 A prayer when your heart is troubled
4 A psalm for evening hours
5 A prayer for morning hours
6 A prayer for healing
7 A psalm when you are persecuted
8 A nature Psalm–praise for the Creator*
9 A psalm for the world in which we live
10 A prayer for the poor and oppressed
11 A psalm when you are in a spiritual battle
12 A prayer when godly men seem to disappear and evil men increase
13 A prayer when it seems God is not answering your prayer
14 A prayer for deliverance from foolish, corrupt people
15 A psalm of holiness
16 A prayer for preservation*
17 A prayer for justice
18 A psalm for times of victory
19 A psalm for those who desire to know and fellowship with God
20 A psalm for answered prayer
21 A psalm for those in authority
22 A prayer for the afflicted*
23 A psalm for all of life*
24 A psalm of Christ's victory*
25 A prayer for direction and deliverance
26 A psalm about integrity
27 A psalm of the presence of God
28 A prayer for divine intervention
29 A praise for the voice of the Lord
30 A praise and prayer for God's help
31 A psalm of trust in the midst of trouble

32 A prayer and song of a restored heart
33 A praise for the God of heaven and earth
34 A praise for deliverance from trouble
35 A prayer when mistreated and maligned
36 A psalm of worship in the face of wickedness
37 A song of faith
38 A prayer for healing, help, and hope
39 A psalm when weak and frail
40 A praise for the God who hears us and thinks of us*
41 A prayer for mercy*

PSALM 42-72

The Exodus Psalms

God's Redeemed People

42 A psalm of thirst for God
43 A prayer of hope
44 A prayer for victory
45 A song of worship for the King*
46 A song about God's presence
47 A psalm about the King on His throne
48 A psalm about the attributes of our great God
49 A psalm about wealth in light of eternity
50 A psalm of the true Judge
51 A prayer of confession
52 A psalm of God's strength over man's strength
53 A psalm about the folly of the wicked
54 A prayer when oppressed
55 A prayer when you have been betrayed
56 A prayer when you are afraid
57 A psalm for the storm
58 A prayer for God's judgment on the wicked
59 A prayer for strength and defense
60 A plea for healing, help, and victory
61 A psalm of shelter when overwhelmed
62 A psalm of trust in God only
63 A psalm when seeking the Lord
64 A prayer when fearful
65 A praise for God's goodness on the earth
66 A song of joyful testimony to bless God
67 A prayer for blessing on the people of God
68 A psalm on the presence and strength of God*
69 A psalm when in deep waters*
70 A prayer for deliverance and help
71 A psalm for every day and every stage of life
72 A prayer for leaders*

PSALM 73-89

The Leviticus Psalms

In the Sanctuary with God

73 A psalm when you envy the wicked

74 A prayer of desperation for God to work
75 A song of thanks for leaders
76 A song of God's judgment
77 A psalm of remembrance when overwhelmed in the night
78 A psalm to remember the faithfulness of God
79 A prayer of the desperate
80 A prayer for God to turn us and shine forth
81 A song that becomes a lament
82 A psalm about true justice
83 A prayer against the enemy and for the glory of God
84 A psalm about God's presence and strength
85 A prayer for revival
86 A prayer when weak and troubled
87 A song about the New Jerusalem, the coming center of Christ's reign
88 A prayer when lonely and low
89 A song and a prayer about God's unfailing faithfulness*

PSALM 90-106

The Numbers Psalms

The Rebellion of Man

90 A prayer to the Lord about life
91 A psalm for the fearful
92 A song to celebrate God's work
93 A psalm about the Lord on His throne
94 A prayer for defense of the righteous and justice on the wicked
95 A psalm for worship
96 A psalm to give God glory
97 A psalm about the holiness of God
98 A song of victory
99 A psalm for approaching God
100 A psalm to praise the Lord for who He is
101 A psalm of consecration
102 A prayer for the day of trouble*
103 A psalm to bless the Lord
104 A psalm about God's power over the whole earth
105 A psalm for God's strength and joy
106 A psalm to remember man's rebellion and God's mercy

PSALM 107-150

The Deuteronomy Psalms

The Holy Word of God

107 A psalm to praise God for His goodness and wonderful works
108 A song of praise and a prayer for victory
109 A prayer against the Lord's enemies
110 A psalm about Christ as our King and Priest*
111 A praise for the Lord's great works
112 A song about the blessings of the righteous

113 An all day song: A psalm of praise for our God
114 A psalm to remember God's power in the Exodus
115 A praise to God for all of His blessings
116 A psalm of praise for answered prayer
117 A praise for the Lord's mercy and truth
118 A psalm of thanks for God's goodness and mercy*
119 A prayer for every circumstance: the sufficiency of God's Word
120 A prayer for deliverance
121 A psalm of divine help
122 A prayer for Jerusalem
123 A prayer for God's mercy
124 A praise that the Lord is on our side
125 A prayer for protection
126 A praise for past victories and a prayer for present ones
127 A psalm of truths for the family
128 A psalm of blessings for the family
129 A prayer against the Lord's enemies
130 A prayer when you are waiting on God
131 A psalm to humble yourself before God
132 A prayer for God to fulfill His promises
133 A psalm of unity among brethren
134 A nighttime psalm to bless the Lord
135 A psalm to praise the only true and living God
136 A psalm of God's enduring mercy
137 A prayer of brokenness and remembrance
138 A prayer to God in the midst of trouble
139 A psalm about God's presence in every place and every circumstance
140 A prayer for protection in the battles of life
141 A prayer to be kept right in a world that has gone wrong
142 A prayer when overwhelmed
143 A prayer for direction
144 A psalm about God's providence, protection, and provision
145 A praise for the wonderful name of the Lord

"The Hallelujah Chorus"

The last five psalms all begin and end with "Praise ye the Lord."

146 A psalm of trust
147 A psalm to rehearse the greatness of God
148 A psalm of personal praise
149 A psalm of corporate praise
150 A psalm of enduring praise

Identified as Messianic Psalms, pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ



HOW TO STUDY THE PSALMS

Our God is a God of perfect light (John 1:5). The first recorded words of God are *"Let there be light"* (Genesis 1:3). Christ came to bring light into a sin darkened world (John 1:9). When a person comes to know the Lord Jesus as Savior they are called "*out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (I Peter 2:9). In the midst of dark days it is wonderful to know that we can know and follow His light!

There are many symbols for Scripture found in the Bible. Among others, it is water, bread, a sword, and meat. But there is no illustration more vivid than the picture of God's Word as light. It is light on the path of life.

In the longest of the Psalms, the great Psalm of the Scriptures, we read, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Psalm 119:105).

"A lamp unto my feet" reveals where I am. God's Word speaks to our current condition and our pressing needs. It corrects and directs to keep us on God's highway.

"A light unto my path" reveals where I am going. One step at a time it points the way to the future. The only way to truly walk with God is with His Word as your guidebook. It orders our steps, keeps us from snares, and leads us to the destination safely.

As you open the Bible, open your heart. Ask the Lord to use the light of Scripture to show you where you are and where He wants you to be. Claim this promise: "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple*" (Psalm 119:130).

There is no book like God's Book! I believe God's Word is all-sufficient for all of life. It is our prayer that these brief meditations from each of the Psalms will help you to dig more deeply into Scripture for yourself to provide light on the path. Before you read the devotional meditation for each psalm, take the time to read that psalm. Begin with God's Word.

HOW TO READ THE PSALMS

1. Read the psalm slowly. "Selah" is found 71 times and serves as a musical pause, a frequent reminder to stop and consider.

2. Read the psalm out loud. In this way all of your faculties work together to help you concentrate on what you are reading.

3. Read the psalm as an expression of your own soul. Seek an understanding of the writer's heart and then allow the inspired words to articulate the feeling of your own heart.

4. Read the psalm as a prayer or praise to God. Pray your way through the Psalms.

5. Read the psalm on your knees. Allow it to lead you to worship.

6. Read the psalm again. You did not get it all the first time.

7. Read the psalm as the psalmist wrote it – with a pen in hand! Record what God is teaching you.

8. Read the title to see if the author attached a particular purpose or background to the psalm. If it is a historical psalm, take the time to go back and read the narrative passage for context.

9. Read each psalm looking for Jesus Christ. In our list, 'A Ready Reference of the Psalms' found in the previous section, we have placed an asterisk beside the psalms that are most commonly referred to as Messianic. Remember that Christ is on every page!

10. Read the psalms watching for repetition. This will help you to discover God's emphasis.

11. Read the psalm on your knees. Allow it to lead you to worship.

12. Read the psalm again. You did not get it all the first time.

13. Read the psalm as the psalmist wrote it – with a pen in hand! Record what God is teaching you.

14. Read the title to see if the author attached a particular purpose or background to the psalm. If it is a historical psalm, take the time to go back and read the narrative passage for context.

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16. Read the psalms watching for repetition. This will help you to discover God's emphasis.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

While we hope that this resource will be a helpful reference tool that you will return to again and again as you study the Psalms, it has been designed to be used as a daily devotional reading. Walk through the Psalms successively and concentrate on one psalm each day. Here are a few practical suggestions to get the most out of the following pages.

- Pray Psalm 119:18 each day before you begin: "*Open thou*

mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Ask God for wisdom and trust that the Holy Spirit will do exactly what Jesus promised and guide you into the truth (John 16:13).

- Write personal reflections on each psalm. A journal will help you to think through what you are reading and remember what you are learning. Wide margins have been provided next to the text of each chapter for you to write things God is teaching you from His Word.
- Turn each psalm into a prayer for the day. Take a Bible verse, a Bible phrase, or a Bible word from each psalm to meditate on and pray throughout the day.

This summary was adapted from the full introduction to the Psalms found in Volume 1: *The Genesis Psalms*. Please refer to that guide for a more extensive guide to understanding and studying the Psalms.

GOSPEL

LIFE IS A SHORT TRIP TO SOMEWHERE FOREVER! HOW WILL YOU MAKE THE TRIP?

We live in a mobile society and it seems that everyone is in a hurry to get where they are going! Life itself is a journey and all of us are headed somewhere forever. An all-wise God has designed it so that those who follow His way can enjoy Heaven someday and also enjoy the journey today. The Bible, God's Word to man, is the roadmap for time and eternity.

BEGIN BY DETERMINING YOUR DESTINATION.

Every journey begins by settling where you are going. Without direction, we all just wander aimlessly through life, searching for meaning and purpose. Thousands of years ago a prophet named Isaiah wrote, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"[1] Some things never change!

"*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*"[2] On our own we all go away from God. This is why Jesus Christ came: to take our sin and give us His salvation. Only He can return us to the path we were created to walk and bring us to God. Jesus said, "*I am the way,*

1 Isaiah 53:6
2 Romans 3:23

the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."[3]

Jesus Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead to offer us eternal life, and stands ready now to forgive our sins. But each of us must choose for ourselves if we will follow our way or His. When Jesus was on earth He said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* [4]

There are only two destinations: eternity in Heaven with God or separated from God forever in Hell. All roads cannot lead to the same place. Our way leads us from God; Christ's way leads us to God. If you continue on the path you are on now, where will you spend eternity? You must determine your destination.

DISCOVER THE COMPANIONSHIP OF CHRIST.

The journey is always better with a companion, someone with whom we share both the joys and trials of the trip. This is why Jesus Christ came to this earth. He traveled this same road for thirty-three years. The Son of God is not a person far away who, *"cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* [5] He knows where you are and what you are facing!

Even more, He wants to make the journey with you right now. This personal relationship begins at the moment that you place your faith in Him and call on Him to be your Savior. *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."* [6]

3 John 14:6
4 Matthew 7:13-14
5 Hebrews 4:15
6 Romans 10:9

When a person comes to know Christ, two things are made sure: they will live with Christ forever in Heaven, and Christ comes to live in their heart now! In one of the most famous psalms, Psalm 23, David explains it this way, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*" [7]

To follow Christ is to have Him make the journey with you, never alone! In some of His last words to the first disciples He said, "*…I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*" [8] There will be difficulties along the way, but He will guard us and guide us at every step.

KNOW WHAT TO DO AT IMPORTANT INTERSECTIONS.

Intersections are turning points. At each of them there is a decision to be made. Life is full of decisions, but the most important ones are the ones that affect eternity. Today you are standing at one of those crossroads. You will either choose to follow Christ or to continue on your own way. Remember that a wrong turn does not lead to the right place! The right turn is to repent and believe on Christ. [9]

There are two paths and we all must decide which one we will take. Jesus said, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" [10] Will you believe on Christ today?

Call on Him now! "Dear God, be merciful to me a sinner. I know that you died for me and believe that you rose from the dead. Please forgive my sin and come into my life. I trust you now as my personal Savior. Thank you for giving me the free gift of eternal

7 Psalm 23:6
8 Matthew 28:20
9 Acts 20:21
10 John 3:18

life. In Jesus' name, Amen."

This is the beginning of your journey with Jesus. He promises those who belong to Him, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*[11] We would love to hear from you and help you as you begin to walk with Christ.

Visit us at **enjoyingthejourney.org** to take the next step.

11 Hebrews 13:5

Want To Know More?

